

Recorder Reporter

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

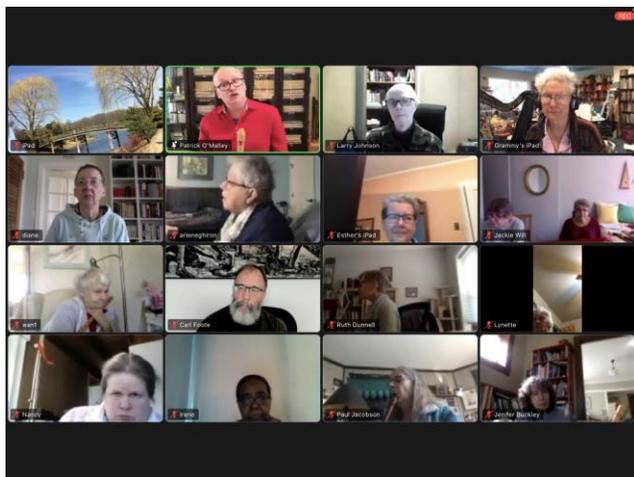
Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society

April 2021

Volume 62, Number 8

Chicago Chapter News

Some 20 members and friends joined us for our March 21 meeting, and we were happy to see Patrick O'Malley as our leader again. I guess Zoom offers an advantage in that we can welcome friends from Ohio or California to our chapter meetings. In September I joined the meeting from the Field Museum of Natural History, in October I tried to manage two Zoom calls at once, the chapter meeting and a baby shower for my niece, from my son's living room in Westchester County New York. And for March I signed on from the Chicago Botanic Garden. Couldn't do that in 1972. The problem was I couldn't manage walking to the prairie carrying my iPad (on a hotspot) while holding music and playing a recorder.



Chicago chapter, March meeting

Patrick O'Malley led the group in playing French music from the Baroque era. Patrick started by reminding us how to start with a music score, read it through, look for key and time changes, and review the road map. Patrick encouraged us to mark the music for repeats, breath marks, and accidentals. He also said to play the piece first without trills and ornaments, and add them back later. For trills that are hard to manage, Patrick said to practice them with a slow metronome setting. It also helps to watch yourself playing in a mirror. Gradually increase your playing speed. To work with "inegales," or unequal notes, where the musician improvises the length of notes while playing, Patrick said to think as if you are a college student, and you have to hand in a paper that is—*due today*. Think about how the words in this phrase, "due today," would be paced in this context, slightly unequal.

Lisette leads us again on April 18. In part, continuing Patrick O'Malley's focus on music for the musette, Lisette will lead our next meeting with duets by two French composers who also wrote for the instrument, Boismortier and Chèdeville. We will add duets by Jacques (James) Paisible, a French transplant who settled in London. The levity and gravement of these duos provide a point of departure for work on articulation and technique as well as musical style and expression.

Our Springtime Online Concert

Please join us, and consider performing, at our Spring Concert on May 16th. We have the opportunity to be creative for this virtual concert, perhaps playing a solo, perhaps playing a pre-recorded piece. Or some other original idea! If you are looking for ideas, and haven't tried this yet, there is a lot of really good music on the ARS National website. This great resource includes printable scores and parts and play-along sound files. The recordings are sometimes electronic, sometimes recorders or other instruments:

https://mms.americanrecorder.org/members/compositions/composition_index.php?org_id=ARSO&lib=play_alongs

Solo and multi-part pieces are available. You can choose from recordings of the whole piece, or of all the parts except one. You can play along, or play any part yourself to accompany the other recorded parts. Each recording starts with a helpful metronome beat to establish the rhythm. This provides an opportunity to practice multi-part music by yourself. Note that you need to log on with your ARS account to download music. We encourage you to take advantage of this resource and experiment on your own.

WSEMS Zooms on March 14

Members of the West Suburban Early Music Society gathered online in March, and in honor of St. Patrick's Day, 13 playing Irish and Scottish tunes. These included Bonaparte Crossing the Rhine, Down by the Salley Gardens, The Irish Washerwoman, Niel Gow's Lamentation for the Death of his Second Wife, and Si Beag Si Mor. We played duets of Renaissance music and medieval music, the latter found in Nine Medieval Songs, arranged by Martha Bixler and Judit Kadar. We also enjoyed pieces by Tallis, Holborne, and Donato.

