



NOTES

www.washingtonrecordersociety.org

December 2019

Join Us on December 16 for Our Annual Holiday Get-Together!

On Monday, December 16, we will have our annual holiday get-together. We will play holiday music together, selected and led by our music leaders—and anyone else who would like to bring music!—and enjoy refreshments and each other's company.

If you would like to bring holiday snacks to share, please feel free! We will supply beverages and cups, plates, and napkins.

Many of us have found this to be one of our favorite WRS events—we hope you can make it!

Holiday Concerts

There are a number of concerts in our area this holiday season of interest to lovers of early music and recorders. Besides the ones listed here, check out the Facebook page of Early Music DC:

<https://www.facebook.com/Early.Music.DC/>.

One particular concert we wanted to highlight: on the afternoon of December 21, **East of the River**, an ensemble featuring recorder virtuosos **Nina Stern and Daphna Mor**, will perform a free Winter Solstice concert at the National Gallery of Art. Nina and Daphna are experts not only in medieval Western music but also in Sephardic music, music of the Balkans, North Africa, and the Middle East. More information about the December 21 concert is at <https://www.nga.gov/calendar/concerts/seventy-eighth/east-of-the-river.html>, and more information on East of the River is at <https://www.eastoftherivermusic.com/>.

Additional concerts of interest, roughly in chronological order, are:

Washington Bach Consort

The Tudors: Sacred motets of Tallis, Sheppard, Byrd, and others—December 6 and 7

Bach's Christmas Oratorio—December 22

<https://bachconsort.org/upcoming-concerts/>

JACK Quartet (string quartet)

Modern Medieval—December 8, National Gallery of Art

<https://www.nga.gov/calendar/concerts/seventy-eighth/jack-quartet.html>

Folger Consort

Gloria! A Baroque Christmas—December 13–18

<https://www.folger.edu/events/gloria>

Calmus Vocal Ensemble (from Leipzig)

Carols From Around the World—December 15, National Gallery of Art

<https://www.nga.gov/calendar/concerts/seventy-eighth/calmus-vocal-ensemble.html>

Ensemble Gallilei, <http://www.egmusic.com/calendar/>

Winter Solstice Concerts—December 13, Baltimore;

December 15, Annapolis

The Washington Chorus

A Candlelight Christmas – December 7, 16, 22 (Kennedy Center), 20, 21 (Strathmore)

<https://thewashingtonchorus.org/master-calendar/2018/12/7/a-candlelight-christmas>

National Symphony Orchestra

Handel's Messiah—December 20–22, Kennedy Center

<https://culturecapital.com/event/71203/nso-handels-messiah>

National Philharmonic

Handel's Messiah—December 21–22, Strathmore

<https://culturecapital.com/event/72630/national-philharmonic-handels-messiah>

Armonia Nova

Twelfth Night—January 4 (DC) and 5 (Alexandria)

<http://www.armonianova.org/concerts.htm>

Also of note is that on February 7 and 8, Stile Antico, a spectacular vocal ensemble from the UK that specializes in Renaissance music, will join the Folger Consort for performances of the music of Palestrina at Washington National Cathedral. Visit

<https://www.stileantico.co.uk/concerts/2020/02/08/palestrinas-perfect-art-2> for more information.

Report on Last Spring's Member Survey From the WRS Board

Last spring, many of you participated in a survey of WRS members and other area recorder players. We wanted to let you know about the survey results and how we are responding.



Results of the survey. Thirty-eight people responded. Of those, 60 percent said they attend WRS meetings regularly or occasionally. Of those who don't attend our Monday evening meetings, many said that coming to Silver Spring on a weekday evening, during rush hour, was difficult. Some people didn't like driving after dark. Of those who do attend on Monday, most expressed approval of the 7:30–9:30 meeting time.

Of other possible meeting days and times, the most popular alternatives to Monday evenings were Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

Regarding the music played by the Nova and Antiqua groups, the large majority of those responding liked a combination of sight-reading new music and working over time on selected pieces to polish them.

There were a number of suggestions, including:

- Explore ways to increase our membership, and especially ways to appeal to younger players.
- Offer more clarity about the criteria for choosing between the two Antiqua groups.
- Offer more opportunities for coaching or mentoring by more experienced players. One suggestion was for more experienced players to alternate instruments during a playing session so that others would be able to play along with them.

