

Recorder Reporter

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

March 2026

Volume 67, Number 7

Chicago Chapter News

February 15 in Chicago, 26 recorder players gathered on a sunny afternoon for another excellent session of sight reading. For our May concert we look to play Handel's *Sarabande* to start, then Vaughn Williams' *My Bonny Boy*, and then close the concert with Gabrieli's 8-part *Alla Battaglia* and Lully's *Chaconne des Africains*. We practiced *Alla Battaglia*, the *Chaconne*, and *My Bonny Boy* all to fine effect.



For our March 15 meeting, we welcome David Echelard from Minnesota as our director. Whenever I attend the Early Music Festival at the University of Wisconsin Whitewater in early June, I always attend one of David's classes. And sing. A lot. In June 2024 David led a class on Renaissance sacred polyphony, motets honoring the

Virgin Mary by Palestrina, Victoria, Lassus, and others. In June of 2025 I joined him in a class on the Franco-Flemish School, which flourished in the 15th and 16th centuries in Belgium, France, and the Netherlands and featured celebrated names like Ockeghem, Compere, de la Rue, Josquin, Arcadelt, Willaert and Crecquillon. David received his MFA in Early Music Performance from Sarah Lawrence College. While living in New York City he performed and recorded with Pomerium Musices, the Taverner Consort, New York Schola Antiqua, and the Baltimore Consort. David taught voice and served as Director of Polyphonic music at the SSPX Saint Thomas Aquinas Seminary, and serves as the artistic director of the Blue Heron Consort Early Music Vocal ensemble & "Hurly Burly," a French traditional music ensemble. Besides performing as a vocalist David plays hurdy gurdy, button box, and bagpipes.



David Echelard at Whitewater, June 2025

For our March meeting he offers a session on *the Art of the Motet: Exploring the Stile Antico*. The "Stile Antico" is the pure, balanced, woven style of music that made the 16th century the golden age of polyphony, playing masterpieces by the four giants who defined the sound, Willaert, Lassus, Victoria, and Palestrina. Recorder players and singers are both welcome.

We have plans to provide music for two Sunday services at St. John's this season, **April 12** and **June 21**, both at 10:30 AM. We could use some recorder players to sign up to participate.

Spring Concert

We gather on May 17 to close our 67th season with our annual spring concert. To take part, send the names of the people in your ensemble, and 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, and then we close our season with our traditional jam session directed by Nancy Chabala. As with our recent practice, the Chicago chapter will plan to open and close the concert.

Whitewater Early Music Festival

The [Early Music Festival](#) at the University of Wisconsin Whitewater returns May 29, 30, and 31. I attended the event for the first time 20 years ago, many of us have been going to Whitewater for a lot longer than that. The festival offers three days of classes and jamming on recorder, gamba, and loud band, as well as singing, and only about 100 miles from Chicago. Scholarships are available, though the weekend is not expensive, and if you need a ride, let me know. About 100 people attend from across the Midwest. Lisette Kielson plans to offer a class on Recorder Orchestra, Laura Kuhlman's class will be "1776: Sons of Revolution and Independence," music of rebellion, protest, and the need for peace, while Anne Timberlake's class will be "Party Time," recorder ensemble pieces for eating, drinking, dancing and other "general merriment." Probably that class will play works by Italian Renaissance composer Costanzo Festa (c. 1485–1545), who's name, when translated, means "Constant Party" (well, not really, but close enough). Whitewater is a great time for learning about recorder music and for ensemble playing until late in the evening.



Mike Kuby, James Watts, Irene Claude, and Mary Snyder join Liza Malamut in playing with the Early Music Ensemble at the University of Chicago February 21. The ensemble meets Tuesday nights in Hyde Park.

West Suburban Early Music Society

The West Suburban Early Music Society met Sunday February 8th at the Friends Meeting House in Downers Grove, with 19 members attending.

Nancy Chabala led us in Valentine themed music before the break. We played "Moon River" and several madrigals, "Lover and Lass" 1 and 2, "Come Again Sweet Love", "Bon Jour, Mon Coeur", and "My Heart Doth Beg You'll Not Forget". The Catch, "Epitaph" by J. Battishill, was also played and Nancy enlightened us on the "bawdy nature" of late night catches with many word plays and not so subtle implications happening due to the verses being overlapped during the round.

