

Recorder Reporter

*Newsletter of two chapters of the American Recorder Society (ARS),
Chicago Recorder Society & the West Suburban Early Music Society*

January 2026

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Yuletide Concert

A lot of planning and practicing went into preparing for our concert on December 21, but more than the usual number of challenges befell us. The chapter showed great flexibility in dealing with last minute changes, from illnesses of several soloists to confinement of our beloved musical director. We bounced back, however, with Nancy Chabala agreeing to fill in for Lisette Kielson on Saturday, replacing a piece in the program, shuffling chairs and swapping parts, switching pages, parts and instruments. The event was filled with a lot of wonderful music in the end, and terrific performances, with gamba and lute with recorder, traditional works and pieces over 400 years old matched with new compositions and modern arrangements. For all the changes the concert was fun, energetic, alive. We really enjoyed making and sharing music, with lute pieces offered by Gail Gillispie and Ron Crawford and the performance by a new group, Recorders Reordered, as special highlights. It worked out in the end, and we performed for a full church, including members of St. John's, and over 40 musicians took part.



Yuletide 2025 closed out a splendid year for the chapter, a fine midpoint for our 67th season, and a statement of who we are as a community. The chapter is a group of ordinary people who gather once a month to have fun making beautiful and often historic music, and featuring a remarkable level of skill in sight reading. Some of us make a living at music making; most of us have other careers. And yet I have joined ensembles of recorder players performing at the front of Rockefeller Chapel at

the University of Chicago, at Brookfield Zoo and at Lincoln Park Zoo, and provided 16th century music on recorder before performances of Shakespeare at the Oak Park Festival Theater. I delight in watching the chapter thrive in recent years, a group with strong leadership, healthy finances, nearly 30 people joining us for our monthly meetings. We continue to draw new people regularly. And on December 19 we welcomed these new people to join us, including several who had never performed for a Yuletide event before, including Jeff Bosacki, Shawn McIntire and Marion Myers.



The Baron's Noyse



Ron Crawford and Gail Gillispie

So we look forward to 2026 together, and to Lisette returning to direct on January 18. Join us as Lisette plans to rehearse for our Spring Concert on Sunday, May 17. Lisette says, "Bring your inégal for Lully's *Chaconne des Africains*, your arpeggiated technique for V.Williams' *My Bonny Boy*, and your most beautiful tone for Handel's *Sarabande*." Bring your sopraninos.

We need to note here that the University of Chicago Folk Music Festival will be held in 2026 on **Saturday, February 21**. We had expected the event to be held on the *first* Saturday (February 7) as it has been for many years. Most of the recorder players who had planned to take part in a recorder workshop at Ida Noyse Hall, including Lisette, plan to attend a meeting of the Recorder Orchestra of the Midwest in Brookfield on the 21st instead. We will make plans to offer a workshop at the festival in 2027, but we will **not** meet in Hyde Park to offer a recorder workshop on Saturday February 7 (or 21).



Recorders Reordered

West Suburban Early Music Society

The West Suburban Early Music Society met December 14 at the Friends Meetinghouse, with 15 joining the holiday program directed by Nancy Chabala. Guests were welcomed and encouraged to join us in singing several Christmas carols.



First we played recorders for them; *Sing Noel*, a French carol from the 16th century, followed by *Twas In The Moon Of Wintertime*, a French Canadian carol. Next up was *All On A Starry Night*, then the finale, a Christmas medieval chant, *Verbum Patris Hodie*.

This was a fun and memorable way to end 2025, and we look forward to our next meeting January 11, 2026!—
Nancy Culp



Three very Polish-looking angels serenade the baby Jesus as part of a delightful exhibit of manger scenes from around the world at the Loyola University Museum of Art, December 2025. In this nativity, created in Poland by sculptor Boleslaw Parasion in 2010, the angels play Renaissance and Baroque instruments because, well, that's what they would have done.

Playing Recorder for St. John's

On Saturday December 6 St. John's Episcopal welcomed ten members of the chapter to provide recorder music for their Advent Lessons and Carols service.



We played *O Magnum Mysterium* by Tomas Luis de Victoria and *Zagales, sin seso vengo* by Francisco Guerrero for the prelude, and then joined in on a hymn at the end of the service. In this [recording](#) our playing starts

around 7:20. Our next playing sessions at St. John's are set of Sunday April 12 and Sunday June 21.



Dale Fitschen, 1937 - 2025

After nearly 20 years of playing recorder and hanging out with members of the Chicago chapter, I have regularly been amazed at the people I make music with. I have been surrounded by excellent musicians with PhDs in chemistry, physics, and biology, people who have traveled the world, speak Mandarin and German and Spanish and a number of other languages, who have deep knowledge medieval history and opera and film and of a remarkable range of other topics, and an equally remarkable range of other talents and passions.

