

Recorder Reporter

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

Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society

October 2010

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Chicago Chapter News

Our first meeting for the Chicago Chapter for the 2010-2011 year was on Sunday September 19. The Oak Park Recorder Society provided a half hour concert, and Mary Anne Gardner directed us in Renaissance dances. We had a good crowd, about 20 people. The chapter meets again on October 17 for a session directed by our own president, Dennis Sherman, offering a program of variations on *In Nomine*. **Bring, Rosenberg #3, the red book, with you!** Write down November 14 for the next concert, as the madrigal group the Pippens will be singing music from New Spain, American music from the 16th century, accompanied by the Baron's Noyse. Last November we were treated with a delightful concert and a big crowd to match. You can start thinking about our Yuletide Concert on December 19. In 2011 we meet on January 16, February 20, March 20, and April 17, with our spring concert on May 15.

Membership

Membership fees for the 2010-2011 year for the American Recorder Society are due **September 1**. For the national ARS the dues are \$45 a year; for the Chicago chapter the dues are \$25, and for West Suburban, \$15. Send \$70 for both memberships to Arlene Ghiron (**2130 N. Lincoln Park West, 10 South, Chicago, IL 60614-4466**) for Chicago or \$60 for West Suburban to Marilyn Linden (**430 Fox Tail Drive, Batavia, IL 60510-8643**). Members are listed in the ARS directory, and receive *The American Recorder* magazine, music, and access to services to help you improve your playing skills. Local dues also help support local chapter activities.

Make your check out to the "**Chicago Chapter ARS**" or to the "**West Suburban Early Music Society**."

West Suburban Early Music Society

The West Suburban chapter kicked off our first meeting of the year with a fantastic playing session under the leadership Laura Kuhlman. We started with a piece out of our Simpson collection and then headed for Spain. Laura passed out a collection of Spanish Renaissance music that promises to keep us busy for the rest of the year. We worked on *Riu Riu Chiu* which was played and sung, a five part setting of *La Spagna* by Josquin des Prez, and *Versa est in Luctum* by Alonso Lobo (1555-1617) in an

amazing arrangement by Mark Davenport that called for the deployment of a Serpent and two great basses. In our break, we ratified the election of our new officers for the coming year, with Nancy Good as President, and Marilyn Linden as Treasurer. Continuing officers from last year are Judy Stephens vice-president, Carol Stanger, Membership, and James Heup, Officer without portfolio. **The office of Secretary is open.** If you haven't paid your dues for the upcoming year, please send a check to Marilyn Linden as soon as possible.

Laura promises us a surprise that you won't want to miss for our next meeting on October 10 at 2 PM at the Naperville Evangelical Church. We hope to see you there!—*Eric Stern*

On Recorder Playing in the 21st Century

When people congratulated me when I was elected to the board of the American Recorder Society this summer, my response was "Thank you, I think." It wasn't just the work I knew that lay ahead. The Society also faces an urgent need for not just new ideas, but for successful ones.

The American Recorder Society is not doing very well. We currently have less than 2000 members, down from over 3100 members 12 years ago, and nearly a third of the membership is 70 years old or older. The society has 90 chapters around the country but at least half struggle; three recently closed down, including the venerable New York Recorder Guild. The Society itself barely has enough membership or capital to carry on.

Our local chapter in Chicago faces similar problems, with 33 members today versus at least 70 a few years ago. When I became chapter president in 2008 we tried to turn things around, changing the meeting format and bringing in a regular director. We also tried to reach out, especially with the Chicago Early Music Festival last April. We got some good publicity with that event, but these efforts seem to have failed, at least so far. I feel I also failed in a more important effort, in that I'm not convinced that my friends with the Chicago chapter and with the Oak Park Recorder Society take to heart the problems we face.

