

# Recorder Reporter

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

Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society

October 2015

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## Chicago Chapter News

Lisette Kielson opened new 2015-2016 season with Suite #2 from Handel's *Water Music*, and Ravel's *Pavane*, both "modern" pieces arranged for recorder that might serve for our Yuletide concert in December. We also worked through a series of *Variations on a Buree by Praetorius* by Harold Owen. I tended to like Praetorius more than Harold, but in time the pieces started to sound interesting, if not elegant.

Coming in October, on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Andrew Schultze returns, this time to lead us in Jewish music from the Baroque era.

We need volunteers to provide food and drinks for our April meeting. For our Yuletide and spring concerts, we traditionally all contribute; in March we plan to be playing at a different venue for Play the Recorder Month.

For chapter meetings with Lisette, including music to download, please visit the Chicago chapter web page ([chicagorecorders.org](http://chicagorecorders.org)) for details regarding music or the schedule. Email Lisette at [LisetteKielson@gmail.com](mailto:LisetteKielson@gmail.com).

## Tom Zajac, 1956 – 2015

I could have taken it easy, writing something about Tom Zajac this month.

Google search his name, cut and paste.

Format the lists of skills and adventures and places of a man breathtaking in the scope and depth of his talent—playing 14<sup>th</sup> century tunes in the White House and serpent on *A Prairie Home Companion*, hurdy gurdy for the American Ballet Theater, a serenade on bagpipes to wake space shuttle astronauts each morning on a 2001 mission. Workshops and concerts in Hong Kong and Turkey and Bolivia and Texas and Poland. Newberry Consort. Piffaro. The Turkish ensemble *Dünya*. MFA from Sarah Lawrence College, faculty at Wellesley College. Christmas Revels and the Amherst Summer Early Music Workshop. 40 CDs recorded; another 1500 in his collection reflecting every kind of music on the planet.

But that's not enough. I want to speak of a man who was loved by hundreds of people, students, fans, friends, and colleagues, who speak softly of Tom's kindness and infectious smile. And I wanted to speak of a man who was one of us. He had friends in the Chicago chapter, too. In the mid 1970's you could have found Tom Zajac hanging

out in Oak Park on Tuesday nights. Tom was born and raised among Polish and Italian working men and women in Schiller Park, Illinois, and went to Catholic grade school. Tom played trombone with a drum and bugle corps named the Imperials, and later in the rock and fusion jazz band Paragon. He got an associate degree from Triton College and a bachelor's in Music History from Northern Illinois, where he sang in several choirs.



It was through Triton College that Tom met his first recorder teacher, Louise Austin. When he first started attending OPRS periodically around 1975, he made Nancy Chabala the second youngest member. Soon he was joining Dave Fitzgerald's troupe at the Bristol Renaissance Faire. Tom, Louise, and

Dave Fitzgerald played recorder for Carol Stanger's wedding in 1980. He directed recorder workshops for the Chicago Chapter twice, most recently in April 2011.

Louise Austin first met Tom Zajac in the early-1970s when he shared some classes at Triton with her daughter Jill. Their music group was raising money for a trip to Mexico, and Louise lent them her garage to store items for a general sale. Tom noticed her recorders on her piano, and told her he wanted to learn that instrument, too. So he took lessons from Louise for about a year, 1973-1974, starting out on a borrowed Dolmetsch alto. "It was the beginning of his early music adventure," Louise said. "He will always be one of my favorite people."

"I could not help but be inspired whenever I was around him," Laura Kuhlman said. "I will miss him deeply, yet be thankful for the time I had with him."

Tom Zajac died on August 31 of brain cancer near his home outside of Boston. He was too young, just 58. We can object to him being taken from us too soon, and we should, but his range of accomplishments is so striking that we can know at least that he never wasted his time, or rather, that he knew how to invest his time well. And that investment included showing kindness to us.



