

Recorder Reporter

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

Chicago Recorders & the West Suburban Early Music Society

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Chicago Chapter News

For our October 19 meeting, Gail Gillispie directed, considering the works of Vincenzo Ruffo (c. 1508 – 1587), an Italian priest, teacher, and influential composer in Verona. Ruffo published ten books of madrigals as well as motets, masses, and other sacred works, contributing to the Counter Reformation as a musician. Mostly Ruffo is known for the common Renaissance practice of taking chansons and madrigals written by earlier composers, or even contemporaries like Jacques Arcadelt (1507-1568) and adding lines to create new works. The development of the printing press made this easier and more common, besides offering composers a means to supplement their income.

Typeset printing for music got started around 1500. We learned that printers regularly left out ficta markings, because, after all, the musicians at the time knew where these accidentals were supposed to be used anyway. Gail herself used to be known as the “ficta queen” when she sang with the Schola Cantorum of St. Peter the Apostle in downtown Chicago. She always knew where the sharps and flats belonged.



We played a lot of Ruffo's works, and some by Arcadelt and others that inspired him. *Quand'io pens'al Martire* by Jacques Arcadelt, was a great piece, though perhaps rather gloomy look at romance, closing with “This life kills me, thus death brings me back to life.” But we understand that when Renaissance secular choral works refer to death, they generally mean, well, another topic of interest. This is called in early music parlance a *double entendre*, though the era offers a lot single entendre pieces too.

These pieces are also known as NSFW, like *Martin Menoit Son Porceau au Marche* by Clement Janequin, featuring a romantic encounter between Martin and Alice, disrupted by Martin's disagreeable pig. When modern musician Tom Leher considered music from the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries, he observed “When correctly viewed, everything is lewd.” But the music sounded great, and we weren't singing. A fine afternoon of music making, once again several newcomers among 18 participants.

Join us when Lisette returns on November 16 at 2 PM to lead us in a dress rehearsal for our Yuletide concert. Come prepared to rehearse Gabrieli's *O magnum mysterium* (double choir), Peter Beck's arrangement of *Gaudete* (more altos and tenors welcome), and the (new) swing version of *Les anges dans nos campagnes* (soprano, alto up, tenor, with doubling octaves encouraged). Attendance required if you want to perform! Email Lisette with questions.

We would still like to recruit some recorder players to provide music services for St. John's Episcopal starting with their Lessons and Carols Service on Saturday December 6 at 5 PM. Please contact Mark Dawson or Cheryl Kreiman. We have played several times at St. John's, great fun, but the faithful few lately. Some newcomers would be welcome.

Please also remember that it is time to [renew your membership](#) with the Chicago chapter. Your [donations](#) help balance our budget.

Yuletide Concert coming up

In November 2006 I wrote my first announcement for the chapter's upcoming Yuletide Concert for this newsletter:

We gather for our annual Yuletide Concert on Sunday, December 17 at St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church at 2 PM. Please let Mark Dawson know if you plan to take part. We need to know:

- Name of the piece you want to play
- Composer's name, nationality, and dates of birth & death
- Movements, if any
- Performers playing, and their instruments

Please make sure you check the spelling of the names of composers and performers. If you want to play near the beginning of the program let Mark know that too. You can reach him at msjddawson@sbcglobal.net. We are looking for a crowd to ring out the year, and also for a measure of variety, as usual. So don't just bring your recorders and krum horns. We would like vocal pieces, lutes, viols. Surprise us, and enchant us. If you have any questions you can also contact Mark Dawson at (773) 334-6376.

Same drill, 19 years later. Let me know what you plan to perform for our Yuletide concert on Sunday, December 21 at 2 PM at St. John's Episcopal, 3857 North Kostner. And as I asked in 2006, surprise us, enchant us.

Wonderful Choral Music in Chicago



Chicago is amazing.

You knew that already. I could write a long article in this newsletter of all the innovations that come from our great city—streetcar electric motors, movie theater popcorn machines, movable bridge technology, the world's two largest telescopes in the late 1940s, and much, much more. For our purposes, we know Chicago for the city's vibrant Early Music and Baroque music scene, and lately we have been doing very well indeed.