My father died last summer, at 89. I can imagine that, given genes and bike riding, I may live nearly as long. I am not so foolish as to think that I can manage the next 35 years, especially considering the relentless uncertainty of

the 35 years now past. Still, I started saving for college for my sons when they were in diapers; I was saving for retirement when retirement was 40 years away. Likewise it would be reasonable to predict that I have another 35 years left. And given what we see in 2010, it is just as reasonable for me to predict that I will outlive the Chicago chapter, the Oak Park Recorder Society, quite possibly the ARS, and the annual Early Music Festival at Whitewater.

Someday I want to leave behind a thriving Chicago chapter. It was my privilege to serve as president of the chapter for our 50th anniversary in 2009, and as I reflected on this moment and on the many people who have played recorder in Chicago for so many years together, I realized that I should think of myself as the custodian of a legacy. I felt responsible for doing what I could to make sure that that legacy would carry on for many years to come. My goal would be for large groups of young people to be gathering to play recorder with the Chicago chapter in 2049. Presumably they would all be fashionably dressed in digital textiles that blink along with a cut time beat.

Of course reflecting on the 100th anniversary of the Chicago chapter is impractical. It's too far away. But that misses the point, doesn't it? If the Chicago chapter is going to be prospering 50 years from now, it first needs to be thriving and hopeful five years from now.

Recorder players are not alone. Two churches I was a part of in years past have closed their doors, and my neighborhood organization lost a lot of ground after the community gentrified. We no longer needed to turn out to wrangle with graffiti, slumlords, and loitering gang members. Chicago's Neighborhood Capital Budget Group is out of business, as is the Ravenswood/Lake View Historical Association. In the 1970s a remarkable movement of historical re-enacting emerged, thousands of people gathering to re-create the Middle Ages or the Civil War or the 18th century. These people stood as a challenge to the 20th century, and in particular the soulless and feeble-minded 20th century of Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. But now that moment in American history is itself aging. Attendance at the Eastern Primitive Rendezvous, an annual gathering of 18th century re-enactors, peaked in 1998. This year's event drew barely one quarter as many people, and most of the long beards seen there were grey. The National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association was started in the 1930s and once boasted a membership of 38,000; today they have 14,000, largely grandparents. Opera and classical music fans worry about their graying audience base as well.

But knowing that decline is a natural feature of the life of an institution doesn't help much. And I'm not sure what to do. It's not just a matter of marketing to a younger audience, though that's important. We face a cultural

challenge, in that our taste in music is largely irrelevant to the Hip Hop generation and their parents.

We do have hope. Some ARS chapters, especially out west, are thriving. The music appeals to some young people and we retain a group of members both talented and passionate. And we have the recorder itself. Our magnificent Renaissance and Medieval melodies remain our greatest treasure. Perhaps for a generation bored with pop/rock, a form all about rebellion but that features every rebel rebelling in the same tiresome, predictable ways, we can offer a gift of great beauty. Maybe what we really need to do is to get enough of them to simply listen. Either way we need to keep working, and we need to keep playing, too.—*Mark Dawson, ARS Board*

Fall 2010 ARS Board Meeting

The board of the American Recorder Society gathered September 24-26 in Wheaton and Winfield, Illinois, hosted by the West Suburban Early Music Society. Members arrived from Montreal and southern California, from Colorado and Massachusetts, from Baltimore and Atlanta and the Chicago area, and one Skyped in from Germany. Four new members were welcomed, including myself, Nancy Buss, Jeanne Lynch, Mary McCutcheon and Richard Spittel.

After an orientation for new members Thursday night at Laura Kuhlman's home in Winfield, we met Friday and Saturday at Gary United Methodist in Wheaton and on Sunday morning at the Kuhlman's, and Saturday we enjoyed a splendid dinner and playing session in Naperville. We started our morning meetings with playing sessions, sheet music propped up on laptop monitors. On Friday if we could have got the wireless network to cooperate earlier we could have played recorder longer.



