

# Recorder Reporter

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

February 2026

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## Chicago Chapter News

We were very happy to welcome Lisette back to the chapter meeting on January 18. This time we met in the living room of the church rectory, just south of the church on Kostner, to make way for a Sunday afternoon funeral at St. John's. We worked on pieces for our spring concert on May 17, including Lully's *Chaconne des Africains*, Ralph Vaughn Williams' *My Bonny Boy*, and Georg Frederick Handel's *Sarabande*."

At February's meeting with Lisette, we will sightread Andrea Gabrieli's 8-part *Alla Battaglia* and confirm & rehearse the pieces we'll be playing in the May Concert (R.V. Williams/Lully/Handel/Gabrieli).



In the living room of the rectory



Squeezed into the dining room with Nancy

We moved to the dining room at 4 PM, better light in there, for Nancy to lead us in a 14th century Gregorian chant, a modern *Passacaglia*, and *A Song for Japan*, a quartet written as a memorial of the people who died as a result of the Fukushima earthquake and tsunami in 2011. We voted to add several new board members. Jacob Schermer is now the secretary, and James Watts and Hyacinth Egner join Ruth Dunnell as board members at large. And Peter Beck recently added no less than 11 new videos to our chapter [YouTube channel](#), all taken from our Yuletide Concert on December 21. I was delighted—we sounded really good.



From a YouTube video, Yuletide concert

Finally, St. John's Episcopal now considers the Chicago Recorder Society as their resident ensemble, and I think that is extremely cool.

When I paused to reflect at the end of last year, I realized that I had read just one book for grownups in 2025. To address that moral failure I put on hold 11 titles at my local Conrad Sulzer Regional Library, a history of salt and another of an effort to save Yiddish language texts, a novel called *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* and *Life after Cars: Freeing Ourselves from the Tyranny of the Automobile*, among others. The library later sent me a message to let me know two titles were ready to pick up, and added this note:

You just saved \$46.95 by using your library. You have saved \$193.85 this past year and \$6,363.64 since you began using the library!

It turns out the Chicago Public Library estimates the cost to purchase the books new, hence the savings. Well, I don't suppose I would have bought the books anyway, that's pretty much the point of living within walking

distance of one of the best public libraries in the state. But I immediately saw the value in this arithmetic. In fact it would be hard to put a price tag on what I have gained from the Sulzer Library over nearly 40 years—books, lectures, concerts, volunteering, movies, meetings, reference tools, historical research. The same applies to recorder playing. I've never made a dime singing or playing recorder, never will, but if I could put a cash value on what I have gained from making music for nearly 20 years the balance would finance a comfortable retirement.

## Help Support your Chapter

At the end of 2025 the Chapter was doing well financially, and we now have 36 paying members. The Chapter enjoys both enthusiastic participation from our friends and members and your generous support, and we thank you warmly for both.

The one problem we face is that our annual revenue for memberships and donations is not quite enough to balance our books each year. We commonly run about \$800 short when we consider our costs for space rental, insurance, and directors. We would like to balance our books at the end of each fiscal year. If each of our members was to contribute just \$20 extra a season we could reach that goal. Please consider the chapter in your giving plans for 2026. Note that the Chapter is now a 501(c)3 organization, so your gifts to the chapter are tax deductible. Access [this page](#) to donate online by credit or debit card, or download the [membership form](#) and mail it in with a check.

## Remembering Dale Fitschen

Thank you for the kind tribute to Dale (January 2026 newsletter). It jogged my memory of when we bought that house in Oak Park in 1977 and Dale found that there was a recorder school. While he was self taught, he jumped at the chance for lessons and joined right away. Doris VanPelt was teaching beginners and Louise Austin, teaching intermediate. He could read music and rapidly advanced. The “school” became the Oak Park Recorder Society very soon, due to a lack of students meeting in the basement of Pilgrim Church then, then and until some 40 years later when the COVID scourge hit. One of our last events, led by Nancy Chabala, was in December 2019 at Brookdale Senior Home where we lived. After that Dale quit playing, he gave his recorder collection to a worthy cause. Dale’s other activities included (serving as) treasurer for a few years, performing at the Renaissance Fair in Wisconsin with Dave Fitzgerald and many classes over long weekends at the University of Wisconsin Whitewater. His biggest achievement was managing the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary recording of original compositions for the recorder, mostly taking place at our house, with help from a friend who was starting his own recording studio.

