

# Recorder Reporter

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

Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society

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## WSEMS Zooms in February

Members of the West Suburban Early Music society and one guest from Kansas City met for a couple hours to play together on Valentine's Day. We enjoyed pieces by Susato, Poulenc, Beethoven, Marcello, Telemann, Bach, Praetorius, and contemporary composers and arrangers. We played along with synthesized music and also enjoyed playing with Helen Hooker ([www.helenhooker.co.uk](http://www.helenhooker.co.uk)) from the United Kingdom. The group played with the London Symphony Orchestra for *Hogwart's Hymn!* Not many recorder players get an opportunity to play with a symphony orchestra! And Linda Schub regaled us with a recorded duet she played with her brother, who played baritone, for the sea shanty, Wellerman (*Between Wind and Water*). Many thanks to Linda Schub & Chris Culp for preparing and producing this event. WSEMS meetings will continue to be on Zoom until the weather is reasonable. Plan to join us March 14 at 2 PM for our next session. Contact Chris Culp at [cg.culp@gmail.com](mailto:cg.culp@gmail.com) if you need the link.--Kathy Hall-Babis

## Chicago Chapter News

The Chicago chapter welcomed 15 members and friends at our latest online gathering on February 21 for another session of music making with Lisette Kielson. We returned to the music, and the themes, of our January meeting, Bach's *Two Part Inventions #13* arranged for two recorders, *Premiere Suite de Pieces* by Jacques Hotteterre, and Telemann's *Vivace Assai*. More discussion of French ornaments, but this time we started without the fancy fingerings. We also went over alternate fingerings for G, E, and F. Two players on the same piece can add color and variety to a performance if one uses standard fingerings and the other, alternate.

Among the instructions that Hotteterre provided with his score was the single word "doux," or soft, to indicate dynamics. The author wrote the piece with the Baroque flute in mind, and thus was asking for a dynamic range that is not really available on recorder. If you blow harder on a recorder, it doesn't get louder, it just goes out of tune. The harpsichord is likewise limited, you can't hit the keys harder on a harpsichord, unlike the piano forte and the piano to follow. That's why the recorder fell out of favor in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, as composers sought instruments with a dynamic range—instruments with a sound that

could carry—to fill larger concert venues. But we can represent dynamic range with a recorder with alternate fingerings, and in fact Hotteterre noted in the original score that his piece would also work with other treble instruments, including the oboe, violin, and recorder. Telemann regularly advertised his sheet music that way as well. Music that can be played using a variety of instruments would sell more quickly.

Hotteterre wrote in his ornaments, but that didn't mean he demanded his way with the musicians of his time, or today. He left plenty of room for improvising. Even when he writes ornaments in a measure where the two players have the same rhythm, he often uses different ornaments for the two parts. The musician is invited to experiment, under the general rule "all in good taste."

The Bach piece was painfully fast, again. But that was just for starting out. We learned that to handle strings of 16<sup>th</sup> notes with accidentals, start slowly, practice a lot, and then move the metronome up two notches, maybe from 54 to 56. Keep increasing the tempo until your music starts to sound painful, and then move back down a notch or two. It also helps to learn to look ahead, anticipating notes to come rather than dwelling on rapidly disappearing 16<sup>th</sup> notes.

We closed with Telemann's *Vivace Assai*. Telemann was a late Baroque composer. The era closed with the death of JS Bach in 1750, while Telemann lived on until 1767. His works tended to be lighter than those found earlier in the Baroque period, and had more of a sense of humor.

But his works are still hard.

His fast *Vivace Assai* is crowded with accidentals, high notes, false cadences, and syncopated rhythms. Here we find one advantage to Zoom meetings, in the form of the mute setting to shield other listeners against finger-on-the-chalkboard high note squawks. We worked on Telemann, and liked his work, but this piece asks for a lot of practice. Lisette noted that when we are back in the fellowship hall at Covenant Presbyterian next season, works by Telemann will be easier. With chamber ensembles for four or five parts or more, the composer spread out the challenges; also, none of us will be obliged to handle any of the parts alone. With the music provided for this meeting on the chapter web site, we also have a series of exercises to help make high notes easier.

Patrick O'Malley returns to lead us for our March 21 meeting. Plan also to join us for our **Spring Concert** on May 16. You are invited to perform if you like, a solo work or a pre-recorded piece. Or some other creative idea! If you'd like to perform, or have any questions, contact Larry Johnson at [lj\\_johnson1239@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lj_johnson1239@sbcglobal.net). There will be a general playing session afterwards, with music made available in advance on our website.