*Playing Pipe and Tabor at a workshop in DeKoven, Wisconsin, November 1991*

“Tom Zajac lashed instruments to himself to play them one-handed, mast on a which he Tom was a and fuller strength have known melodies will



Odysseus at the taunting sea to would not yield. finer musician soul at half-than any other I whole. His continue to

navigate my life.”—*Matthew Dean, Manager and tenor, Schola Antiqua of Chicago, and Director of Operations, Rockefeller Chapel, University of Chicago*

If you would like to help Tom’s widow Lilli Nye with medical expenses related to Tom’s long illness, visit [www.giveforward.com](http://www.giveforward.com) and search for the Tom Zajac Medical Fund.

## **A Coda for the St. Luke Recorder Series**

John Langfeld’s Recorder Series concerts have been a fixture at St. Luke’s Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, 1500 West Belmont, since 2006. His 15<sup>th</sup> concert—and his last—will be on Sunday, November 22, at 4 PM. He views *Liturgiana: Liturgical Music for Recorders*, as a fine challenge, partly because in fact there *isn’t* any liturgical music for recorders. But these concerts have been all about the challenge, about living on the edge, finding a great idea for a theme and then having to come up with music that works with that theme. This closing effort will include new works by Randall Snyder, one featuring our own Mirja Lorenz, and a piece John wrote himself (in 1963), besides arrangements of several parts of the *Mass* by Leonard Bernstein.

This final concert is special. “It’s kind of my own ‘amen’ to the church, and to Pastor David Abrahamson,” John says. Abrahamson has been a good friend, and suggested John start the Recorder Series. “Everything just seems right.” Even so, the time has come to move on. “The series has run its course,” John said. “The sculpture is finished. And 15 in a series is a lot. I’ve done so many wild and wooly things; how many more can I come up with?”



*John Langfeld with Jason Moy on harpsichord, April 2014*

In talking to John about the series it seems like every concert was his favorite. He liked *Music Never Intended for Recorder*—as an idea. It was his least favored musically, because the works did not always respond gratefully to being arranged for recorder. But he has experimented over and over again, offering Bach and Telemann with 21<sup>st</sup> century compositions, a clarinet piece by Brahms played (with difficulty) on tenor, parodies of Andrew Lloyd Weber (“*Memories?* Ugh. Shoot me now”). Audiences have enjoyed poetry readings and flamenco dancing, opera soprano arias, an arrangement of Ernst Toch’s *Geographical Fugue* and even of Queen’s *Bohemian Rhapsody*.



*Dies Ire, April 2009*

“The musicians have really been wonderful, giving of their time—and courage,” John says. And he has seen a lot of serendipity too. A pianist took sick at the last moment, and Andrew Schultze suggested a replacement, the outstanding harpsichordist Jason Moy. Schultze in fact has suggested many people for the series. Friends and audience members would often ask where he got his singers. “I just asked, they said yes,” he observed.

John Langfeld has been part of the Chicago chapter for over 40 years. He got his first recorder in 1969, and started making weekly trips to the Oak Park Recorder School in 1973, where he met Louise Austin and enjoyed watching her work. He was teaching at Whitewater before Whitewater was Whitewater, when the Early Music Festival was held at Milton College. He has known our music director, Lisette Kielson, since he taught her recorder when she was 16.

Raised in Minnesota, John graduated from St. Cloud State University with a degree in Music Education in 1966. Since then has done, well, everything, except for competing in the World Wrestling Federation. For three years he pursued a PhD in Musicology at the University of Wisconsin, earning a Master of Music before he left. He loved studying history, the school, and the coursework, but he found the scholars around him a disagreeable lot, so he quit in 1973 and became the band director at Eisenhower High School in Blue Island. He served there for eight years.

Years later he tried again, this time pursuing a PhD in Music Education at Northwestern, and stayed on campus after his courses were done to work at the Medill School of Journalism while he finished his dissertation. Except that he didn't finish that dissertation, either. So he was All but Dissertation—ABD—twice, or as he puts it, “ABD squared.”