Dale Fitschen, long a member of the Chicago chapter and a regular on Tuesday nights in Oak Park, was one of these remarkable recorder players I reflect on. Dale provided me with several rides to the Early Music Festival at Whitewater, and we shared many Tuesday evenings playing recorder in the basement of Pilgrim Church in Oak Park, and one bitterly cold Tuesday night in his living room in January of 2014. Dale died on December 15 in Michigan. He was 88 years old.

Born in St. Louis and raised in a three-room apartment with two siblings, Dale taught ballroom dancing through high school and college, played steel guitar, served as a stagehand for high school musicals, and cartooned a lot. He started in the art school at Washington University in St. Louis. "I was around painters, sculptors, dress designers and ad illustrators, a seismic change for a blue-collar seminary Catholic," Dale observed in 2009. "Some were opera and jazz addicts. . . a stuttering illustrator and banjo player introduced me to jazz bars and musicians who had migrated from New Orleans." So Dale spent his evenings in jazz bars, sketching. That led to a job at a commercial art studio, but without a happy ending. The pay was poor, so he finished a degree in English literature

instead. To pay the bills Dale worked as a welder of tugboats in the Mississippi River, cleaned blast furnaces, and cleaned seal skins on an island in the Bearing Sea.

In 1960 Dale moved to Chicago to pursue a master's degree at Roosevelt University, and settled in Hyde Park. There he met author Saul Bellow and joined the Committee for Social Thought at the University of Chicago. Marilyn Olsen, a friend he had met in art school, also moved to Chicago, and they were married in 1962, and raised three daughters. For many years they worked together to illustrate books and published a children's book, eventually moving to South Shore to help found a Montessori school. They bought a home in Oak Park in 1975, doing their part to turn Oak Park into a global center for recorder playing. Dale regularly played recorder with friends at the Bristol Renaissance Faire and every spring he planted a flower and vegetable garden.

Dale went to work for the Chicago Transit Authority in 1969 and ended up among the first employees of the Regional Transportation Authority, working to develop the first para-transit system for northern Illinois for the elderly and disabled. From there he worked for Pace Bus System in Arlington Heights, and then moved to working for IDOT, with an office across from the Art Institute but traveling all over Illinois to fund construction of bus service, transit facilities and light rail service until he retired in 1999.

Dale started recorder lessons with Louise Austin and Dave Fitzgerald at the Oak Park Recorder School in 1980. He very nearly died in 2006 but recovered after a liver transplant from his daughter Samantha, and then kept playing recorder, a fixture in the Chicago chapter and a regular part of Tuesday night jam sessions in Oak Park, until Dale & Marilyn moved to a retirement home in Oak Park in 2019.



May concert 2015, Dale Fitschen, Arlene Ghiron, Nadine Petersen, and Karen Crotty



Playing recorder in the Fitschen's home on a bitterly cold Tuesday night in January of 2014

Music and More

The [Newberry Consort](#) presents Corkscrews, Coils & Clocks, music from Ockeghem to Josquin celebrating scientific inventions from the 15th and 16th century.

Friday March 13 at 7:30, Bond Chapel of the University of Chicago, Saturday March 14 at 4 PM at St. Luke's Episcopal in Evanston, and Sunday March 15 at 4 PM at Ganz Hall, Roosevelt University in downtown Chicago. This concert of medieval and early Renaissance specialists will feature music on shawms, dulcians, sackbuts, recorders, and hurdy-gurdy.

The [North American Virtual Recorder Society](#) offers a means for recorder players to meet and play online. They welcome all experience levels and seek to promote the recorder and to provide a space for playing.

[Handel Week](#) returns for their 27th season at Pilgrim Congregational, 460 Lake Street in Oak Park, with Sunday concerts at 3 PM on Feb. 15 & 22 and March 1.

[Bach in the City](#) offers *The Composers of Bach's Musical World* on Sunday January 11 at 3 PM at the Allen Hall of the Holtsschneider Performance Center, DePaul University, 230 North Halsted in Chicago. The program features chamber music provided by Bach's contemporaries, including Georg Telemann, Dieterich Buxtehude, and George Frederic Handel.

The University of Chicago [Folk Music Festival](#) returns on Saturday February 21.

The [Early Music Ensemble](#) of the University of Chicago performs on Saturday February 21 at 7 PM at Fulton Recital Hall, medieval and Renaissance music for recorders, crumhorns, violas da gamba, voices, and sackbuts, French chansons, motets, Gregorian chants, dance music, and more.

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 Recorder Society and the West Suburban Early Music Society.

Chicago Recorder Society (ChicagoRecorders.org)

President	Mark Dawson
Vice President	Michael Kuby
Secretary	Jacob Shermer
Treasurer	Carl Foote
Facebook	Hyacinth Egner & Cheryl Kreiman
Web site	Larry Johnson & Carl Foote
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 Recorder Society meetings: 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:	Pat Mahoney
Vice Convener	Nancy Culp
Treasurer	Stephanie Duesing
Secretary/Membership:	Elaine Gillies
Hospitality:	Norm Adams
Web page support:	Chris Culp
Music Director:	Nancy Chabala nchabala5555@gmail.com

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

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