

Recorder Reporter

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

Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society

March 2025

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Chicago Chapter News

Another terrific meeting on February 16 with Gail Gillispie directing! I just turned 65, and after years of driving myself too hard—a 6 AM alarm, Monday nights with the Baron's Noyse, Tuesdays with the Oak Park Concert Chorale, chapter efforts, and all the concerts and museum events and lectures and travel and bike rides I pack into my schedule, I find myself looking forward to naps. But our February meeting reminded me of why I pour myself into chapter plans and practices. "You guys are really good," Nancy Chabala said. Exactly. Splendid sight reading for a lot of beautiful Spanish Renaissance music, with 18 attending, and three newcomers. We play great music really well.



We are of course also amazing in other ways, though you knew that already. A visiting student from China was delighted to find both Peter Hulen and James Watts speaking with her in Mandarin. Over many years I have regularly found myself sitting next to recorder players who have PhDs in biology, physics and chemistry. And I never stop marveling at all the fine professional musicians I get to try to keep up with.

Anyway, we started with Nancy Chabala directing us in the hymn *All Creatures of our God and King*, followed by Tomas Luis de Victoria's *O Magnum Mysterium*, and closed the first hour with the wonderful swing of *La Spagnola*. Then Gail Gillispie joined us. Gail is an old friend to the chapter, and a skilled lutenist. She also directed her own choral ensemble in the past, the Scholars

of Cambrai. The music from the 16th century in Spain was influenced by Italian forms, as key composers, including Victoria (1548-1610), spent many years living in Rome.



Our first effort was *Ave Color Vini Clari*, a Latin work written by Juan Ponce (1480-1521), sung in praise of wine drinking, and ending with "Amen"! This sacred music was sung by university students. That's all we need to know.

We also played *Surge propera, amica mea* by Francisco Guerrero (1528-1599), a lovely work intended as a tribute to virgin saints or perhaps played during the clothing ceremony for a new nun. Guerrero was a prodigy who held his first job as a church music director at age 18. He longed to travel as a pilgrim to the holy land and finally had his chance in 1589. On the way home his ship was attacked twice by pirates, and he was ultimately released for a ransom and returned to Spain destitute. Friends bailed him out of debtor's prison and gave him his old job back, where he served for another ten years until he died. We agreed we should play Guerrero's *Zagales, Sin Seso Vengo* at a service for St. John's Episcopal in April.

We talked about how musicians in the Renaissance lacked a standard musical pitch to work with, musicians were basically told to figure that out on their own. Pitch would vary from one church and one town to another. In 15th and 16th century Italy, lutes tended to be tuned down, and organs tuned up. If you tried to tune a lute too high you risked breaking strings; to reach lower notes in an organ, you needed bigger brass pipes. Broken strings and brass organ pipes were expensive, after all. Also,

SATB settings are common today. In the Renaissance, choral music tended to be written STTB, with the soprano part sung by a boy soprano or, later, a counter tenor, as these were compositions for men to sing.

We played *Ojos morenos* by Juan Vasquez (1500-1560). He taught choirs and wrote some 90 secular songs, plus complete settings for the mass and the daily offices.

We played an excellent double choir piece by Sebastian Vivanco (1551-1622), *Surge, propera*, and the most famous work by Alonso Lobo (1555-1617), *Versa est in luctum*. Victoria, the most celebrated Spanish composer of the era, considered Lobo his equal. We closed with Victoria's exquisite *O lux et decus Hispaniae*.

Gail provided a PDF file with no less than 88 links for downloading more historic Spanish music for free from libros.csic.es. We will post this PDF document to our chapter web site. **Join us for our next meeting, March 16, 2 PM at St. John's, where Nancy Chabala again leads us for our first hour, and then Peter Beck offers a session on playing jazz music.** While you wait, visit our chapter [YouTube channel](#) to hear some new recordings of music from WSEMS and at the Folk Music Festival.

Finally, thanks to the noble efforts of our treasurer, Carl Foote, the Chicago Chapter of the American Recorder Society (Chicago Recorders) is now an official 501(c)3 organization. Your contributions to our chapter's efforts are tax deductible.

Recorder Workshop, Saturday March 22 at the Old Town School of Folk Music

Our workshop with Liza Malamut approaches, Saturday March 22 at the Old Town School of Folk Music at 4544 North Lincoln Avenue, in Lincoln Square. Registration starts at 8:30, we play from 9 AM to 4 PM. **It is time to [Register online for the event.](#)**

Liza is the artistic director of the celebrated Newberry Consort in Chicago. Under Liza's leadership we will offer a workshop welcoming Renaissance wind as well as recorder, including playing sackbut, crumhorn, shawm, dulcian, and other Renaissance instruments.

The event will be held at the Old Town School of Folk Music at 4544 North Lincoln Avenue, in Lincoln Square. **The fee is \$100 for the day, and it includes music, snacks, and lunch. Don't let the cost keep you from attending—scholarship aid is available, just ask one of our leaders.**

We will also provide printed copies of all music, and we plan to also offer the music online for review before the event. Several parking lots are available, besides street parking, and the Old Town School is an easy walk from the Western Avenue L stop on the CTA Brown line.