John left Northwestern to serve as the Music Department Chair for the Academy: Art Music Dance Theater in Chicago, a private arts school, for three years, and then spent three years training non-medical staff at the Highland Park Hospital. In 1990 he became the Executive Director of the state-funded Illinois Summer School for the Arts in Normal, Illinois, where he directed and produced shows and musicals, administered faculty, taught classes, and traveled around the state to recruit, hold auditions, and talk to elected officials. Every teacher at the School quit another job to teach there, every student left another school to attend, so the place was packed with risk takers and intensity. Finally, John was hired by Morton East and West High Schools in Cicero and Berwyn as the Dean for Instruction in Fine Arts 1994. Besides hiring faculty to support fine arts initiatives there, he was eventually assigned to administer the music, math,

science, and career tech departments, as well as teaching. He retired from Morton in 2007, but that did not mean bingo in Florida. Too many interesting things to do in retirement, like a recorder series at St. Luke's.

What's next? Travel! John writes poetry, and has just completed a draft of *Nothing: A Memoir*. Both this and his most recent work are free of whining (as John puts it). His poems hit quickly and then move on. At a writer's workshop, an instructor told him that he was an epigrammatic poet; he looked up that word and found out that it means his poems are short. John preferred the term “brevitist” (it's also short) so he named his latest collection of poems *There's a Brevitist Loose in the Condensory, or, If you want your heart broken, read somebody else*.

Music, too. He would like to conduct “a really big something” at St. Luke's. I suggested that John ought to hesitate in trying to stage an arrangement of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* for recorder orchestra, and he considered my counsel gravely. But more creativity is likely on the way. Stay tuned, and join us November 22 for the end of a noble recorder-playing effort.

### Bach Week Fundraiser

Join Bachtobertfest, a fund raiser for the Bach Week Festival, on Sunday October 11. The festivities start with a reception at Tre Kronor, 3258 Foster Avenue, and then moves across the street to Isaacson Chapel at North Park University in Chicago. Works include Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, Monteverdi's *Beatus vir*, and other works. Tickets are \$50. To learn more visit [bachweek.org](http://bachweek.org).

### West Suburban Early Music Society

Mirja Lorenz directed the chapter at their September 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, offering in depth interpretation, phrasing, and expression for several madrigals.



*Mirja Lorenz directs in Naperville*

October 11 Darlene Kay once again leads the chapter with great hits from jazz and the Big Band era, some of her own arrangements for recorders. Interesting

rhythms, harmonies, and melodies are always part of Darlene's presentations. Come out and jam with us! Laura Osterlund will be the director for the meeting on November 8

### Chapter Information

Visit <http://chicagorecorders.org>.

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

**Chicago Chapter meetings:** The 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 west of the church and go to the large fellowship hall on the right.

#### Chicago Chapter ARS ([ChicagoRecorders.org](http://ChicagoRecorders.org))

President	Ben Eisenstein (BenEisenstein@comcast.net) (847) 998-0198
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Webmaster	Ben Eisenstein

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#### West Suburban Early Music Society ([westsubems.org](http://westsubems.org))

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Vice President:	Darlene Kay (630) 679-1506
Secretary:	Nancy Finley (nfelma3@comcast.net) (630) 554-4363
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Recorder Reporter contact:	Eric Stern (egstern1@netscape.net) (630) 428-8464

**WSEMS meetings:** Second Sunday of each month, September through April, first Sunday of May, 2-4:30 PM at the Downers Grove Friends meeting house, 5710 Lomond Avenue in Lisle. 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.

#### Tuesday Night Recorder Sessions

The Oak Park Recorder Society members meet Tuesday night, 8-10, in the basement of the Pilgrim Congregational Church, 460 Lake Street. Go to the back entrance near the parking lot and ring the buzzer for the basement.

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**Visit us at [chicagorecorders.org](http://chicagorecorders.org)**

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## Membership Form

Membership fees for 2015-2016 for the American Recorder Society are now due.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

_____ \$30	Chicago chapter	Please mail this form to:	Chicago	Esther Schechter
_____ \$15	WSEMS			6747 South Constance Avenue
_____ \$50	National ARS Membership			Chicago, IL 60649-1015
_____ \$80	Chicago chapter <i>and</i> National ARS		WSEMS	Marguerite Re
_____ \$65	WSEMS <i>and</i> National ARS			5117 Lee Avenue
\$_____	Donation to ___Chicago chapter ___WSEMS			Downers Grove, IL 60515
_____	Total amount enclosed \$_____			

If you are willing to receive publications from the ARS electronically, rather than by US Mail, the membership is \$45.