The Chicago chapter is thinking about hosting some more outdoor recorder playing sessions in April or May, when the weather is warmer than this:



*Mark & Susan Dawson, playing in the snow*

We could meet in Mark & Susan Dawson's back yard in Lincoln Square (BBQ included!) or we can look at some convenient parks on the north side of Chicago. WSEMS offered a series of very successful playing sessions on the grass outside their regular meeting place in Downers Grove last fall, continuing until mid-November. Please let Mark Dawson know if you would be interested in participating in an outdoor gathering, [msjddawson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:msjddawson@sbcglobal.net).

### Spring workshops coming up

Due to the uncertainties of the past year, the Chicago Chapter decided not to present its biennial April workshop in 2021. But there's no need to miss the fun learning opportunities of the many virtual workshops and online classes being offered around the country. They all are very economical, present fascinating programs and involve no travel!

The Oregon Renaissance Band Trio, Gayle Neuman, Laura Kuhlman and Phil Neuman, lead trios of music ranging from Medieval to Contemporary on all sizes of recorders, early double reeds, strings, voice and bagpipes! All levels welcome. Classes will be held on Wednesday evening and Saturday mornings from March 31 to April 3, 2021 and run for ten weeks. Cost is \$100.

You are welcome to come on either day or both. Join the fun. Questions? [pneumantartold@gmail.com](mailto:pneumantartold@gmail.com).

For more information on other upcoming classes, workshops and other events over the next month, check the national website (<https://americanrecorder.org>). Look for Events on the home page, and click the View Full Calendar option.

### Whitewater Early Music Festival

Registration is now open. You can sign up for eight one-hour sessions over two days, or four one-hour sessions on one day. The cost will be \$40 for one day and 4 classes; \$75 for two days and 8 classes.

The festival offers 16 classes to choose from, and no limit on class size. This year's faculty includes Laura Kuhlman, Lisette Kielson, Eric Haas, Gayle Neuman, Phil Neuman, James Chaudoir, Clea Galhano, and more!

For the latest information visit the website <http://www.whitewaterearlymusic.org>.

### The Chicago Chapter, and the world

For the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 seasons, we worked together as a chapter in an aggressive outreach program. I figured then (and still do) that it would be easier to find dollars than recorder players, so we should go ahead and spend what money we had to try to reach out and attract newcomers to our meetings and to our fellowship. As chapter membership continued to age, we felt a need for more aggressive marketing. So we started with Ben Eisenstein's splendid idea to invite Lisette Kielson to serve as our music director in September of 2013. We hosted our first recorder workshop at the University of Chicago Folk Music Festival in February of 2014, played at the Oak Park Public Library a month later, and joined the Make Music Chicago festival the following June 21 at the French Market. A year later, the Make Music Chicago festival found us playing on a plaza at Lincoln Park Zoo. We played in the lobby at the Harold Washington Library Center in December 2013. Before that, we revised our brochure and cut a deal with the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. We would pay to sponsor a master's class offered by British recorder player Piers Adams if the Department in return would distribute our brochure at all of their events in the 2010 Chicago Early Music Festival. All of this effort was great fun. We did some really cool things together.

And it didn't work at all.

In late 2015 we talked about merging the Chicago chapter and the West Suburban Early Music Society as a means to create one single strong chapter from two. That idea was abandoned in January 2016.

Today, Lisette continues to make our monthly chapter meetings vital and bright, regular gatherings where we enjoy the privilege of creating something beautiful together. The Yuletide concerts for 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 in particular were excellent. And, curiously, we started seeing new faces at our meetings and welcoming new members around our 2017-2018 season. It looks like we have enjoyed more success in attracting newcomers since we stopped trying so hard. Rather than planning special events for Play the Recorder Month or showing up in public places in the summer, it looks like the best way for us to attract new members is to regularly publish lively content to our chapter web site and to our Facebook page.

That in fact is the way I found out about the Chicago chapter of the American Recorder Society in 2002. My son David (now 30) had started playing recorder as part of a home school group, and eventually I noticed and thought, wow, that sounds really good. I found the chapter online and we attended the spring concert in May.



