

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

For our November 22 meeting Dennis Sherman devoted the playing session to Renaissance dance music, and invited a group of dancers to join us so we could *see* as well as hear the results of our playing. We also enjoyed ten centuries of recorder works from AND 'a 3, Nancy VanBrundt, Anne Cook, and Dennis Sherman.



Music and Dancing in November



Yuletide Concert 2009

Please join us for another festive year-end afternoon of music making on Sunday, December 20 at 2 PM. We have been invited to use the church sanctuary next door for our concert. This opens some possibilities; your

group could perform from a platform in the front of this gothic space, or from the balcony. Please limit the playing of your ensemble to five to seven minutes. Any kind of music is welcome on recorder; you can introduce other instruments, or offer choral works, but these must be early music. If you would like to perform, please send the following to Larry Johnson at (773) 631-6671 or at ll_johnson1239@sbcglobal.net, or to Mark Dawson at msjddawson@sbcglobal.net

- Name of the piece(s)
- Composer name, nationality, and dates (if known)
- Movement names (if any)
- Performers' names and instruments

Don't forget to bring holiday treats to share with the audience and participants!



St. Luke's Recorder Series, November 15, featuring chapter friends John Langfeld, Patrick O'Malley, and Lisette Kielson

Chicago Early Music Festival

The City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs is making plans for its first annual Early Music Festival April 20-25, 2010. The festival will feature concerts, lectures, and master classes in venues throughout the city. The festival will also offer exhibition space to vendors, educators, and organizations in the Grand Army of the Republic Hall on April 24 & 25. This is a great opportunity for us. The Chicago Cultural Center is an elegant building, a treasure from the City Beautiful movement of the late 19th century. The Cultural Center is also a remarkable cultural institution, offering over a

thousand free movies, concerts, lectures, art exhibits, and other artistic events every year. In 2007 821,000 people visited, making it the fifth most popular tourist destination in the city. The Chicago chapter has reserved a table for the exhibition. If you are part of a musical group or organization, or are a vendor or teacher, please provide business cards or brochures that we can place on our table and distribute to visitors.

We have also been invited to sponsor a master's class offered by English recorder artist Piers Adams. This would be on Tuesday afternoon, April 20, in downtown Chicago. Mr. Adams would select three students, based on applications, and each would enjoy the master's class for free. In return, the Dept. of Cultural affairs will display the business cards and brochures for the Chicago chapter at many other events sponsored by the city during the Festival week. If you would like to be considered for this master's class, or could contribute to cover the cost of our sponsorship, please let Mark Dawson know. Call 773 334-6376, email msjddawson@sbcglobal.net, or write at 2425 West Leland, Chicago IL 60625-2913.

Music Coming Up

The Collegium, a chamber group, is in concert at Roosevelt University on Thursday, December 10, 2009, at 7:30 PM. The concert is in the elegant Ganz Hall at the 430 South Michigan campus. David Schrader plays harpsichord, with Masahito Sugihara on recorder, for Bach's Brandenburg Concerto #2 and Concerto #4, the "Peasant" Cantata. The concert is free.

Golosa, the Russian folk choir at the University of Chicago, offers vigorous singing of sacred and secular folk tunes on Friday night, January 22 at 7 PM at Covenant Presbyterian Church, 2012 West Dickens. This is the host for the Chicago chapter monthly meetings, near the corner of Damen & Armitage. Visit www.golosa.org to learn more. Tickets cost \$10 at the door.

The Oak Park Symphony Orchestra performs on Sunday, February 14 at 4 PM at the First United Church, 848 Lake Street in Oak Park. Amy Pikler and Kay Clements play recorder in *La Campanella* by Paganini, and in Bach's Brandenburg Concerto #4. The program also includes Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Single tickets are available on the day of the concert for \$20, seniors \$15. Children through college age are free.