West Suburban Early Music Society

Everyone was "jazzed up" at the February 9 meeting of the West Suburban Early Music Society. The group welcomed Peter Beck as the director, and he shared his love for and expertise in jazz. The players started the day's journey with "Ja-Da" from 1918 by Bob Carleton. Next up was "St. James Infirmary", popularized by Louis Armstrong in the late 1920s. With this piece, Peter explained how jazz bands typically play background music while soloists take turns improvising. Tom Re provided the solo on his fiddle. Following was the jazz requisite "When the Saints Come Marching In," followed by "Sonnymoon for Two" by tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins and then "Now's the Time" by Charlie Parker in 1945 as well as "One Mint Julep" by Rudy Toombs. We also played a transcription of "Darn that Dream" by Darleen Kay, our late WSEMS member. Everyone had a syncopated finger-snappin' time!



After a break, the group played a collection of pieces compiled by Darleen Kay:

- Moresca
- Pavane D'Angleterre
- Polish Dance
- Ora Baila Tu
- Love's Oculist
- Grandfather's Clock
- The Milkmaid's Song
- The Slighted Swan
- Advice to Cloe

WSEMS meets again on Sunday, March 9 at 2 PM at the Meetinghouse, 5710 Lomond Avenue, Downers Grove. This meeting will be a much-anticipated return of crumhorns provided and directed by Nancy Chabala.

Chapter Members Making Music



Patrick O'Malley & Lisette Kielson play Bach, BWV39, Northwestern University, February 7

Bach wrote 350 cantatas, most of them once a week for services at the church in Leipzig. About 200 of these “sermons in song” survive. Bach scholar Mark Ringer says “The cantatas represent an almost superhuman artistic and spiritual achievement. They are at the absolute center of Bach’s creative life.”



Dear members of the Chicago chapter of the American Recorder Society, Cheryl, Peter, Carl, & Mark, Thank you so much for coming to Lincoln Square Presbyterian Church on February 2 to grace us with your beautiful music. I closed my eyes a bit as your music took me to a “different place” momentarily. Thank you again for taking the time to share your beautiful gift of music with us.—Darla Coulson, LSPC.

To hear us playing Le Clerc’s Air at Lincoln Square, visit the church [podcast](#) site, and look for the February 2 service. The music starts at about 1:07:30.

After the service ended (with applause) I prepared myself to talk about how recorders are thought of as for elementary school students, plastic sopranos used to teach 9 year olds the basics until they move on to real instruments, but in fact recorders come in SATB, and they were very popular in the Renaissance, and King Henry VIII owned a set, and a broad array of music was composed for the recorder in past centuries, and I expected to say all of this to—kids. Instead, two *adults* approached me, amazed at my bass recorder. Oh well. We made a good impression, regardless.

University of Chicago Folk Music Festival

Another Chicago chapter workshop on recorder playing on Saturday, February 8 at Ida Noyes Hall, directed by Lisette Kielson. We performed *Suite à 5* by Johann Christoph Pezel (1639-1694), Allemande, Courante, and Bal, and then spread out to play Renaissance dances with those who gathered. We offered a recorder workshop at the University of Chicago Folk Music Festival for the first time in February of 2014; this event in 2025 was the 9th workshop we have presented at the festival.

Dennis Sherman also offered a workshop on the hurdy gurdy. We don’t know where the English word “hurdy gurdy” comes from, the French and Spanish refer to the instrument as the “violin with a wheel,” which makes sense. The hurdy gurdy features a rosined wheel, instead of a bow, turned with a crank. It also features over 300 parts, a need for a musician who likes to tinker with tools as it requires frequent adjustments, and heroic efforts to keep the instrument in tune.



The earliest image we have of the hurdy gurdy, or of a predecessor, would be the organistrum, featured in a carving in a Spanish cathedral from 1169. This instrument was much larger than the ones Dennis plays, and required two men, including one who turned the crank. The hurdy gurdy was popular later to accompany dances, but it faded in popularity in the 16th century with the rise of polyphony, before enjoying a revival in the French court of the 18th century as French nobility at Versailles liked to style themselves as country folk. By then the hurdy gurdy had been relegated to rural audiences. No original examples of the instrument survive before about 1700, but to this day the hurdy gurdy retains a strong French influence, and a lively community of young musicians.





University of Chicago Folk Music Festival

Music and More

The **Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish** in Grand Rapids, Michigan plans a free year-long [celebration](#) of the **500th birthday** of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-94). The 16th century choral works will be a part of the regular mass once a month, as Palestrina would have intended.

The **Oak Park Concert Chorale** sings on Sunday April 6 at 4 PM at the [First United Methodist Church](#) of Oak Park, 324 Oak Park Avenue.

[Jan Matoušek](#) offers a YouTube channel that features old swing jazz, but also **recorder music** of Anthony Holborne, Thomas Tallis, and others.



The Newberry Consort, February 15, Bond Chapel

Early Music Festival, Whitewater

Registration for the [annual music festival](#) at the University of Wisconsin Whitewater opens April 1. This annual gathering runs Friday night May 30 through Sunday afternoon June 1. If you have never attended before, Whitewater is a great time for jamming and classes in recorder, singing, and viol da gamba for all talent levels, a terrific weekend of fellowship and music making.

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 Recorder Society and West Suburban dues are paid in September for each new season. Dues include membership in your local chapter, this newsletter, and a welcome to attend the meetings of both chapters. The *Recorder Reporter* is published monthly, September to May by the Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society.

Chicago Chapter ARS (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 lisettekielson@gmail.com

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)

Convener/Chapter Representative:	Kathy Hall-Babis (kathy.hallbabis@gmail.com)
Vice Convener	Pat Mahoney (Pmahoney2024@gmail.com)
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Web page support	Chris Culp cg.culp@gmail.com (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.