

AMERICAN RECORDER SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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New Address: 1453 York Avenue, New York 21, N. Y.

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Annual Concert

The annual concert of the American Recorder Society, held on June 6, was one of the most successful ever given, with the recital hall of the New York College of Music filled to capacity, and many standees. The program was divided into two sections, the first section consisting of Baroque music, and the second of contemporary music.

Featured in the first half were "Three Parts upon a Ground" by Henry Purcell; Trio Sonata in G minor by G. P. Telemann; Aria "Stein, der über alle Schätze" by J. S. Bach; Sonata in A major by Tommaso Albinoni; and the Aria "Rien ne peut calmer ma peine" by Giovanni Paisiello. Performers were Johanna Kulbach, recorder; Sonya Monosoff, violin; Dorothy Clark, soprano; Leonora Schwartz, 'cello; and Winifred Jaeger, harpsichord.

The contemporary offerings - Trio for two alto recorders and violin by Erich Katz, Suite for three recorders by Gail Kubik, and Children's Suite ("A Day in the Park") by LaNoue Davenport - were performed by LaNoue Davenport, Herbert Kellman, and Joel Newman, recorders; Sonya Monosoff, violin; and Patricia Davenport, harpsichord.

Most heartening, next to the large and enthusiastic audience, was the hearty reception given the new music. It is to be expected that music of the Baroque, when performed as well as this was, will meet with no resistance, but the obvious enjoyment by this audience (most amateur players) of the less familiar sounds leads to a strengthening of the conviction that those who play an instrument make better listeners.

American Recorder Society Edition #12

Lively Airs by Jacob Regnart, edited by Alfred Mann. These pieces were first published in 1940 as No. 1 of an American Recorder Society series which was not continued at that time. They have been reprinted with the kind permission of the editor. The following remarks were contained in the first edition: 'This selection of songs from "Teutsche kurtzweilige Lieder", first published towards the end of the 16th century, represents a form which was very popular at that time. Unlike the more elaborate madrigals the Villanellas (Street Songs), as they were commonly named in the titles, were written in a homophonic style; and parallel fifths were often used intentionally. It was customarily mentioned in the titles that the songs were "to be sung or played on instruments", whereby the recorder was meant primarily. The combination of two soprano recorders and an alto recorder seems to be the best

for performing these songs. Bars have been added, and in a few cases transpositions have seemed advisable. Thanks are due to Mr. St. John Edmunds for English versions of the original titles.'

Important Notice to Members

Associated Music Publishers, the new publisher of the American Recorder Society Editions, has moved. The new address is: 1 W. 47 St., N.Y. 36, N.Y., and all orders for ARS editions should be sent to this address.

Officers Meetings

The officers of the A.R.S. met on April 24 and on July 1, 1954. Miss Isabel H. Benedict tendered her resignation as Secretary of The American Recorder Society, and Roderick Evans was elected to fill her place. We are extremely sorry that Miss Benedict has found it necessary to give up her work for us. The organizational development of the A.R.S. during the five years of her service as Secretary is largely due to her outstanding efforts in behalf of the Society. In recognition of this fact, Miss Benedict was awarded an Honorary Life Membership.

The following will serve as officers of The American Recorder Society for the 1954/55 season: Dr. Erich Katz, Musical Director; Gertrud Bamberger, LaNoue Davenport, Johanna Kulbach, and Bernard Krainis, Assistant Musical Directors; Roderick Evans, Secretary; and Winifred Jaeger, Treasurer. The address of our new Secretary is 341 East 74th Street, New York 21, N. Y.

Other business included preliminary discussions on a planned constitution, the establishment of chapters of The American Recorder Society, and a decision to raise the dues (for the first time since the Society's beginning) to \$4.00 a year for members in the Metropolitan Area, and \$2.50 per year for those living outside this area.

The conclusions of the discussion on chapters are printed herewith:

The American Recorder Society has decided, in response to numerous inquiries, to establish chapters outside of New York City.

Following is a brief outline of the manner in which chapters might function:

1. Six or more members of the American Recorder Society in any community outside of New York City may establish a chapter of the "A.R.S."
2. Such chapters will be authorized to elect their own local officers, and plan their own activities.
3. An Advisory Committee, made up of the Chairmen of the various chapters, will be established to advise the board of officers in matters of policy.