West Suburban Early Music Society

We in the WSEMS were pleased that Laura Kuhlman could be with us in November. In honor of Laura's birthday (I'm not saying which one) we played *Happy Birthday Variations* written in the style of Gregorian chant, Frescobaldi, Bach and Mozart. Laura also

brought in her arrangement of a Handel aria, premiered at the summer barbeque (rumor has it that video of that event was seen on a Comcast home buyers show). Our next meeting will be December 13 at 2 PM. We will play favorites from the Christmas collection books and work on music for our winter concert, January 10 at 4 PM. Players meet at 2 for a run-through. Individuals & groups are encouraged to perform.—*Eric Stern*



WSEMS meets in November

Charles Fischer Recorder Workshop

We learned about this workshop at Whitewater, as members of Charles Fischer's renaissance recorder group. He invited members of his class to a free workshop in Bloomington on October 16-18. Those who wished could stay at his home. Requirements for attending the group were to be an advanced player who was willing to play unfamiliar instruments that required alternate fingerings. Nancy Chabala and I were the only players from the Chicago area who attended, along with seven other people from all over the country. We elected to stay at his home, while the other attendees struggled to find motel rooms on homecoming weekend! This article by Richard Spittal describes the weekend in amazing detail, more than I could remember. Those encountering the "serious stretch problems" he describes, which made some instruments difficult to play, were the women present, giving great advantage to the men!—Ann Greene

For several years I've seen the announcements for a "free recorder workshop" to be held in Bloomington, Indiana. My first thoughts were always: 1) that's too far away, and 2) what's the catch? After having met Charles Fischer (of Unicorn Music) at the American Recorder Society Conference this past summer and realizing his workshops were legit, I sent him a note asking for more, and specifically about my second thought above. His reply was that there is no catch, so I ignored my first

thought and told him I'd be attending. My initial thought that there might be some pressure to buy recorders, but there was absolutely none. If you were interested, you really had to start the conversation. On the other hand, if you're looking to find and purchase a new higher end recorder, this would be a good place to do so. You could try several and play them for a couple days in different settings to see how you like a particular recorder. My friend Suzi fell in love with a tenor recorder that sounded good and which was very comfortable in her hands. I also decided, what's an 11-hour drive if it involves being able to play recorder for 3 days?

On Friday, October 16th, a handful of recorder players (and at least one self-professed recorder geek) converged on Bloomington for such disparate places as Baton Rouge, Chicago, Baltimore, Lafayette, Indiana, and Ann Arbor, Michigan for a weekend of recorder playing, both on our own instruments and on reproductions of various Renaissance and Baroque recorders at a variety of pitches and with a variety of fingerings. We were able to play recorders by makers such as von Huene, Adriana Breukink, Tom Prescott, Bob Marvin, Adrian Brown, and Ture Bergstrom.

The first playing session on Friday afternoon was devoted to Renaissance music on Renaissance recorders at 440. This gave those of us who had brought our own recorders a chance to play them in a group of like instruments. For those who didn't have or bring their own, we were welcome to play many of the instruments which Unicorn Music had in stock. Hearing a large group of Renaissance recorders was a very pleasing sound, quite different from other recorder groups with a mixture of Baroque, Renaissance, and modern instruments. It was fun to appreciate the warm sound of a consort made up entirely of Renaissance recorders. The music for that session was pulled from the Dowland Collection published by Dolce, and the Schott Consort Anthology.

The next session had us bringing out the Baroque recorders at 440. The juxtaposition of the Renaissance consort to the Baroque consort was eye-opening as to the difference in sounds possible with recorder groups. I won't say one was better than the other, they were just different. Again, for those who didn't bring their own recorders, there were more than enough other recorders to try from the stock of Unicorn Music. The music for this session were two Telemann concerti in A and Bb for SATB recorders. One attendee who is also a keyboard player accompanied these pieces on an electronic keyboard, and we were able to hear the different effects of various sounds from harpsichord to harp to guitar to organ and beyond. The session ended with a reading of

Bach's Fugue Alla breve e staccato. After a delicious supper at a local Chinese restaurant, we returned for the evening session, Modern, Latin, Swing, and Ragtime at 440. Some of the songs played were "Sunny Side of the Street," "Weeping Willow," and other arrangements by Stan Davis.

On Saturday morning, things really got interesting, or confusing, depending on how you look at it. The first session was Renaissance Music at 6' at A466. Most recorder players know about 8' pitch—playing music for SATB recorders an octave lower on Tenor/Bass/ Great Bass/Contra Bass Recorders. The 6' pitch is in between music, written for SATB recorders, but played on Alto/Tenor/Basset/Great Bass. The tenor and great bass are the usual C instruments, but the alto and basset are in G, so the relationships between the instruments is the same. The resulting sound is not quite as dark as an 8' consort, and much gentler than a consort with soprano on the top voice. The group members had two small brain-stretchers to overcome; using the "wrong" fingerings on the instruments (C fingerings on alto and basset recorders/F fingerings on tenor and great bass recorders), and learning the difference between normal English fingerings and Renaissance fingerings. One nice feature about playing instruments pitched at 466 (or one half-step higher than 440) is that the larger instruments are smaller and hence are a little more finger friendly. Some of the music played during this session were several In Nomines by Tye and a setting of *The Leaves Be Green*. However, it was disconcerting to be playing *The Leaves be Green* while looking out the picture windows of the studio and seeing a vast sea of leaves of gold, yellow, red, orange, and every shade in between.

