

# Recorder Reporter

Newsletter of two chapters of the American Recorder Society (ARS),

Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society

October 2024

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## Chicago Chapter News

The Chicago chapter opened our 66<sup>th</sup> season on September 15 at our new venue, St. John's Episcopal Church, 3857 North Kostner. A beautiful and welcoming space, a solid crowd, including one person joining us for the first time, and as always, excellent music making. Nancy led first with a pair of 16<sup>th</sup> century works, *Duro mal, terrible llanto* and then *Trahe me post te* by Jacob Handl. We also played *Honeysuckle* by Anthony Holborne and *Die Katzen Pfote*, or the Cat's Foot.

Lisette Keilson directed *Intrada 13* from the *Suite à 5* by Johann Christoph Pezel (1639 - 1694) (for Yuletide) and *Lachrimae Tango* by John Dowland for our May concert. We arranged Pezel by parts for December, but contact Lisette if you want to participate if you weren't with us last month. You need to join us in November if you plan to play for Yuletide. We closed with a lovely Welsh piece by Alyson Lewin, *Bugeillio Gwenith Gwyn*.

Mirja Lorenz directs on Sunday October 20 at 2 PM, and plans to spend a few minutes talking about music theory and the basics of harmony. Then she will open with the Yiddish folk song *Hot a Yid a Weibele*, "a beautiful, easy going, happy little tune to warm up," Mirja says. We will also return to *Sonata 15* by Dario Castello, a piece we have played before with her. This time we won't leave it for the end, when we are running out of time. "It is way too beautiful to only scratch the surface," Mirja says. If time allows, she wants to close with the sea shanty *Wellerman*, and we might even have time for an encore, an arrangement of *Putting on the Ritz* by Irving Berlin.



**We need to recruit recorder players to provide music for at least four services at St. John's this season.** We already played once on September 29. We have also committed their Lessons and Carols Advent Service on Sunday December 7 at 5 PM and to Sunday January 5, 2025, at 10 AM. We might also play for St. John's during Lent, or in the weeks following Easter or at Pentecost, such as Sunday April 27 at 10 AM.

**Please plan to renew your membership!**

## West Suburban Early Music Society

Members of the West Suburban Early Music Society met on September 8 at the Friend's Meeting House at 2 PM, with Janet Fitchuk directing.

The West Suburban Early Music Society started our new season September 8 at the Friends Meetinghouse, led by Janet Fitchuk and welcoming several new players. Janet led us in an assortment of Welsh folk tunes arranged by Austin Ralphson, starting with *All Through the Night*. Following that we played *Ar Lan y Nor* ("Beside the Sea"), *Suo Gan* ("Lullaby"), and *David of the White Rock* by David Owen. Legend has it that Owen composed this tune on his deathbed and asked that it be played at his funeral.



We played Israel's national anthem, *Halikvah* before returning to a pair of Renaissance pieces: *Absalon fili me* by Josquin des Prez and Passereau's *Au joly son du sanzonnet* ("To the Pretty Sound of the Starling").

The DaCapo group, led by Kathy Hall-Babis, played *Three Dances* by Tielman Susato and a French song arranged by Josquin des Prez titled *Mille regretz*.

Our next meeting is on Sunday October 13 at 2 PM at the Meetinghouse, led by Dennis Sherman.

Here is our schedule for the rest of the season:

11/10	Pat Badger – Director of Recorder at the Clearing, Door County Wisconsin
12/8	Holiday music
1/12	Stephanie Duesing
2/9	Peter Beck (jazz)
3/9	Nancy Chabala (crumhorns)
4/13	Mary Anne Gardner
5/4	Elaine Gillies

## Spring workshop with Liza Malamut

Join us for our next recorder workshop on Saturday March 22, 2025. We have been offering recorder workshops every other year for decades, but we have some new plans for this event. We start by welcoming Liza Malamut as the workshop director for the first time.



Liza is the artistic director of the celebrated Newberry Consort in Chicago, and she plays sackbut, teaching the instrument at Indiana University. In June of 2024 she joined the Whitewater faculty, offering a class in Renaissance loud band.

As Liza is a specialist in Renaissance brass and wind music, we will host a broader recorder workshop than have in past years. In addition to recorder players

will also welcome for music making for people playing sackbut, crumhorn, shawm, dulcian, and other Renaissance instruments.

The third change is that the Old Town School of Folk Music at 4544 Lincoln Avenue in Lincoln Square plan to host the workshop for us. This will be an official event sponsored by the Old Town School, allowing us to reach out to the School's large and loyal musical community, and take advantage of their marketing skill and online presence. We can also market through the Newberry Consort. So we look to have a lot of fun making music, and I am thinking that we can probably draw more participants as well. Likely the same sort of folk who enjoy Tom Paxton and Pete Seeger would also brake for John Dowland and Orlando de Lassus. We should have a natural draw from people who hang out at the Old Town School, and the Newberry Consort audience would appreciate our music as well. Thus this workshop could serve as an excellent opportunity for the chapter to reach out to potential new members.

