

Recorder Reporter

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

Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society

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Chicago Chapter News

March 16 meeting, great. I could just use that as boilerplate for future issues of this newsletter. Nancy Chabala opened with selections from the *Odhecaton*, a collection of 100 songs published in Venice in 1501, the first book of polyphonic music ever printed in moveable type. The collection was reprinted in 1942, “the bible for people who wanted to play early music,” Nancy observed, but in a bound volume as a scholarly treatise. If you actually wanted to *play* any of the pieces, you had to cut out pages and paste them together, and that’s exactly what Nancy did, 30 copies, decades ago for jam sessions at Whitewater. The Amherst Music Festival tried again in 2001, republishing the collection in a large format for sight reading. We played *Alons Ferons Barbe* by Compere, and then *Latura tu* by Antoine Bruhier. Bruhier “flourished” (f. c. 1504-1520) for a brief period. That presumably means that Bruhier was active and successful in those 15 years and we don’t know much about him otherwise, not that he had a boring job at a gas station before entering the service of Pope Leo X.

Then, we jumped forward five centuries, for an afternoon of jazz on recorder, thanks to Peter Beck—and a very different afternoon from what we would find playing polyphonic melodies from 1501. Unlike the *Odhecaton*, jazz is all about improvisation and swing. We played from sheet music, but swing does not lend itself to standard notation. You have to feel it, not read it. In fact jazz musicians have always tended to play by ear, using a set of hand signals to indicate the end of a solo run or other transitions. The Count Basie band, which began in 1936, learned pieces by improvising in rehearsal and always performed everything from memory.

Peter feels that the recorder is sadly underused in the form, as they are good for playing glissandos. He arranged a set of jazz standards for us to play. We started with 1920s and 30s big band pieces, and then tried the bebop style that emerged in the early to mid-1940s, with smaller bands and a faster and far more complex style of play. The works we explored included *Ja-Da* by Bob Carleton, the traditional *St. James Infirmary*, *Wabash Blues* by Fred Meinken (1921), *Sonnymoon for Two* by Sonny Rollins, *Now’s the Time* by Charlie Parker, and *One Mint Julep* in the version made famous by Ray Charles. Dennis Sherman, Peter Hulen, and Jacob

Shermer provided some excellent improvisation. We look to play *Now’s the Time* as a chapter in our spring concert.



Join us for our next meeting on **Sunday April 13** (not April 20, that’s Easter) at 2 PM at St. John’s Episcopal Church 3857 North Kostner. For our final chapter meeting before the Spring Concert, Lisette leads us in our dress rehearsal of *Lachrimae Tango*. In addition to rehearsing this double-choir performance selection, we will stay in England and read through Purcell’s *Funeral Sentences* in honor of Queen Mary and John Adson’s vibrant *Royal Wind Music*. Peter Beck will also spend a few minutes preparing us to perform *Now’s the Time*. Nancy Chabala opens the session by playing pieces from the *Odhecaton*.



We could also use some recorder players to take part in a service at St. John’s Episcopal on Sunday, April 27 at 10 AM. Please contact Mark Dawson if you are interested.

West Suburban Early Music Society

Wow, what a breathtaking time we had at our March meeting! And I mean that literally! Nancy Chabala graciously lent her expertise and patience with an introduction to playing the crumhorn, providing many of her own instruments, and along with Chris Culp's there were enough to go around. Many of you readers are aware that Nancy did a similar tutorial with the Chicago Recorder Society recently.



Despite having almost the same fingering as the recorder, the players immediately discovered that the crumhorn sound and skill required to produce the sound differ greatly. The nasal drone-like sound of a crumhorn, similar to that of a bagpipe practice chanter, had some of us questioning the

popularity of the instrument in Renaissance music. Fortunately, Nancy adeptly navigated these concerns and within a short time the group was playing pieces, including *Pastime With Good Company*, *Fata la Parte*, *La, la, la, Je Ne L'ose Dire*, *Remember, O Thou Man*, *Mille Regretz*, and *James the Second's March*. It was quite the experience. Thank you, Nancy! WSEMS meets again on Sunday, April 13 at 2 PM at the Meetinghouse, 5710 Lomond Ave in Downers Grove. This meeting will be led by Mary Ann Gardner. All are welcome.—Pat Mahoney

WSEMS members play at Windsor Park

Seven members of the West Suburban Early Music Society played a short concert on February 27 for 25 to 35 people at Windsor Park, a retirement community in Carol Stream. Janet Fitchuk is a resident of Windsor Park and organized the event. She frequently plays her flute for the regular Thursday evening program.