October 24 and 25 the Haymarket Opera and the Newberry Consort produced *Euridice*, the oldest surviving opera, written by Jacopo Peri in 1600. This was a rare collaboration between these two groups, and the instrumentalists featured Liza Malamut and Ben David Aronson on sackbut and our own Lisette Kielson and Laura Osterlund on recorder. A grand afternoon of excellent ensemble singing, and unlike the ancient Greek forebear, this version had a happy ending.



Carl Foote joined the Oriana Singers and City Voices of Chicago on Saturday October 18 to sing Thomas Tallis' rarely performed *Spem in Alium*. I'm jealous. I didn't get to attend—I want to sing *Spem in Alium* with a choir of 40 voices someday. Carl and I attended *William Byrd in Hiding* in August (see the September 2025 newsletter) and I also enjoyed Cappella Pratensis at the University of Chicago on October 25, a men's ensemble singing 15th century sacred polyphony, using facsimiles of historic manuscripts. After an hour of grand singing, we stood around with the director on stage while he explained this Dutch ensemble's strange and beautiful historic practice.



West Suburban Early Music Society

The West Suburban Early Music Society met on October 12 with Nancy Chabala directing 11 members for two hours, with music that included *Des biens d'amours* by Johannes Martini, *In Gottes Namen faren wir* by Heinrich Finck, and the traditional tune *Babel's Stream*, based on Psalm 137. They played Guillaume de Machaut's *Douce Dame*, arranged by Will Ayton and *Jude's Round*, a beloved canon of former Chicago chapter member Rosalie Guttman by her friend Judith Mathews (1948-

2021). Finally, we played *Twas in the Moon of Wintertime*; please note that we will play that at the December concert.

After the break, Janet Fitchuk led the ensemble for the final hour through a Purcell Fantasia and an arrangement by Austin Ralphson of *Deck the Halls with Catchy Rhythms!* The board has asked Janet Fitchuk, a retired music teacher, to lead us in pieces at a few meetings during the year. Our goal is to practice challenging portions of the music in between our intermittent rehearsals.



WSEMS meets next on Sunday, November 9 at 2 PM at the Meetinghouse in Downers Grove. Please join us! We remind Chicago chapter members that you have a joint membership with our group and are welcome to all meetings.—Kathy Hall-Babis



Dinner and Jamming at the Dawsons, October 24

Susan and Mark Dawson enjoy inviting recorder playing friends to their home for evenings of dinner and music making.

This is a good way to welcome newcomers into our chapter and musical community. If you would like to be included in our next gathering, please feel free to let Mark know!

Music and More

[Ars Music Chicago](#) offers *Byrd in the Hand*, with Artistic Director Jason Moy offering a solo recital on harpsichord with works by William Byrd, Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, and other late Renaissance and early Baroque keyboard composers. The concert is free but donations are gratefully accepted. Friday November 14 at 7:30 PM at St. Chrysostom's Episcopal Church, 1424 North Dearborn.

The [Recorder Orchestra](#) of the Midwest holds its first rehearsals on Saturday November 22, at the Cantata Senior Center, 8700 W. 31st Street in Brookfield. This is across the street from the north entrance for Brookfield Zoo. The practices start at 10 AM and last until 4 PM. The final concert will be held on April 22 in Oak Park. Please visit the [web site](#) for fees and more details on playing with the Recorder Orchestra.

The [Oak Park Concert Chorale](#) offers their annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, November 23 at 4 PM at St. John Lutheran Church, 305 Circle Avenue in Forest Park. The concert features music from Benjamin Britten, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, and more, and also welcomes the choir of St. John's Lutheran School of Chicago. The Chorale offered two pieces for the Chicago chapter's spring concert last May.

Our friends Lisette Kielson, Patrick O'Malley, and Mira Lorenz, [The Chicago Recorder Trio](#), perform twice this Autumn, November 2 in Northbrook and November 17 in Evanston. They plan to offer a 30- minute lunchtime performance at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Monday November 17 at noon, 1509 Ridge Avenue in Evanston. Before that, the Trio plays on Sunday November 2 at 2 PM at the Northbrook Public Library auditorium, 1201 Cedar Lane in Northbrook. Both events are free.

[Apollo's Fire](#) performs the Christmas Vespers of Michael Praetorius, Sunday December 14 at 3 PM at the Church of the Holy Family, 1080 W Roosevelt Road in Chicago, and Monday December 15 at 7 PM at Faith, Hope, and Charity Church at 191 Linden Street in Winnetka. These are both elegant venues, and both are well served by public transportation. And Apollo's Fire, based in Cleveland, is one of the nation's best Medieval and Baroque ensembles.