Here is the Old Town School web page for the event:

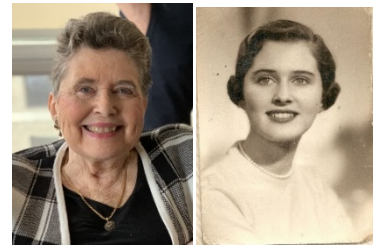
[Old Town School | Recorder and Renaissance Wind Music Workshop](#)

Several parking lots are available, besides street parking. We would encourage you to consider public transit. Walk to the Old Town School from the Western Avenue L stop on the Brown line. If you can reach the Chicago Loop on Metra it's easy to make your way to the Old Town School from there.

## Karen Crotty, 1940 – 2024

We have been pausing on our way a lot lately, friends and musicians, to bid farewell to some of our travel companions. Karen Crotty, long a member of the Chicago chapter, died September 9 after a brief illness. She was 84.

Karen Crotty “was all things Irish,” according to her sister Ann Garvey. She was a member of the Irish American Heritage Center, loved Irish



dance and music, was a devoted member of the St. Clement's parish, traveled to the Emerald Isle at least once a year. “At one point she was even asked to come over to serve as a tour guide,” her sister observed. She loved music and art, playing recorder with the Chicago chapter and the Oak Park Recorder Society for many years, and was a member of the St. Clement Chapel Choir and of the Musician's Club of Women.

Esther Schechter knew Karen for 30 or 40 years. They met playing recorder together with Dave Fitzgerald, another good Irish person. Esther and Karen would go to opera together and the Chicago Chamber Music Society. She rarely missed a Tuesday evening jam session in Oak Park, though she was known for pausing to trim her nails before picking up her instrument. “Now, whenever someone playing the recorder stops and says ‘Oops, I have to cut my nails’ I remember Karen,” Esther said.

The oldest of six children, Karen was born in Chicago and grew up in South Shore, living there until her family moved to the Beverly Hills neighborhood when she was 18. She went to Aquinas High School and then to St. Mary's of Notre Dame, a Catholic women's college in South Bend Indiana, before transferring to Loyola University. She took a degree in education and served as an elementary school teacher before completing two master's degrees and becoming a reading therapist. She



worked for the Chicago Public Schools for over 40 years, and lived in Lincoln Park for about 50 years.

Karen was “all about family.” As the oldest she took on some of the burden of guiding her younger siblings when their mother died when Karen was 38. “She was the head of the family,” Ann said. “Even though she didn’t have children, she became the matriarch. She made sure she came to every party, she was always the last one to leave, and she always took a doggy bag home with her.” Karen and Ann were known for talking on the phone every day, at 11:15 AM.

Her mother taught at the Chicago Public Schools for many years, her father was in management with US Steel. Her father played saxophone with his own jazz band when he was at DePaul University. Jimmy Crotty’s Campus Kids regularly played at hotels and at college dances. “That’s where her love of music came from,” Ann said.



*Karen (right) joins the Dearborn Winds in May 2009*

## Lee Newcomer, 1943 – 2024

We still have Performer’s Music.

Performer’s Music is the only independent sheet music store left in Chicago, and one of a handful left in the United States. Lee Newcomer opened Performers Music, a recorder shop originally, on February 14, 1981. February 15 was the monthly meeting for the Chicago chapter of the American Recorder Society, and Lee set that date in an attempt to appeal to our members. And in fact he did appeal to us, for over 40 years selling instruments, sheet music, stands and other items to support our music making. These days about two thirds of the store’s business is online.

Lee died in August peacefully at home, not long after another day working at his store in the Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue. He was 81 years old.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Lee graduated from Wittenburg University in 1965 with a degree in English

literature and finished a PhD in American Literature at the University of Utah in 1970. The 1970s found him teaching English, and in particular, technical writing, at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. By 1978 Lee was 37 years old and outcompeting better qualified candidates for a tenure track position. His classes were well regarded; he was set for life. So he decided to leave instead. He wanted to live in Chicago; he wanted to open a music store. With an inheritance and some savings, he opened Performer’s Music, turning a profit in a year. He had hoped to offer a store devoted to Early Music, but quickly learned that he needed to offer jazz music as well, piano music, music for violin, guitar, clarinet. He did sell a lot of recorders in the 1970s and 80s, and recorder music, and he hosted jam sessions in the store on Sunday evenings, in the early days, after closing time.



People did come in for recorders and recorder music, but many were drawn to a store with a proprietor known for his deep knowledge of his broad collection. Performer’s Music had plenty of traffic from professionals and students with Roosevelt University next door, and the Chicago

Conservatory in the Fine Arts Building, plus visitors from out of town. Lee was famous for his spartan lifestyle, no car, simple food, no plans to retire, and evidently no money saved to that end either. Lee poured everything he had into his store. Good for us; the store carries on as a result. The manager of Performer’s music and staff plan to keep the store serving musicians for years to come.

