

AMERICAN RECORDER SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

EDITED BY LANOUE DAVENPORT

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Recorder for Children
by
Gertrud Bamberger

The recorder is gaining more and more recognition as a child's instrument. The reasons are obvious. Tone production and fingering are comparatively easy and require less coordination than on most other instruments. It is a small, handy instrument which can be carried along on a trip, even up the apple tree, and last but not least, it is inexpensive. It opens up a new world to a child, the world of playing music with other people.

All this has been recognized and needs no advertising any more. In fact, the recorder is almost getting too popular, and this article aims at clarifying (and somewhat restricting) its possibilities.

Before Christmas three different parents asked me to recommend the "best" recorder and music as a Christmas present for their children. The mother of a four year old one was quite disappointed when I discouraged her and suggested that the child would only chew it up and make a few squeaky sounds on it. The mother of a girl, age seven, wanted her daughter to get acquainted now with the recorder and perhaps have lessons in the Fall. The third one, a good amateur pianist, wanted to teach his boy nine years old. All these parents were somewhat startled when I asked them: "Would you ever think of giving a child a violin or a flute without providing a competent music teacher? And wouldn't this teacher have to be an expert on the instrument as well as a well rounded musician and educator besides?" Why do many people think that the recorder requires less understanding of a child's learning process than any other more expensive instrument? Is not, on the contrary, this first opportunity to make music on a real instrument a vital experience to a child? Is not, therefore, the set-up for these first steps of great importance?

The choice of the instrument is of secondary importance, and will largely be determined by financial considerations. But one should not go below a certain minimum price and buy a toy. If the child is to be taught in a group, the choice of the instrument should be left to the teacher, for in order to play in tune it is best for all to use the same make. The first recorder does not have to be an expensive one. Children don't always take very good care of the instrument (and it is tempting to use it as a baseball bat), so that all the mishaps of losing parts, or a sudden chewing interest on the part of the puppy had better be taken care of on an inexpensive instrument. A new, expensive recorder makes a real impression on a child who can play already. It gives him a new sense of pride.

What music should be used?

There are several recorder methods available, such as Bradford-Parker, Giesbert, Katz, Middelfort, Ruetz, Trapp, and others. Each of these contains valuable material as well as good ideas and suggestions for the adult who teaches the child, but none seems completely satisfactory as a child's method. Some do not have enough easy material, some present too many features too soon (staccato, 6/8 meter, complicated rhythms), some present good material at the right time but with confusing notation. Most of these methods use words only in the beginning, some not at all. Yet, a child learns by listening to and singing a song. To sing it without words is unnatural for a young child.

An excellent book, published recently, is "Tunes for Children", arranged for recorders and singing by Johanna E. Kulbach. This book, more than any other I know, is apt to arouse a child's appetite for music. It has sixty lovely songs, mostly folk songs, many of them proven favorites with children without being the all-too well-known fare. The words, wherever supplied by the author, are childlike without being sugar coated, the two-part arrangements are not too hard yet interesting enough to give the child the pleasure of ensemble playing.

"Tunes for Children" is not a method. It cannot be used for self-teaching, but can successfully be used together with a method. It will also help to bridge the gap between quicker and slower children in the same class, because the more ambitious students will soon be able to play the second part. The easier songs offer excellent sight-reading material.

For a second edition, which should be due shortly, the following suggestions may be helpful: The origin of the folksongs should be indicated. A fingering chart could be added for those children who want to do a little exploring of their own. Some exercises here and there such as the Katz method contains may arouse an interest in technique and velocity.

It takes a discriminating adult to choose and combine material from several books, adding his own, to give the child an experience which is interesting, challenging, stimulating and yet not above his capacities.

American Recorder Society Edition No. 15:

JOHANN HERMANN SCHEIN, Three Canzonettas arranged for three recorders by Winifred Jaeger.

Johann Hermann Schein (1586 - 1630), an outstanding composer of his time, was one of Joh. Seb. Bach's predecessors as Cantor at St. Thomas' in Leipzig. Among his secular compositions are numerous choral and instrumental works, from simple dance forms to the most refined and expressive chamber music. The three pieces arranged in ARS No. 15 are taken from the first part of his collection "Musica Boscarea" or "Waldliederlein" (1621), settings to the kind of pastoral lyrics which were the fashion of that period. In his foreword to this collection, Schein points out that these songs may well be played on a variety of instruments, among which he specifically mentions recorders or little flutes ("Flotlein").

Letter to the Editor

"Although flutists customarily stay put, some do move about." Anon.

THE ADVENTURES OF A FOOTLOOSE PFEIFFER IN CHICAGO

It all happened this way: Obeying a strong impulse, the undersigned flew to Chicago last Thanksgiving weekend, taking with him two braces of recorders and some printed music - purely a normal precaution against emergencies.