The University of Chicago Presents concert series offers a [long list](#) of concerts this season in Hyde Park.

- Castalian Quartet, the resident ensemble at Oxford University, offers Haydn, Janacek, and Brahms on Sunday November 9 3 PM in the Logan Center.
- Trio Medieval sings in Rockefeller Memorial Chapel on Friday, January 23, 2026 at 7:30 PM, sacred

monophonic and polyphonic medieval choral works, modern pieces, and Norwegian ballads.

- The Academy of St. Martin in the Fields Wind Ensemble performs Mozart, Haydn and Nielsen on Friday, April 17, 2026 at 7:30 PM in Mandel Hall.

[St. James Cathedral](#) in Chicago (Episcopal) offers some fine singing in their choral evensong services:

- Sunday November 2, 4 PM, Faure Requiem
- Sunday November 30, 4 PM, Lessons & Carols
- Sunday December 7, 4 PM, Advent music from Tudor England
- Sunday December 21, 4 PM, Lessons and Carols
- Sunday January 4, 4 PM, Christmas song
- Sunday February 2, 4 PM, Benjamin Britten's Ceremony of Carols
- Sunday March 1, 4 PM, Music of Henry Purcell
- Friday April 3, 6:30 PM
- Sunday May 3, 4 PM Rockefeller Chapel

The [Millennium of Music](#) radio program has provided resources about Medieval and Renaissance music ("1000 years before Bach") for 50 years. The web site provides access to a variety of content, most by subscription. Some content is provided for free; subscribers can pay as little as \$36 a year for access.

This article in MSN.com, "[Why singing is good for your brain](#)," notes that mental health and cognitive benefits of music making. Riding a bicycle regularly is good for your brain too, according to this [article](#) in the Journal of the American Medical Association. In case you are interested. I suppose if I could play recorder while riding my bike to our monthly chapter meetings I would add 20 years to my life, as long as I avoided running into an SUV while riding without holding the handle bars.

Once a month you can enjoy a [Bach Cantata Vespers](#) service at Grace Lutheran Church, 7300 Division, River Forest (corner of Division and Harlem). This season the services are on Sundays, with a lecture at 3 PM, a prelude at 3:45 and the service at 4 PM, November 23, December 31, January 18, February 22, March 29, April 19, and May 17.

Visit [Medievalists.Net](#) for a wealth of articles related to the Middle Ages. Open the page to see links to articles about medieval sayings and phrases, jobs, colors, travel, and thievery. Then, search on "music" to find hundreds of articles related to medieval music, including an online course offering an introduction to medieval music, a look at musical notation during the period, and reconstructing Viking music. A subscription costs \$30 a year.

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 Recorder Society and West Suburban dues are paid in September for each new season. Dues include membership in your local chapter, this newsletter, and a welcome to attend the meetings of both chapters. The *Recorder Reporter* is published monthly, September to May by the Chicago Chapter & the West Suburban Early Music Society.

Chicago Recorders ARS (ChicagoRecorders.org)

President	Mark Dawson
Vice President	Michael Kuby
Secretary	Cheryl Kreiman
Treasurer	Carl Foote
Facebook	Hyacinth Egner & Cheryl Kreiman
Web site	Larry Johnson & Peter Beck
Members at Large	Ruth Dunnell, Jacob Shermer
Chapter Representative	Larry Johnson
Music Director:	Lisette Kielson lisettekielson@gmail.com

You can contact the chapter through our web site.

Like us on Facebook: 

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

Chicago Chapter meetings: The third Sunday of each month, September through May, 2 PM, at St. John's Episcopal Church, 3857 North Kostner. Enter through the side door on Byron and go to your right down a few steps to enter the parish hall, or enter in the front.

West Suburban Early Music Society (westsubems.org)

Convener/Chapter Representative:	Pat Mahoney
Vice Convener	Nancy Culp
Treasurer	Stephanie Duesing
Secretary/Membership:	Elaine Gillies
Hospitality:	Norm Adams
Web page support:	Chris Culp
Music Director:	Nancy Chabala nchabala5555@gmail.com

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.

Visit us at chicagorecorders.org
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