One WSEMS member has a pair of recorder cases free to a good home. Contact Elaine Gillies at 708.846.3472 jegillies@comcast.net.

Thanks again to Linda Schub, Chris Culp, and Kathy Hall-Babis for planning the Zoom event. We plan to meet again on April 11th; if weather permits we will meet outside at 2 PM. We will send a notice the week before. Contact Chris Culp at cg.culp@gmail.com with questions.

Whitewater Early Music Festival

EMF registration opens April 1 for the workshop on June 5 - 6. You can sign up for eight classes over two days for \$75, or four classes on one day for \$40. Visit <http://www.whitewaterearlymusic.org>.

Music History Seminar

Andrew Schultze offers a seminar, "Chief Chicago and Jean Philippe Rameau, an 18th Century Musical Interplay." The seminar focuses on a chief of the Illinois tribe and the most important French composer of the time, and events taking place in and around Paris in and around the 1725, a discussion of arts and a sacred ritual, the Dance of the Calumet and musical inspiration.

Saturday evenings April 10 and 17 at 7:15, \$40. Contact Andrew Schultze at Schu421@comcast.net.

Chicago Recorder Trio Concert

In their first concert since the pandemic, the Chicago Recorder Trio presents "Simply Remember: Our Favorite Things" on Friday, April 9th at noon, featuring music from the 14th to the 21st centuries by Bach, Vivaldi, Uccellini, Staeps, Melika Fitzhugh, and more! As part of the Musicians Club of Women Artists in Recital Series, the performance will be live but without an audience at the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago.

<https://musiciansclubofwomen.squarespace.com/artists-in-recital>

Concert Link (day-of):

<https://video.ibm.com/channel/kdTVwbnwgyW>

Join the Zoom reception after the performance and say hello!

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87576443744pwd=TFNRcWk1dW5zN1BDcW5KTkdYWG82UT09>

Performer's Music turns 40

Lee Newcomer opened Performers Music on February 14, 1981. February 15 was the monthly meeting for the Chicago chapter of the American Recorder Society, and Lee set that date in an attempt to appeal to the members. His initial goal was to establish a recorder shop, offering instruments, sheet music, and books related to the

recorder. "That's what I was imagining—that you could have a shop devoted to Early Music," Lee said. "That turned out not to be the case."

People did come in for recorders and recorder music, but many came to the store to ask for music for violin, or clarinet, or guitar. A single piano composition by Louis Moreau Gottschalk was the entire piano section for a while. "Somebody ordered it and never picked it up," he said. But Performer's Music had plenty of traffic from students and professionals, with Roosevelt University, and the Chicago Conservatory in the Fine Arts Building, plus visitors from out of town. Lee quickly expanded his offerings of piano sheet music, and many other instruments.

In the early days, Lee would host jam sessions in his store on Sunday afternoons, when the store was officially closed. "I spent a lot of time making music," Lee remembers. "People would come over to play. I was not watching for profits. I was looking for relationships." Nevertheless, commerce. Lee sold a lot of recorders. The late 1970s and early 1980s were good days for recorder playing and recorder music.

In the 1980s the Roosevelt University Music Department was across the alley from Performers Music, with a passageway connecting the ninth floor of the Fine Arts Building to the Roosevelt University building. The corridor between the two buildings ran through the space that Performers Music occupies today. Roosevelt University periodically conducted fire drills for the department, prompting their music students to stream past Lee's door. "When I heard the fire alarm, I would be out in the corridor, saying, 'hi, we have a music store here,'" Lee said. "That's very surprising to me, I've always seen myself as bashful."

"I didn't set any false alarms, I promise."