Dale loved early music and recorder and all of his fellow travelers. My sincere regard to all—*Marilyn Fitschen*

Dale’s family plan for a virtual memorial gathering on Sunday, March 29 at 1 PM Central time. They would like to recruit a recorder ensemble to play for the event. Some of the family is in East Lansing, Michigan, but most of them are spread out thus the online event. If you are interested in playing for this event in Chicago, contact Mark Dawson.

## Jacob Schermer, Recorder Player of the Month

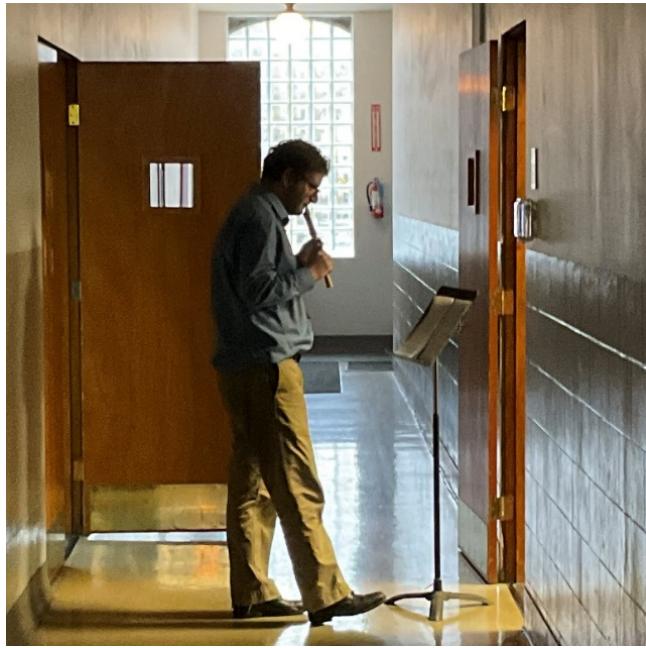
Our new board secretary was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, grew up in Milwaukee, where his father served as a professor of Architecture at the University of Wisconsin. Jacob’s father has visited Nepal twice in an effort to establish a university there, and Jacob joined him in 2023. His mother is a speech pathologist, Jacob’s brother plays Irish fiddle at a gig at a winery each week in Durango, Colorado and enjoys rock climbing. Jacob likes Irish music too, and lots of other kinds of music, but his favorite would be klezmer.

Jacob finished a degree in linguistics at McGill University in Montreal and was part of a student-run concert band while there. He finished law school at Ohio State University in 2020.

Jacob practices union-side labor law and employee benefits law and moved to Chicago after law school to work in-house for a labor union in the Chicago area. Today he works for a law firm downtown.

An alto saxophone player since elementary school, Jacob embraced the recorder during the pandemic. He started playing the sax again, but was nervous about bothering the neighbors, so he picked up the plastic soprano recorder he’d had forever, thinking it would be a quieter option. It ended up being a lot of fun, though he’s not sure if it was any less annoying. He challenged himself to play the Glazunov Saxophone Concerto on the recorder, still a work in progress, learning mostly by watching YouTube videos. “I still have saxophone fingerings carved into my brain, so I’m sticking with soprano and tenor recorders where the fingerings are similar,” Jacob says.

Jacob Googled “Chicago recorder” in 2023 and that led him to us. Our chapter web site popped up, and it was pretty much exactly what he was hoping to find. “I decided to give it a shot. Everyone was super friendly and inviting from the first meeting, so I’ve been involved with the chapter ever since!” He joined the Recorder Orchestra of the Midwest as well.