When I got there, I said to myself, how should I go about locating the faithful flautists in a strange city? Why, I answered, through the directory of ARS members, of course. However, the list, after close examination, yielded exactly seven names. Incredible, I thought. Only seven woosers of the muse in all Chicago? Absurd! There must be more.

So first I called Mrs. W. B. Bowers, whose enthusiastic report in the July NEWSLETTER mentioned a conclave of several ensembles from various parts of the city. But, alas she was on the point of leaving for Central America with Mr. Bowers to do anthropological research (of all things!).

Next I tried Miss Connie Campbell who had carefully compiled a directory of Chicago players. No answer. Then Mr. and Mrs. Sagan. Moved to California. That left three. Mr. James Rosser. In Winnetka. Two left. At this point my weekend looked bleak indeed.

It was Mrs. Malcolm Collier who broke the log jam. Through her I was able to meet and play with (that very night!) a group of ten led by Mr. Sam Lessner at the home of Mrs. Jo Ann Klutch in Jeffrey Manor; and again the following evening with the "Monday Evening Group" at the home of Mrs. Alice Schneider off the University of Chicago campus.

Mr. Sam Lessner, film critic of the CHICAGO DAILY NEWS, and instructor in recorder playing at the Chicago Central YMCA, is one of the leading spirits in the recrudescence of interest in antique instruments. Although the Jeffrey Manor group is not too far advanced, it did play, among other items that night, the Ezra Rachlin VARIATIONS ON A FRENCH THEME and the Bach CHORALES (Schirmer). By the oddest of chances, I had brought my Dolmetsch bass, and I had a most enjoyable evening. Mr. Lessner's YMCA group gave a downtown concert the following Tuesday, but unfortunately I could not attend.

The "off-campus" group, which regularly meets Mondays, was gracious enough to call a special meeting Saturday evening, for which I give thanks. For that evening we played Haendel's "Rodrigo Suite," the Allegro from the Concerto Grosso, a Debussy movement, the Hindemith "Suite," and a Mozart Divertimento, a lavish evening! They had been playing, among other items, the Eyrd and Gibbons Fantasias and a Haendel Fugue arranged by Mrs. Bowers. The addition of string music played by Mr. Collier lent an interesting variety of timbre to the ensemble.

With both these groups we discussed informally the ARS and the NEWSLETTER - pro and con, and the advantages of ARS membership; how the New York chapter went about its business, how it conducted its meetings, etc.

There exists in Chicago (and I wish to believe in most large cities of the United States) an interest and love for the archaic musical arts which somehow seems more modern and more substantial than the frenetic efforts of some of our contemporaries. What I have learned from my visit with our Chicago confreres is the genuine interest existing there in the joy of recorder playing and in the American Recorder Society, for the exchange of ideas and for the building of a better musical life through the recorder ensemble.

Carl Cowl

Concerts

Newark, N. J., Nov. 7, 1954. The Newark Museum presented An Hour of Baroque Music, featuring Alfred Mann, recorder; Josef Marx, oboe; August Wenzinger, viola da gamba; and Erwin Bodky, harpsichord. Music played was by J. C. Pepusch, Christopher Simpson, John David Heinichen, Handel, and Telemann.

New York City, Nov. 18, 1954. Claudia Lyon, recorderist, and Reba Paeff Mirsky, harpsichordist, presented their ensemble. Amer Musicae, in a performance of 17th and 18th century music. Assisting artists were: Lois Wann, oboe; Mary de Csepel, virginals; Vally Gara, 'cellic; Mary Hasman, violin; and Constance Jessup, soprano. Music by Telemann, Loeillet, Bach, Scarlatti, and Handel was played.

New York City, Dec. 12, 1954. The first in a series of Children's Concerts at the New York College of Music featured The Musicians' Workshop, Erich Katz, Director, in a program of Holiday Music (Christmas and Hanukah) for voices, recorders, and voice with guitar. Playing the recorder were LaNoue Davenport, Winifred Jaeger, Erich Katz, and Herbert Kellman.

New York City, Dec. 12, 1954. The Knickerbocker Chamber Players, George Koutzen, Director, included in their program at the Metropolitan Museum of Art a Trio Sonata for Recorders and Continuo by Telemann, and the Fourth Brandenburg Concerto of Bach. Richard and Theodora Schulze were the recorder players, and Herman Neuman conducted.