For my part I bought three new recorders from Lee Newcomer, including my beloved Zenon bass. I was excited to put it together in Lee’s shop when it arrived shortly before Thanksgiving of 2008, but then I couldn’t pry loose the cap on the top of the bass. It was new, the cork needed to be sanded down. Lee summoned one of the maintenance crew in the Fine Arts Building to help, and a worker not known for his subtlety tried to wrench the cap off with a large pair of locking pliers. When that didn’t work he got it free by knocking at it from the block in the inside. I was left with a permanent scrape on the cap.

Today I view that scar as a mark of distinction, and whenever I put my Zenon bass together for another playing session—something I have been doing at least once a week for over 15 years—I think of the man who provided the instrument, and his elegant store on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor of one of Chicago's grandest landmarks.

Performer's Music has served all of us well for many years. We can continue to support Performer's Music, and thus honor the memory of the store's founder.

## Music and More

The **Newberry Consort** opens its 2024-2025 season with music from the era of King James I of England, for viols, voices, cornetto, lute, and sackbuts, featuring works by Orlando Gibbons, John Dowland, and more.

Friday October 18 at 7:30 PM, First Unitarian Church of Chicago, 5650 South Woodlawn, in Hyde Park

Saturday October 19 at 7:30, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 939 Hinman Avenue, Evanston

Sunday October 20, 4 PM, Ganz Hall, Roosevelt University, 425 South Wabash, Chicago's Loop

Chicago chapter members can get a 15% discount for tickets with the code **ARSTREMBLE24**. Visit <https://www.newberryconsort.org/itremblenot>

**Apollo's Fire** offers the Brandenburg Concertos # 2, 3, 4, and 6, and the Concerto for Oboe and Violin, Friday October 25 at 7:30 at the Music Institute of Chicago in Evanston and Saturday October 26 at 7:30 PM at St. James Cathedral in Chicago. Visit [apollosfire.org](http://apollosfire.org).

The **University of Chicago Presents** concert series offers Bach's St. John's Passion on November 15, 2024 at 7:30 PM in Mandel Hall (Reynolds Club), performed by the Scottish Baroque ensemble, the [Dunedin Consort](http://DunedinConsort.org).

The [St. Louis Recorder](http://StLouisRecorder.org) Society is famous! Or was, this is from 2007. But still really cool.

And we at the Chicago chapter are on our way to similar acclaim. Here is our new [YouTube channel](#). The channel now includes several recordings from our Spring concert in May 2024. Please let Peter Beck know if you have a video you would like to contribute.

The **Silkroad Ensemble** offers "American Railroad" at Harris Theater in Chicago on Thursday November 7 at 7:30 PM. The [event](#) highlights music from the immigrant communities that built the transcontinental railroad in the mid-19th century.

## Chapter Information

Our chapters are open to anyone, regardless of musical training, who wants to cultivate appreciation of the art, history and use of the recorder and related instruments. Our

meetings, programs and publications help members to come together with others with similar interests.

Chicago Chapter and West Suburban dues are paid in September for each new season. Both groups include membership in either chapter as well as this newsletter. The *Recorder Reporter* is published monthly, September to May by the Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society.

### Chicago Chapter ARS ([ChicagoRecorders.org](http://ChicagoRecorders.org))

President	Mark Dawson
Vice President	Open
Secretary	Cheryl Kreiman
Treasurer	Carl Foote
Facebook	Hyacinth Egner & Cheryl Kreiman
Web site	Larry Johnson & Peter Beck
Members at Large	Ruth Dunnell
Chapter Representative	Larry Johnson
Music Director:	Lisette Kielson <a href="mailto:lisettekielson@gmail.com">lisettekielson@gmail.com</a>

You can contact the chapter through our web site.

Like us on Facebook: 

<https://www.facebook.com/ChicagoARS>

**Chicago Chapter meetings:** The third Sunday of each month, September through May, 2 PM, at St. John's Episcopal Church, 3857 North Kostner. Enter through the side door on Byron and go to your right down a few steps to enter the parish hall, or enter in the front.

### West Suburban Early Music Society ([westsubems.org](http://westsubems.org))

Convener/Chapter Representative:	Kathy Hall-Babis ( <a href="mailto:kathy.hallbabis@gmail.com">kathy.hallbabis@gmail.com</a> )
Vice Convener	Pat Mahoney ( <a href="mailto:Pmahoney2024@gmail.com">Pmahoney2024@gmail.com</a> )
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Web page support	Chris Culp <a href="mailto:cg.culp@gmail.com">cg.culp@gmail.com</a> (630) 415-8413

**WSEMS meetings:** Second Sunday of each month, September through April, first Sunday of May, 2-5 PM at the Downers Grove Friends meeting house, 5710 Lomond Avenue in Downers Grove. The church is located near Maple Avenue and 355. From 355, take the ramp and go east on Maple for 4/10 miles and turn right (south) onto Lomond street. The church is on the right.

Visit us at [chicagorecorders.org](http://chicagorecorders.org)  
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