Spring Concert

We gather on May 16 to close our 66th season with our annual spring concert. A lot of people participated in our Yuletide concert, and that was fine. **We would ask, however, that you seek to limit your playing time to 5 minutes.** That will allow us to close the concert, enjoy a reception together, and then end the season with our traditional jam session led by Nancy Chabala. To take part, send the names of the people in your ensemble, the name of the piece or pieces you plan to perform, to Mark Dawson at msjddawson@sbcglobal.net. Join us for a reception after the concert.

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.

An Excellent March 22 Workshop

We shared a grand Saturday, 30 of us playing polyphony from the 16th century on recorder, shawm, racket, crumhorn, cornemuse, serpent, and more, gathering for the first time in Szold Hall at the Old Town School of Folk Music. Four newcomers joined us, Liza Malamut was wonderful as our director, and even when we needed to decamp at 3 PM and head upstairs 20 people joined us without complaint and kept playing until we finished with *O Dolce Notte* by Philippe Verdelot at 4:30 PM. Our goal was to have fun and attract musicians from the Old Town School, and we succeeded famously in both.



When we decided to move to St. John's Episcopal in September 2024, we found a fine host for our monthly meetings, but the move raised an issue of where to hold our next recorder workshop. I approached the Old Town School thinking that we could simply rent a room, and

was surprised and delighted when I was told that the School would be willing to offer our workshop as one of their own sponsored events instead. That provided us an opportunity to reach out to the School's community of members and students, and take advantage of their marketing juggernaut. I had hoped that we might welcome friends of the Old Town School who like Orlando de Lassus and John Dowland as much as Tom Paxton and Pete Seeger.

Perhaps a successful workshop at the Old Town School will lead to other workshops there in the future. More than that, I hope we can build a relationship with the School community in coming years. We are all folk musicians, after all. We just play really old folk music.



Liza Malamut directs at our March 22 workshop

Liza offered insights about phrasing, direction, and the Renaissance beat. Dancers keep moving, so the music offered to accompany those dancers needs to keep moving forward as well. Orlando de Lassus (c 1532-1594) wrote *Audite Nova* in praise of beef, and plays with the timing, setting triplets awkwardly off from each other over the four parts after the lyrics address drinking wine and beer. In this case Liza said we need to closely follow “the big beat,” the tactus. The tactus represents the larger basic beat that carries through a piece, even when the time changes. The tactus of the 16th century and earlier, a half note beat of 60 to 80 beats per second, was based on the human heartbeat.

Liza used an image of riding on an old-fashioned train as a way to think of counting the tactus. You will hear the clickety clack, clickety clack of the wheels on the track, underneath the steady movement of the train itself. And we talked articulating notes—about exaggerating notes, sometimes to a ridiculous extent, “300%,” to bring out the dynamics in a piece so the audience can hear them. Choral groups use a similar technique, strong emphasis on word

and phrase-ending consonants to make sure that they are clearly expressed.



Mostly, we kept making music. Tomas Luis de Victoria's *Alma Redemptoris Mater* was so exquisite that I printed out parts with the goal to find ways to play it again later. We are looking at our season-ending jam session after our concert in May. *Italia Mia* by Philippe Verdelot, a song of mourning for Italy, is Liza's favorite piece.



We had a lot of great music, enough to keep us going for five hours and in fact longer, all of the pieces from the 16th century, *Danse du roy* by Tielman Susato, *Benedetta*

el gregaria by Annibal Padovano, and *La Pellegrina* by Cristofano Malvezzi. After we moved upstairs we played *Vecchie letrose* by Adrian Willaert and John Dowland's *The Earl of Essex Galliard*. And a lot more. A lot of beauty and wonder, and we closed the day with new friends, good will, and fine memories.



Playing upstairs, in a dance studio, after 3 PM



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)
Treasurer	Stephanie Duesing (stephdusing@gmail.com)
Secretary/Membership:	Elaine Gillies (Jegillies@comcast.net)
Hospitality:	Norm Adams Norman_adams@frontier.com
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.

Visit us at chicagorecorders.org

Mark Dawson, newsletter editor

2425 W. Leland, Chicago, IL 60625-2913

msjddawson@sbcglobal.net (773) 334-6376