We would like suggestions from any members, outside of New York City, who might be interested in organizing a chapter.

The following is reprinted, with permission, from House Beautiful magazine, copyright June, 1954.

The Miracle of the Recorders
by Dorothea Walker

"The miracle of the recorders! As long as I live, I'll never get over the miracle of the recorders!" my mother exclaimed. Playing recorders, triangle and drum, my husband, our five children and I had just delivered a lively "British Grenadiers" to her as a birthday offering.

But my mother and father didn't applaud for long, because they too are recorder players, and, like all recorder players, they would rather play than listen. They brought out their own recorders, and all together we attacked "Greensleeves," then "Early One Morning," then "Willow, Willow," then on and on. Recorder players, once started, are hard to stop.

Here is the miracle of the recorders: a family group, three generations in age, from five to seventy, getting together to play good music; and all having the time of their lives.

It is the miracle of a wooden flute, whose "clear sweet dignity of tone" and quick response to playing effort have made it loved for centuries by those who wanted to make music. And now the recorder is offering our own generation its answer to the longing of each of us to make music ourselves.

Just watch a group of people hearing recorders for the first time -- not even well-played recorders, because the performers may have been playing only a year or two. But the music is always the best -- Mozart, Bach, Purcell, some folk dances -- and the listeners can never wait until the last number is over. They want to handle the instruments. Each question shows how directly they have thought of the recorders in terms of their own need. "I can't even hum a tune," they remark, "do you think I could play?" "These would be just the thing for Daddy and me in the evenings." "Could we really play music like this after just a few hours' teaching?" "What if you can't read music?" "Oh, come on, show me now where to put my fingers on this thing!"

Recorders are simple woodwind instruments that come in different sizes. The sizes vary in pitch, and the five most commonly played (you can see them opposite)* are the bass, tenor, alto, soprano, and the still higher sopranino. Each of the five has a range of a little over two octaves, fully chromatic, and each has its own distinctive quality of tone. Fingering on all five sizes is so similar that most players quickly learn them all.

Recorders are remarkably easy instruments to learn to play. Fingering is done on a system of eight holes; and the mouthpiece requires no specialized technique of liping. You blow as into a whistle.

However, although the beginner can play tunes from his first session, it does not mean that recorder playing ends there. The recorder has no limit to its possibilities as a musical instrument. Among our recorder-playing friends we number beginners contentedly tooting their first "Polly's Bonnet"; but we also know professional musicians who have played recorders as a hobby for many years with increasing delight in

their scope as solo and ensemble instruments. The recorder is by no means to be regarded with condescension as a toy or as a pacifier for those who can't play other instruments.

The name "recorder" is unfortunate, since it is confused with records or tape-recording. But "recorder" takes on a happier sound when its meaning is considered. In times past the English verb "to record" meant "to warble like a bird"; and when you play recorders you do indeed "sing like the birdies sing."

Flutes, of which the recorder is one type, have been played in most ages. Archeological diggings all over the world have yielded many kinds of bone or ceramic flutes. The recorder itself belonged particularly to Renaissance and post-Renaissance England. In this golden age of English music, sets of recorders were regular home equipment. Henry VIII's collection of 76 recorders has become famous. Shakespeare's characters played recorders, and Samuel Pepys mentions several times how he has been transported by their angelic music.

Attacked by 17th-century Puritans as popular frivolity, and during the 18th Century replaced in concert orchestras by its extensively developed rival, the transverse flute, the recorder fell out of use both in home and in concert, and for many years remained forgotten.

Then 40 years ago in England, Arnold Dolmetsch, a German musician-craftsman who was recreating Renaissance instruments, began to make recorders, patterning them after early English ones in his collection. Eager acceptance of his new recorders showed at once that they were not an esoteric instrument of interest principally to Shakespearean students and specialists in Baroque music, but a living thing meeting needs of today.