*Jacob performing in the hallway with Peter Beck, Yuletide concert, December 2023*

Jacob moved from Edgewater to Pullman on the south side in May 2025, buying a rowhouse built in 1886. It was sort of a spur-of-the-moment decision, he wasn't planning on buying a house anytime soon, but he found something affordable in this friendly and diverse community, and the commute downtown via Metra is convenient. Pullman is one of the most historically significant places in the country for the labor movement, so it seems like an appropriate place for Jacob to live. And with thick 19<sup>th</sup> century walls, Jacob thinks he can play whatever instrument he wants without bothering anyone. We can invite him to learn bagpipes to play at future meetings. Jacob has two cats, Cheskie and Viau, that he adopted in 2025. He has been exploring some of the marshes and natural areas around Lake Calumet, and has joined a trivia team.

## ARS Chapter Representatives Meeting

The American Recorder Society hosts a general online meeting of representatives of chapters in the US and Canada two or three times a year. One purpose is to learn about our chapters' activities, concerns, issues and to give and receive advice on how our chapters operate and deal with problems they encounter. For example, we have discussed how other chapters can try to increase membership, select and present music at meetings, handle websites, and many other topics.

Another goal is to discover all the wonderful services that ARS national provides for all chapters and members, and some offerings available to even non-members. These appear on the ARS national website and include the ARS

calendar (advertising online and in-person events), chapter and member directories (for finding other recorder players), the members' music library (to download sheet music), the members' play-along library (with music-minus-one type sound and printed music files), the ARS Magazine online archive, and more! Worth noting are the FREE online classes for beginners, also open to non-members. All chapter members, all recorder players, are encouraged to visit the ARS website ([americanrecorder.org](http://americanrecorder.org)) and browse Our Community, Our Publications, Programs and especially Resources. Don't be afraid to go down a few rabbit holes to discover the wealth of experiences available from ARS!"—Larry Johnson, chapter rep

## West Suburban Early Music Society

The West Suburban Early Music Society met January 11 in Downers Grove. For the first two hours, Nancy Chabala led the group in four selections. "In Gottes Namen faren wir" by Henrich Finck, the 15<sup>th</sup> Century plainchant "In Epiphania Domini" by Guillaume Dufay, the 14<sup>th</sup> Century composition "Chavalcando con un giovine accorto", and Glen Shannon's "Prelude & Fugue." A new prospective member, Joy Wong, was present to try out the group, having only recently returned to America after living in China for many years.

After break, the small alto ensemble gathered, while most other players remained and played as the "Da Capo" ensemble, playing Stephen Foster's "Old Folks at Home" in a modern arrangement by Johannes Koulman, and the 2026 ARS Play-the-Recorder Month Composition "Sonata in 3 for 4" by David Hurd. WSEMS meets next in Downers Grove on February 8 at 2 PM.—Paul Schmidt



## Music and More

Join [Apollo's Fire](#) in their Winter Sparks concert, Tuesday February 3 at 7:30 PM at Fullerton Hall of the Art Institute of Chicago or Wednesday February 4 at 7:30 PM at Nichols Concert Hall, the Music Institute of Chicago, 1490 Chicago Avenue in Evanston. Join a pre-concert conservation 45 minutes before the music starts. The concert offers virtuoso works of J.S. Bach, Vivaldi, and more, including Bach's Concerto for Two Violins and Orchestral Suite # 2, and a Vivaldi oboe concerto.



*Jamming at the Dawsons, January 1*

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

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

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.



*Jamming at the Dawsons again, January 17*

## 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](http://ChicagoRecorders.org))***

President	Mark Dawson
Vice President	Michael Kuby
Secretary	Jacob Schermer
Treasurer	Carl Foote
Facebook	Hyacinth Egner & Cheryl Kreiman
Web site	Larry Johnson & Carl Foote
Members at Large	James Watts, Ruth Dunnell, Hyacinth Egner
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 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](http://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 <a href="mailto:nchabala5555@gmail.com">nchabala5555@gmail.com</a>

**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)**

**Mark Dawson, newsletter editor**

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