After a wonderful lunch at the Irish Lion Pub and Restaurant in downtown Bloomington, we returned to play Baroque music at A415. After the relative ease of holding recorders at 466, we had to adjust to larger instruments, which were in effect a whole step lower (and longer) than the morning recorders. After playing a 415 tenor all afternoon, a recorder at 440 felt incredibly easy to hold. Some of the music played during the afternoon included a Concerto Grosso by Geminiani, Scheidt's *Canzon Bergamasca*, and a version of street cries.

For supper we gathered at a local Applebee's and for the most part managed to ignore the homecoming weekend activities for Indiana University which was also happening that weekend (which also raised the rates for every motel room in town - so some of us had to stay in a town 25 miles away).

For the evening session, we returned to the 415 instruments more Latin, Swing, and Ragtime. It was sort of strange combination: Baroque instruments with 20th

century music, but it worked. We also pulled out the 440 instruments and read through some arrangements from the Royal School of Music for soprano & alto quartets. Although the thought of quartets with three soprano recorder parts may scare some people, these arrangements were actually quite pleasant to play—and listen to.

The final session on Sunday morning was dedicated to Renaissance music at 4' and 8' pitch. For this session, Charles brought out the big guns, er, recorders. We did manage one piece at 8' pitch, but there were some serious stretch problems with playing the great and contrabass recorders by some of the players. However, it was an interesting experience to get to hear recorders at the low pitch. Recorder players with large hands would be more than welcome at future sessions. The main music played during that session was 4 setting of "Aus teifer Not shrei ich zu Dir" (*Out of the depths have I cried to thee*), which was appropriate for the larger instruments. I was surprised to find out how easy the Breukink contrabass recorder was to play. The finger holes were comfortable to reach, and the response surprisingly quick, considering the large size of the instrument.

Was it a fun weekend? Yes. Did I learn anything? Yes. Would I do it again? Yes, but I'd take another day off work to make the drive home over two days. I learned that it's always fun to spend a few days with recorder players, or as one person put it at the ARS Conference: "you can't have a recorder in your hands and an ego." I also learned that just because a larger instrument has a bocal it doesn't mean that the response is slow. I played some very agile bocal blown bass and contrabass recorders. And I learned that although Renaissance recorder fingers can be somewhat different than the English fingerings we're used to, the ability to make real differences between enharmonic pitches (F#/Gb) can make a big difference in how a piece of music sounds.— *Richard Spittal*

Chapter Information

Our chapters are open to anyone, regardless of musical training, who wants to cultivate and sponsor love and appreciation of the art, history and use of the recorder and related instruments. Our meetings, programs and publications help members to come together and to find others with similar interests.

Chicago Chapter Dues begin September 1, and West Suburban dues cover June 1 through May 31 and are due in September. Both groups include membership in either chapter and in the *American Recorder Society*. Members are listed in the ARS directory, receive *The American Recorder* magazine and this newsletter.

The *Recorder Reporter* newsletter is published monthly from September to May jointly by the Chicago Chapter and the West Suburban Early Music Society.

Chicago Chapter ARS (chicagoars.org)

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Chicago Chapter meetings: Usually third Sunday of each month, September through May, 2 PM, at Covenant Presbyterian Church, 2012 West Dickens, Chicago. Enter the front door of the parish building immediately west of the church and go to the large fellowship hall on the right.

West Suburban Early Music Society

President/Chapter Rep:	David Johnson (david.johnson@foresitewireless.com) (630)740-9220
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WSEMS meetings: Second Sunday of each month, September through April, first Sunday of May, 2-4:30 PM at the Naperville Evangelical Covenant Church, 1150 Hobson Road, Naperville, southwest corner of Naper Boulevard and Hobson Road. Exit I-88 at Naper Boulevard and travel south. The church entrance is on a side street, more obvious from Hobson Road.

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