Groups of recorder players, musicians and non-musicians gathered in England. Interest spread to the Continent. In Germany, especially, the appropriateness of the recorder as a companion for outdoor hikes and camps was appreciated. Schools began to introduce recorders as the most direct path to music appreciation as well as a valuable outlet for self-expression. The recorders' gentle tone, lower in volume than that of modern instruments, gave them special appeal for playing in the home.

Scholars searched out the wealth of Renaissance and Baroque recorder music and arranged for the recorder folk music that is so well-suited to the uncomplicated spirit of the instrument. Modern composers began to write for the recorder; and within a few years a large body of published music became available.

In our own country there has been a recent boom in recorder interest of which ours and our friends' is representative. In the summer of 1952 our family was in the position of many American families with musical interests, but with no vitalizing core. We had a fairly good record collection which we played often. Occasionally we took the children to a musical event. My husband sometimes got out his violin and I sometimes sat down at the piano. Our three older children, ten-year-old Bruce and nine-year-olds Ellen and Lisa, were taking violin lessons. We could, and did, play together; but the difficulties of the instruments were such that playing was something of a chore.

At that time Bruce, the only one of our family who showed musical leanings, asked for a woodwind instrument. Remembering that recorders were cheap and easy to play, we bought him a six-dollar plastic soprano and left it on his pillow one night.

Early next morning we were roused by giggles and shuffles and an unaccountable new sound. Bruce, escorted by the younger children, was outside our bedroom piping Beethoven's Ninth on his new recorder. We were at first too convulsed at the incongruity of that magnificent choral in a high-pitched whistle to grasp what the phenomenon might mean to us, but within minutes the whole family was wangling for turns on the magic instrument.

In the afternoon my sister and brother-in-law stopped by and were so intrigued at the possibilities of the recorder, that they went off to a music store for more plastic sopranos and instruction books. That night we were still tooting when a friend phoned, and hearing the noise in the background, she demanded to know what the ungodly sounds were.

"Recorders," I said. "Do you know what they are?"

"I've got one in a bottom drawer somewhere," she said. "Haven't touched it for years. Hang on a minute," She brought her recorder to the phone and offered a fine "Jingle Bells."

"Come on up," I said. She came that night and for many Tuesday nights thereafter.

Our neighbors came to investigate the strange new sounds. They too joined us in our Tuesday-night sessions. Then other friends came, and almost immediately we had our full group of a dozen who have played together every week for a year and a half.

Soon after starting, we all replaced our plastic sopranos with good wooden recorders of various pitches; so we now have a well-balanced group for part playing.

None of us are musicians. We still play with more gusto than finesse, but we have learned a great deal about pitch and time by the trial-and-error method. We have even come to understand something about counterpoint and chords.

We are learning that essential of part playing, "Listen to each other," which not only has as its reward better sounding group music, but also is the basis for the emotional satisfactions of playing music with others.

No one seems to get bored with the regularity of the group sessions. Usually a rather fagged dozen assembles at 8 o'clock. By the time we break up, faces are relaxed, conversation is lively, and our only worries have become whether we're playing in tune and keeping our volume down.

Seven groups, at this point, have combined to form the Southern California Recorder Association which meets five times yearly so that all the groups can play for each other and play together under a professional conductor. These meetings are shared by many individual recorder players from the area who, though not regularly playing with groups, enjoy the Southern California get-togethers.

The children are growing in music appreciation by the best means -- that of playing themselves the best of all music. Children who play the recorder from the beginning play the world's folk tunes, Handel, Purcell, Byrd, Mozart, Bach. Even Mark and Craig at five and six have their favorites and know which books to bring when it is their turn to choose what we should play. If you listen to their casual humming, you may catch a tune from the Beggars' Opera or a 16th-century dance, because they have learned them on their own percussion instruments.

Besides playing the recorder with our own children, we have had a great deal of pleasure from a group of eight neighbor children who have played recorders with us every Monday afternoon during the past year. These children range from nine to twelve years old and, being neighbors, are accustomed to playing together.

You can also get a great deal of satisfaction out of playing alone. Although ensemble playing is responsible for many of the enjoyments of recorder playing, it is not essential. You needn't hesitate to go ahead, even if you feel there are no prospective fellow-recorder-players in sight. But don't be too sure your friends won't be interested.