In the 70s there were two major music stores in the Loop. One, Lyon & Healy, remains a major force in the music world, celebrated for their harps. The company, filling a building at Adams and Wabash, had expanded into a variety of other instruments, as well as sheet music. But by the middle of the decade the company decided to concentrate on the profitable harp business and moved to the harp manufacturing facility in the west Loop they occupy to this day. That meant that Chicago only had one music store remaining, Carl Fisher on Wabash. Lee Newcomer saw an opportunity. In 1980 he spent \$1,000 for the recorder sheet music that Lyon & Healy had turned over to a wholesaler, Harris Teller. Harris Teller bought the Lyon & Healy stock in a scavenger sale, and took an interest in the pianos and trumpets they got, but not in the lowly recorder. The boxes of recorder sheet music they bought from Lyon & Healy remained unopened for three years. Lee took it all. "When I told them I wanted recorder music, they looked at me with amazement," he reflected. "They gave me a lot. They didn't think anybody would want it."

Lee was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and graduated from Wittenburg University in 1965 as an English major. Before he started Performer's Music, he was an English professor at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. "I found myself spending more and more time in Chicago, and I decided I wanted to live there." He grew up visiting Chicago with his parents, and always found it exciting to drive with them down Lake Shore Drive. But the story of his moving to Chicago is more interesting than that.

After Wittenburg, Lee had no idea what he wanted to do. "This is a history of America. In 1965, you could be a little footloose. I did not have a plan at all, I had not applied anywhere. On a whim, I went hitchhiking." Lee made it as far as Wahoo, Nebraska. He was down to one candy bar in his pocket, and it was either spend the night in a nearby farmhouse, or try the next car. "I stuck out my thumb one more time," he said. Someone came along bound for a rodeo in Salt Lake City, and he wanted someone to share the driving. When Lee got to Salt Lake City he found himself enchanted. So he visited the University of Utah, and they were willing to let him into their summer study program. When that was complete, they invited him to finish graduate studies. The mountains were beautiful, he had direction in his life again—and he was surrounded by Mormons. Their efforts to share their faith proved futile. "I was a better Lutheran in Salt Lake City than I had ever been any place else," Lee observed. He finished his PhD at Utah in June of 1970, in American literature, but he also studied classical Greek.



Performers Music has served many musicians over 40 years

After spending a year teaching in Missouri, Lee took 15 months to hitchhike and take Greyhound across America, looking for another teaching opportunity. The position he found was as an instructor at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. After his first semester, the contract was renewed, and eventually he found himself on the tenure track. He taught in Milwaukee for seven years; the class he created, Health Science Writing, was well received, and the credentials were useful later—almost. At the time college enrollment had fallen significantly across the country, and openings for professors were scarce. Lee found himself competing with scholarly candidates who had more articles published and better credentials. Still, Lee was up for tenure, an excellent opportunity, in 1978.

He decided to walk away instead.

Lee could have been set for life, but that's not what he wanted. His father died in 1978, leading him to think about his own future. "I didn't want to teach technical writing for the rest of my life," Lee said. "At that point I was 37, I figured it was a good time to start something fresh." He knew if he accepted tenure, he would stay at UWM until he retired. "It was sort of like I had won the revolution, but I didn't want to rule the country," Lee observed. "I looked down the road, and that wasn't what I wanted to do."

Lee has played the violin since he was nine, and he remained an active musician well past college. As Wittenburg was in a Lutheran town, he had plenty of opportunities as an undergraduate to play Heinrich Schütz, Dietrich Buxtehude, and JS Bach in church services. "I wasn't ignorant about music," Lee observed. "I was ignorant about business."

But he learned quickly. With his academic background Lee knew how to do research, and he found that his customers tended to be well educated as well, so they got

along well. After his father's death, his mother moved into a nursing home, and he sold the family home in Cleveland Heights. The proceeds, plus his savings, was enough to start Performer's Music and provide living expenses for a year until the store could turn a profit.