*John & David Dawson, May 2002 spring concert*

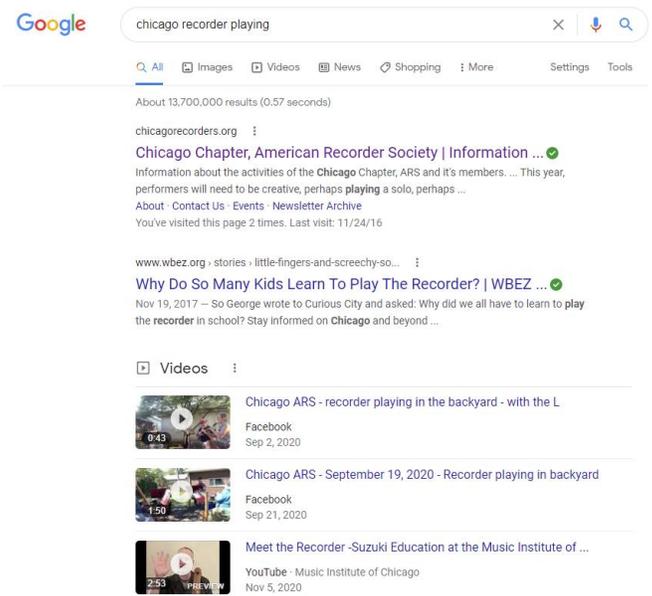
The next season we started attending every month, and in January of 2006 I was asked to edit this newsletter. At the urging of my recorder playing friends, I started taking lessons myself in May of 2006 and attended Whitewater for the first time in June. I was 46 years old, with no musical background apart from a brief effort to learn to play the flute when I was 12. Well, trying to learn to play piano when I was 26 inspired jealousy in no one, and I flunked the test for bagpipes about a year later and was assigned the bass drum instead when marching with the Royal Chicago Scots. For recorder, third time proved successful. At Whitewater 2006 I was sad that I had

waited so long, but I also thought that if I kept working at it in another year or two I could join the other recorder players in jam sessions, holding my own part. And I am delighted to report that that is exactly what happened.

Over the years I have encouraged our members and friends to contribute to this monthly newsletter. And over the last few years we have been seeing visitors appearing at our meetings and newcomers joining the chapter, including two more just a few weeks ago. That's great! An excellent way to make sure that growth continues would be if you could provide content to post to the chapter Facebook page, web site, or YouTube channel. Do you have some photos or videos you could offer?

I don't really like Facebook, frankly. I created a Facebook page in 2009 and then deleted it a few months later. And I am incompetent when it comes to speaking of Search Engine Optimization. But Facebook is how the world communicates these days, and thanks to Internet access in 2002, I started on my own grand musical adventure.

Search on "Chicago recorder playing" and this shows up:



The chapter web site is [www.ChicagoRecorders.org](http://www.ChicagoRecorders.org), our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/ChicagoARS>. We also have a chapter YouTube channel.

Please contact Hyacinth Egner or Cheryl Kreiman at [hyacinth\\_egner@yahoo.com](mailto:hyacinth_egner@yahoo.com) or [chekrei@aol.com](mailto:chekrei@aol.com).

The future members of the Chicago chapter of the American Recorder Society are out there, but I'm not going to complete the cliché with "we just have to get out there and find them!" That's because in fact we probably won't. Instead, our new members are going to find us. With that in mind, you could help by providing material for us to add to our online presence.

## A Lecture on Music Theory

The title, Music Theory and White Supremacy by Adam Neely, is more provocative than necessary. That's what you name your video if you want to compete with five billion other videos on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kr3quGh7pJA>

The discussion is not a rant. The author calmly points out that that when we talk about "music theory" we generally mean principles developed in northern Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. "The first thing to acknowledge is that music theory has a perspective to begin with," Neely said. "That is kind of hard to wrap your head around if you're not used to it." The idea is that there is no such thing as American or German or Russian mathematics; math is math. But we want to think the same way of music theory, and incorrectly.

Rather, most of what we think of as music theory in this country these days is rooted in historic practice of German men. What about music practice in India? Russian women composers? Jazz innovations from the African-American community? Bizarre dissonances found in traditional folk songs from Bulgaria? Georgian choirs that deliberately sing off-key? Chinese stringed instrumental works? Different cultures and ethnic communities have different approaches to music, and even different understandings of what music is supposed to be. "Imagine if you will, a new world order in which African approaches to rhythm pedagogy predominated in the American academy," Kofi Agawu observed. "No one would be granted a music degree who could not dance."

Well, as the video progresses, the dive into music theory and white supremacy goes deeper, as Neely starts to probe the influential—and disturbing—views of Austrian music theorist Heinrich Schenker (1868-1935). Still not a rant. Rather, the video prompts us to look more closely at our default ideas. And from there maybe we could embrace lots of different kinds of music from lots of different kinds of people, something we would be likely to do anyway.

**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 future newsletters and on the ARS chapter websites. In the meantime, all of these meetings are happening online. See the chapter websites for details, or contact Larry Johnson to learn about the Oak Park Recorder Society.**

## 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 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, September to May by the Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society.

### Chicago Chapter ARS ([ChicagoRecorders.org](http://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 <a href="mailto:lisettekielson@gmail.com">lisettekielson@gmail.com</a>

**Chicago Chapter meetings:** The third Sunday of each month, September through May, 2 PM, at Covenant Presbyterian Church, 2012 West Dickens, Chicago.

Enter either door of the parish building west of the church and go to the large fellowship hall.

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

Convener/Chapter Representative:	Christopher Culp (cg.culp@gmail.com)
Vice Convener	Linda Schub Lgschub@yahoo.com
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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, 2-5 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.

Like us on Facebook: 

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

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