New York City, Dec. 25, 1954. The Musicians' Workshop was featured on Herman Neuman's "Hands Across the Sea", WNYC, in a program of Christmas Music for voices, viols, and recorders. Participants included the Musicians' Workshop Singers; LaNoue Davenport, Roderick Evans, Winifred Jaeger, Erich Katz and Herbert Kellman, recorders; LaNoue Davenport, Winifred Jaeger and Max Shames, viols; Martha Bixler, soprano, and Richard Bond, tenor.

Jan. 4 and 25, and Feb. 10, 1955. The Theodore Thomas Orchestra, Richard Schulze, conductor, will present three concerts of music featuring the recorder, on the above dates at Carnegie Recital Hall.

New York City, Jan. 16, 1955. Claudia Lyon, recorder, and Reba Paeff Mirsky, harpsichord, assisted by Doris Kane, soprano, with members of the New School recorder ensemble, presented a program of 17th and 18th century music at the Museum of the City of New York. Claudia Lyon will also appear as guest artist on a program given by Whitney Tustin's woodwind ensemble, at the New York Historical Society on Feb. 13, 1955.

Play

The "Shakespearewrights" production of "Twelfth Night", which opened Nov. 9, 1954, at the Jan Hus Auditorium to critical bravos from the Broadway critics, utilizes a score composed by Ellen Bower for two recorders and lute. Players are Joel Newman, alto recorder; Anna Kaufman, tenor and sopranino recorders; and Donald Mork, lute.

Music Reviews

Michael East, Twelve Ayerie Fancies of Four Parts. Four Volumes. RMS 700, 702, 704, 706, Schott and Co., Ltd. Edited and arranged by Francis Grubb. From Michael East's (c. 1580-1648) 'Seventh Set of Part Books', these are fairly simple to play, but nonetheless quite interesting and enjoyable compositions. A particularly noteworthy point is that the two upper voices frequently interchange parts, with the second taking the lead. For two sopranos, alto and tenor.

John Graves, Suite for Four Recorders. Two sopranos, alto and tenor. RMS 540, Schott and Co., Ltd. In four movements, Prelude, Siciliano, Minuet and Trio, and Finale. This work requires competent musicianship, especially to negotiate the rhythmically complex Finale.

Michael Tippett, Four Inventions. Soprano and alto. RMS 744, Schott and Co., Ltd. Written by a well-known contemporary English composer, these are lovely pieces, and well worth the effort involved in mastering them.

The Bird Fancier's Delight. RMS 281, Schott and Co., Ltd. The famous collection of tunes for birds, edited, and provided with an extremely interesting historical introduction, by Stanley Godman.

William de Fesch, Fourteen Duets. For alto and tenor. RMS 211. Arranged by Audrey Abbott and Theo Wyatt. These pleasant duets will serve a real need in providing music for the somewhat neglected alto-tenor combination.

Henk van der Vliet, Variations on Le Pont de Nantes. RMS 271. For two sopranos, alto, and piano duet. The piano parts require a fair amount of technique, as do the recorder parts. Special care must be taken to achieve correct balance between piano and recorders, which is somewhat difficult to do.

Miscellaneous

One of our members, Mrs. R. W. Burrell, is preparing a thesis and requests the help of the membership. This thesis is "A Study of the Contemporary Revival of Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque Music." Mrs. Burrell would like members to send her any information, periodicals, programs, etc., which might be relative to the following subtitles: A. Field of Publications. 1. Periodicals, 2. Books, 3. Music Scores. B. Field of Recordings. C. Field of Instrument Manufacture. D. Field of Education (including college). E. Field of Church Music. F. Field of performance and general activities of musical societies. 1. Amateur, 2. Professional.

She would appreciate any information, no matter how small it might seem, sent to her at Room 128, Agricultural Center, University Station, Baton Rouge 3, La.

The above mentioned Mrs. Burrell has been instrumental, along with Dr. Kenneth Klaus and Gordon Epperson, in forming a society for ancient music and instruments at Louisiana State University. The group calls itself the "Pro Musica Antiqua."

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Dr. Leonard Meinwald, of 2 Meridian Road, Levittown, N. Y., wishes to contact recorder players living in Levittown or the vicinity. His telephone number is Levittown 9-7045.

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Miss Janet Peterson, of 177 Arnold Avenue, Edgewood 5, R. I., a former treasurer of the American Recorder Society, is keeping up her recorder activities in the Providence area, where the recorder seems to be little known. She has appeared in various concerts and is anxious to contact harpsichordists in or around Providence for ensemble playing.

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We are planning to print a revised list of teachers of the recorder who are members of the A.R.S. This list will be available to the public. Any member teaching the recorder who wishes to be included in this list should please send his address, telephone number, school affiliations and other pertinent information to the Secretary, Roderick Evans, 341 E. 74th St., New York 21, N. Y., before February 10, 1955.