In our circle, more than 40 have so far become interested enough in recorders to buy instruments of their own. Some of them played for a short time and then lost interest. Others have continued to play, making many converts of their own.

Your first concern is choice of instrument. Many begin on the cheapest available (around \$6) and these are all right for beginners. Only be sure you don't stay too long with them, and don't inflict them on a group of more experienced players who have already graduated to better instruments.

Get an instrument with "English fingering" (some have "German fingering") because English fingering is fairly standard among American groups, and the two systems of fingering, while not varying much from each other, are not too easy to play in tune together.

One of the beauties of recorder playing is that even in assembling a set of the very top quality, you are not called upon to spend very much money. Three excellent makes -- the American Koch, the English Dolmetsch, and the Swiss Kung -- cost only about \$20 for the soprano, \$30 for the alto, \$40 for the tenor and \$75 for the bass.

Give some thought to choosing one of the lower-pitched ones. The alto and tenor are both fine solo instruments, easier to make melodious than the soprano, and with them you will be more welcome in any group you might wish to join. A group's success depends partly upon having its strongest players on the soprano parts since the sopranos are so often in the lead.

Now pick out an instruction manual. Erich Katz's "Recorder Playing" is good, shows finger placements in diagram, and should be used in conjunction with Ruetz's "Recorder Book" which also has finger charts and provides an assortment of pieces that will last you for a long time. The Dushkin manuals are easy to follow and especially good for a child. Most manuals assume that you have a rudimentary knowledge of reading music; but some, like Margaret Midelfort's "Recorder Tunes and How to Play Them," are arranged so that you can learn without previous experience. At the same time that you choose your manual, buy the Bradford-Parker Alto Book II or the Soprano-Tenor Book II and get Simpson's Elizabethan and Jacobean books.

Now you are ready to sit down with your recorder, to play and have fun. Relax! When your fingers cramp, it means you are taking it too hard, so stop a while. And don't pass negligently over any of the points made in your manual. When the manual exhorts you to tongue each note, be sure that you do just that; because this matter of whispering "tu" on each note is the basis of your breath control, without which you will never arrive at the smooth sustained tone which is good recorder playing. Be sure you operate your thumb-hole correctly from the beginning, because if you bend your thumb up and use the thumb-tip, it will cut down your speed later.

If you play in a group, you will have the example of more experienced players to show the way to better tone and phrasing. If you play alone, it will help if you listen to some recording of good recorder players. Carl Dolmetsch and Alfred Mann have made several, and the "Music Minus One" series will give you an opportunity to hear good recorder tone as well as a chance to play along with the records, filling in yourself on the recorder part.

In a national news weekly's recent discussion of the stresses and tensions of modern life, surgeon Sir Heneage Ogilvie was quoted as saying that only leisure could break the chain. And not mere idleness, he said, but leisure filled with some occupation that "makes a call on the intelligence and restores self-respect."

The recorder offers us an outlet of this kind -- a means of self-expression in which we can not only mark our daily progress in skill with satisfaction, but also find a fresh, uncomplicated basis for old and new human relationships. Above all, with our recorders we share the miracle of recreating the world of song.

* Sorry, we cannot bring the pictures. Editor.

Summer Activities

The American Recorder Society is sponsoring a Labor Day week-end (Friday afternoon through Monday afternoon) especially planned for recorder players, or enthusiasts. It will be held at Indian Hill Music Workshop, Stockbridge, Mass. Activities will include instruction for beginners, and supervised ensemble work for more advanced players. In addition there will be a concert each evening, the first a chamber concert for strings, featuring Berl Senofsky, violin, George Grossman, viola, and Shirley Trepel, violincello. The next will be a concert for recorder, harpsichord, and strings, and for a gala finale, the participants in the week-end will perform for each other, in various combinations of recorders. LaNoue Davenport will be in charge of the recorder activities.

Indian Hill is located in the Berkshires, and the famous Berkshire landscape will be available for hikes. Other activities, such as swimming, tennis, etc., will be offered at such times as the participants become winded from too much tootling.

Facilities are dormitory style, with some rooms for two. The price, which is all-inclusive is \$50.00 per person for the rooms for two, and \$45.00 for the dormitory.