Recorders and laptops at the ARS Board Meeting

The board devoted much of our time to reorganizing how the ARS works. We created a new set of committees, and then assigned tasks to these committees and each board member volunteered to join those that interested them. The goal of this restructuring effort was to make the board work more efficiently and to set priorities for projects and programs. In recent years the ARS board has not worked very well, with too few people trying to complete too many projects. So we sought first to expand the size of the board and then to streamline its functions.

We also sought to address problems with the board. For a long time we have done a poor job in marketing, our fundraising efforts have been falling short, and our special projects and priorities have tended to make our regular members feel neglected. In fact, lately the members of the Society have tended to see the ARS as not providing them with much value for their annual dues. Thus we set up a Governance Committee to monitor and manage all of the efforts of all board members, and we also created new committees to focus the board members' efforts toward fundraising, marketing, and membership services, besides continuing with the current programs that we all value.



The Board of the American Recorder Society

The board also talked about recruiting members and other interested volunteers to help out with board efforts. These friends would lend specialized types of professional expertise, such as in grant writing, web design, marketing, and recruiting, to the board on short-term projects. We talked about improving the monthly magazine and the web page, offering more published music to members, and communicating more regularly with the members and chapter leadership. We would also like to add staff and create a new office. To strengthen the financial situation of the Society, we want to expand our efforts to attract foundation grants and other large gifts, and look toward setting up an endowment to help fund operations in the future. Meanwhile, we do not plan to raise our

membership dues or advertising fees, and plan to continue to publish the magazine five times a year.



Jamming with WSEMS in Naperville

Many thanks to our friends with WSEMS for hosting our Saturday night dinner, town hall meeting, and playing session! And this is not the last opportunity you have to talk to us. Those of us on the board want to both talk to and offer valuable services to the local chapters and to the chapter members. Our goal as board members is to improve the ARS so that the Society works better for everyone who joins. For those of you in the Chicago area, ARS board members include myself, Mark Dawson (msjddawson@sbcglobal.net/773 334-6376), Laura Kuhlman at WSEMS, and Lisette Kielson. Feel free to reach out to us.

The ARS Board's next meeting will be April 7-9 in Portland, Oregon. We meet September 13-15 in Denver and in March 2012 in Baltimore—*Mark Dawson*

Distant Future Events for the Absurdly Well Organized

For those of you who enjoyed the terrific ARS Festival and Conference in St. Louis in July of 2009, a long weekend of recorder playing and concerts, the ARS plans its next Festival in Portland, Oregon, July 5-8, 2012. Plan to join us in the beautiful city of Portland for an excellent weekend of music with old friends.

The city's Department of Cultural Affairs plans the second Chicago Early Music Festival for April of 2012. As soon as the actual dates are confirmed we will provide them. For those of you who enjoyed a splendid week of music from the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Baroque eras, you can take heart that the festival was successful enough to be repeated.

The Home Street Recorder Ensemble, featuring Mary Anne Gardner, Mike Becker, and Kathy Smart, are

wondering where their 30s went as their 20th anniversary of performing together approaches. But they invite us to celebrate with them as they perform on February 20, 2011 at 7 PM at the Unity Temple in Oak Park. Joining them will be Laura Kuhlman, Patrick O'Malley, and Jennifer Resek. A reception is planned to follow.



Lisette leads the ARS Board and friends from WSEMS

Clea Galhano Workshop

Chicago and WSEMS members will remember when the Chicago Chapter invited Clea Galhano to lead a workshop at Concordia University in April of 2005. Now the Winds of Southern Wisconsin has invited Clea to lead their Fall 2010 workshop, Saturday, October 23, 9-5, at the St. Francis House at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The cost is \$70 for the event. Please register by October 17. Mail your check to the Winds of Southern Wisconsin, c/o Beverly Inman, 3918 Priscilla Lane, Madison, WI 53705-5216. To learn more visit www.windsofsouthernwisconsin.org or send an email to info@windsofsouthernwisconsin.org.

Chapter Information

Visit the Yahoo group <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ChicagoARS>.

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 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

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Music Director:	Laura Kuhlman (laura@thekuhlmans.com) (630) 462-5427

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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