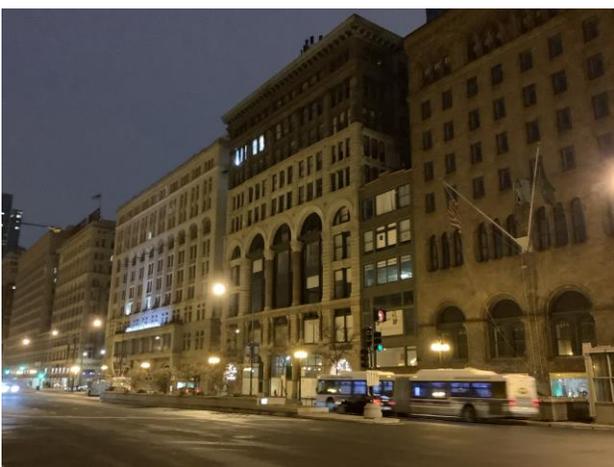
For Performers Music, this pandemic year has been a mixed blessing. Traffic to the store has fallen and so have sales. Lee had to cut his staff hours in half; his publishers are in trouble, facing a downturn with competition from free music on the Internet and unable to keep as much music in print or ship regularly. Performers Music in turn can't afford to keep a lot of music in stock, though they are getting a lot of online business.

Performers Music still has bins of recorder music, but recorder music sales had been shrinking for some time. A [GoFundMe](#) campaign allowed Lee to keep paying the rent. He had considered and then rejected pursuing donations well before COVID-19 as it didn't seem appropriate for a for-profit concern. "People had to convince me," Lee said. "My younger staff, they said, 'no, no, they like you.' So we set up the GoFundMe project, and started to get donations in five minutes."

Meanwhile, the pandemic has helped Performers Music in a way as unexpected as the pandemic itself. "People are practicing more," Lee said. "People like to play a quiet instrument—a recorder is a great apartment instrument. And people have free time. I get this from kids a lot—the recorder is good for the heart."

And with this in mind Lee Newcomer, now 77, plans to keep going. He lives at Belmont Harbor, a few steps from Lake Michigan and is in the store nearly every day. "I am hoping that the store will survive me. I have no plans to retire, but I think about it every day when I get up," Lee said. "An employee once asked me why I keep up. The store is a living thing."

"I think I found the right thing to do."



Lights on late in the Fine Arts Building

Performer's Music is on the 9th floor of the Fine Arts Building, 410 South Michigan Avenue. The Fine Arts is worth a visit by itself. Where else will you still find old-fashioned manual elevators with elevator operators? This elegant 1880s structure started out as the factory and showroom for Studebaker carriages, and now is 10 floors of music spaces, art studios, instrument vendors, and arts organizations. An extremely cool place to hang out on the last Friday of the month, post pandemic, when they offer an evening open house. Performers Music is open Monday through Friday 10 to 7, Saturday 10 to 5 and Sunday Noon to 5. www.performersmusic.com.

Note that indoor, in-person meetings of the Oak Park Recorder Society and the two ARS chapters are still suspended. When we return to normal activities, we will announce that in this newsletter or by email. In the meantime, these meetings are happening online. See the chapter websites for details, or contact Larry Johnson learn about the Oak Park Recorder Society.

Chapter Information

Chicago Chapter ARS (ChicagoRecorders.org)

President	Larry Johnson (ll_johnson1239@sbcglobal.net) (773) 631-6671)
Vice President	Lynette Colmey (jttlk@gmail.com) (708) 638-7721
Secretary	Jenifer Buckley (jenifer.a.buckley@gmail.com)
Treasurer	Cheryl Kreiman (chekrei@aol.com) 773-972-7679
Web site and Facebook	Hyacinth Egner
Member at large	Esther Schechter & Ruth Dunnell
Music Director:	Lisette Kielson lisettekielson@gmail.com

West Suburban Early Music Society (westsubems.org)

Convener/Chapter Representative:	Christopher Culp (cg.culp@gmail.com)
Vice Convener	Linda Schub Lgschub@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Marguerite Re (margueritere@comcast.net)
Secretary/Membership:	Suzanne Scott (SIRDS@sbcglobal.net) (630) 605-2326
Hospitality:	Nona Freeman (574) 286-5960
Recorder Reporter contact:	Eric Stern (egstern1@netscape.net) (630) 428-8464

<https://www.facebook.com/ChicagoARS>

**Visit us at chicagorecorders.org
Mark Dawson, newsletter editor
2425 W. Leland, Chicago, IL 60625-2913
msjddawson@sbcglobal.net / (773) 334-6376**