Those interested may contact Mr. Mordecai Bauman, Indian Hill Music Workshop, Stockbridge, Mass., or LaNoue Davenport, 1453 York Ave., New York 21, N. Y. Reservations should be addressed to Mr. Bauman.

New York Pro Musica Antiqua

The New York Pro Musica Antiqua announces a Festival of Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque Music to be held in Lenox, Mass., on Wed., Sat., and Sun., August 18-21, and the same days August 25-29. The programs will include Italian, English, Spanish, and German music of these periods. The group features voices, recorders, viols, and Harpsichord. Inquiries should be directed to Mr. Roy A. Rappaport, Box 1, Avaloch, Lenox, Mass.

New York Folk-Guitar Club

The New York Folk-Guitar Club, Dr. Charles and Irmgard Carlé, directors, is sponsoring a Folk Music Workshop during July and August at the Birchwood Barn, Lenox, Mass. Instruction will be given in folk-guitar, classic guitar, and recorder ensemble, plus a series of concerts and lectures at the Lenox Library. Inquiries should be addressed to: Birchwood Barn, Lenox, Mass.

Chicago

Two very welcome communications from Chicago set forth at some length activities in that area. The first, from Katherine H. Bowers (Mrs. W.B), of 1550 N. Wieland St., Chicago, 10, Ill., apprises us of the existence of the Crilly Court Recorder Group, and also encloses details of two programs given by the group. She also describes a "Recorder Jam Session" on May 24, 1954, in which three groups of players; a South Side Group, North Shore Group, and the above-mentioned Crilly Court ensemble, got together and played for each other.

Miss Connie Campbell, of 632 N. Dearborn St., Chicago 10, Ill. encloses a rather imposing list of prospective members of a proposed Chicago Recorder Society, which has been thoroughly prepared with a listing of preferred instruments, and approximate stage of advancement. If this should be of interest to any Chicago member of the ARS, Miss Campbell would welcome inquiries.

Concerts

Wooster, Ohio, May 9. In a program of Chamber Music presented by the Department of Music of The College of Wooster, recorders were played by Barbara Stechow and Richard Leeds. Also participating in the program were Mrs. Betty Russell and Doris Ornstein, harpsichordists, the Madrigal Group of Wooster, and Arthur Follows, 'cello.

New York City, May 13. The Amor Musicae Student Ensemble was presented by Claudia Lyon, recorder, and Reba Paeff Mirsky, petit harpsichord, in a concert at Carnegie Recital Hall. Music played was by Bach, Telemann, Molinarc and Purcell.

New York City, June 7. John Langstaff, baritone, accompanied by Seymour Barab, viol, and Bernard Krainis, recorder, presented a program of mediaval music at the annual garden party for members of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Boston, Mass. June 11, 1954. Dorothy Bartol, Raymond Blois, Ethel Cook, Morna Crawford, Katheryn Ford, Ervin Lewis, Harold Marshman, Ruth Misch, Elizabeth Sullivan, Dorothy Wetherald, and Samuel Zahl, all members of the Boston Recorder Consort, with Elna Sherman, Director of the Consort, participated in a concert at the Harvard Musical Association Library. The program included music for consort, recorder and harpsichord, and piano.

New Recording

Recorder Music of the 18th Century. Classic Editions 1051. Volume II of Classic Editions anthology of recorder music. LaNoue Davenport, recorder; Jesse Tryon, violin; Earl Schuster, oboe; Patricia Davenport, harpsichord; Marjorie Neal, 'cello. Quartettino by Alessandro Scarlatti; Sonata in G minor, J.B. Loeillet; Concerto from Church Cantata #152, J.S. Bach, Trio Sonata in C minor and Quartet in G major, G.P. Telemann.

For Sale

Dolmetsch Bass Recorder. Still in unopened packing case. Dr. Allan Roos, 17 W. 54 St., N.Y. 19, N.Y.

Correction

In the review of The Living Theatre Studio production of The Age of Anxiety (Apr. 1954) the name of the singer should have been Isca, not Isaac, Jorgensen, and the composer was Mr. Jackson MacLow, not McLow.