Later in the session, Paul Schmidt was asked about the serpent and lyzard families and the differences between them. Paul drew a distinction between the cornetto/zink family (lyzarden) and the serpent. These are different sizes of a branch of the brass instrument family that includes those that use a regular tone hole plus thumb hole, similar to recorders:

In Renaissance Italy, there were efforts to extend this group into the bass range, but without any real success. Bass instruments of this sort become too large to be controlled adequately using the regular finger hole scheme. Nevertheless, there are two examples in museums of attempts to solve the "bass cornett / bass zink" problem, and I know of a couple modern reproductions based on period sketches rather than actual period examples. Ultimately, bass cornetts/zinks are a failed kind of instrument. Meanwhile, in Renaissance France, the serpent was developed as a different approach to solving the problem, and it was vastly more successful, at the expense of being much more challenging to play. For one thing, the serpent does not use the finger hole scheme that recorders and cornetts/zinks do, requiring the player's embouchure to work a lot harder, and the player needs to already hear the pitches in his head if they are to come out right. In recent times but before the 1970s, there were no living serpent players, and the distinction between cornetts and serpent was misunderstood, with many books incorrectly reporting that the serpent was the bass member of the same instrument group.

Historically (17th century) serpents were used to provide a bass line to accompany male voices, with a single serpent played in an ensemble, or maybe two serpents played to support a two-choir piece.

Modern settings with an ensemble of serpents playing together is oddly difficult. It's rather like sight singing; the musician must know the notes his or her head to stay in tune. The serpent rarely helps the player produce the desired note, and often it does its best to thwart the player's intentions. In general, any notes may be produced with (almost) any fingering, but with varying stability and timbre.

WSEMS meets next on March 8 at 2 PM in Downers Grove—*Thanks to Nancy Culp and Paul Schmidt*



WSEMS members gather at their February 2026 meeting

CRS, WSEMS members join ROMW

The Recorder Orchestra of the Midwest opened its 17th season in November 2025, with four rehearsals and a concert. Originally established in Bloomington, Indiana, this season ROMW expanded into the Chicago area, hoping to attract new interest, bolster membership and afford more recorder learning and playing opportunities for the Midwest.

Currently the group counts over 20 participants, including many members of our Chicago and West Suburban chapters, providing a nice representation of dedicated recorder players. The orchestra requires almost the entire range of recorders, from sopranino through sub-great bass. The orchestra is directed by Cléa Galhano, a wonderful recorder teacher and gifted national and international performer, who is well-known to many in the Midwest from her classes, workshops and the Early Music Festival in Whitewater. This season Cléa concentrates on eight compositions, from Medieval through Renaissance and Baroque to modern, beginning with Machaut and ending with a contemporary tango.

Of special note is a playful piece by 20th century Brazilian composer Gismonte, titled "Palhaço" (Clown). This season's highlights also include a world premiere performance of a new composition by ROMW member Phil Rugel. We will also study a late Renaissance "Sonata a 7" by Grillo, a traditional march attributed to Lully, and an overture by Telemann; all challenging but beautiful and rewarding to work on! So far, the most challenging piece has been a Leenhouts arrangement of "In the Mood" for four choirs of three to five voices each; which is a lot to manage at a rather clippy tempo!



The expanded ROMW holds rehearsals in Brookfield, just north of the Zoo. For the final rehearsal we'll meet at Grace Episcopal Church in Oak Park, followed by a concert at 3 PM on Saturday, April 25th. The concert is free and open to the public; everyone is invited! To learn more, or to join, visit the [Orchestra](#) website.—*Larry Johnson*



Irene Claude plays flute at Rossi Music in Oak Lawn February 20, shortly after performing with the University of Chicago Early Music Ensemble

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 next [Bach in the City](#) concert features the St. Mark Passion, based on Malcolm Bruno's reconstruction of the composer's lost masterpiece. Friday March 20, 7:30 PM, St. Vincent DePaul Church, 1010 West Webster Street, in Lincoln Park in Chicago.

The [Recorder Orchestra of the Midwest](#) offers *Laments and Renewal* at Grace Episcopal Church, 924 Lake Street in Oak Park, on Sunday April 25 at 3 PM. Many of our members and friends will be featured in this performance of works by Machaut, Telemann, Lully, and more. Mona Mann plans to bring her recorder students from the Recorder Club at Lincoln Elementary School in River Forest. The concert is free, though donations are appreciated. This closes the Recorder Orchestra of the Midwest's 17th season, and their first in the Chicago area. The Orchestra welcomes new members to join them this September.



Monks making music, Blackfriars Pub, London

Why are recorders called "recorders"? The Germans refer to the instrument as the Blockflöte, a literal reference to the wood block near the mouthpiece. But in old French and Middle English, the word "record" meant to remember, recite, or repeat, a service that minstrels would offer in court. They would "record" melodies that were often passed down orally, and these melodies were played on recorders.

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	James Watts, Ruth Dunnell, Hyacinth Egner
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
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