How the Board is responding. We hear the concerns of those of you for whom Monday evening meetings are inconvenient or impossible, and we are exploring occasional weekend meetings as an alternative. (Interestingly, our survey of other recorder groups in the U.S. has revealed that a large majority of them meet on weekends, once or twice a month.) Unfortunately, the Church of the Atonement is not available on weekends, so we will be exploring other possible venues this coming spring, such as libraries or community centers in Montgomery County.

As everyone knows, there have been some changes this fall among our music leaders. Leo has taken a break from leading one of the Antiqua groups, and Adela took a break for her new daughter. David continues to lead the Nova recorder orchestra, and Rachel Isaacson, and Adela when she is able, are leading the group previously directed by Leo. We are encouraging other WRS members to volunteer to bring music to our groups and lead us in playing that music. We also will encourage some of our more experienced members to move between instruments during

Nova meetings in order to give more people the opportunity to play along with them.

We have tried to offer more guidance for those wondering which Antiqua group to play with. Specifically, we have suggested that the “consort” is for those who are comfortable playing one to a part, who can play most if not all four standard recorders (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass), and who are able to play music on alto one octave higher than written (“alto up”).

We welcome your thoughts about other ways to improve and to meet your needs. Feel free to talk with any of the Board members or music leaders, or to send us a message at <http://www.washingtonrecordersociety.org/contact-us/>.

Shelley Gruskin Is Coming—Save the Date!

Save the date—Shelley Gruskin is coming to WRS on Saturday, March 7, 2020, for a recorder workshop. Shelley has been giving workshops at WRS for more than 40 years.

There are many reasons for you to save this date—so many, in fact, that a full article would take up most of the *Notes*. To save space and your patience, here are just a few:

- Shelley was one of the original members of the professional early music group the New York Pro Musica, which helped put the recorder and early music on the map in the United States.
- Shelley has received a prestigious lifetime achievement award from the American Recorder Society for his many contributions to the recorder.
- By Shelley's own reckoning, he has led more than 500 recorder workshops here and abroad. Now that's longevity.
- Shelley is a masterful teacher whose zest for the recorder and early music remains undiminished.
- Shelley's connection to WRS goes way back, and he knows many WRS members by name.

Shelley's workshop will be at the Church of the Atonement from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. In early 2020, you will receive more information and a flyer to register.

If you enjoy playing the recorder, want to learn more about early music, and want to improve your playing of Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque composers, pencil in this date—March 7, 2020—for Shelley Gruskin's WRS workshop.



Quintessentially Gwyn

By Jane Udelson and Daniel Bruner

On Saturday, November 2, a group of 22 Washington Recorder Society members and other area recorder players were treated to an exciting and memorable workshop led by Gwyn Roberts. She came from Philadelphia to teach us a new perspective on music that we too often tend to take for granted. We worked with several Pavans and Galliards by Anthony Holborne (c. 1545–1602); dance music by Henry

Purcell (1659–1695) written for a play titled “The Old Bachelor,” including a Bourrée, Hornpipe, Minuet, and Rondeau; and a Suite No. 1 in D Minor by Georg Philippe Telemann (1681–1767).

Gwyn noted that the pieces she presented were untitled or generically titled as a “Pavan” or “Bourrée.” She suggested that our appreciation of these pieces might benefit by giving each one a name that describes the feelings it evokes in us, such as the name of an animal or a mood or something that brings to mind a story. Naming pieces in this way might make them come more to life for us and might motivate us to seek them out more often.

After playing each piece, we discussed the feelings they evoked in us, and suggested names we thought might fit our sense of the piece. The movements in the Telemann Suite brought to mind animals, such as “Monkey” or “Snake” or “Mockingbird.” The Purcell pieces evoked many different moods or scenarios in the life of “The Old Bachelor,” such as being “on the make,” or “preening,” or feeling despondent or wistful. The dances by Holborne were the most challenging to name; Gwyn encourages us to go beyond descriptions which are generic to Pavans and Galliards, such as “stately” or “dignified” or “energetic”. We came up with some surprising and amusing—even hilarious—titles, including “First Job,” “The Introvert,” “Check Me Out,” and “Kids’ Playground.”

By stretching our minds and our descriptive capabilities, we came to a deeper appreciation of many of the pieces. Clearly, Gwyn had thought a lot about this process and conveyed it to us most amusingly.

Of course, Gwyn also shared with us many insights into recorder technique and musicianship. For instance, she emphasized one important rule ending a traditional dance piece: don’t ritard at the end, because if you show down at the end, the dancers will fall over! She also discussed the

importance of breathing naturally while playing, and avoiding an overemphasis on “support,” since the recorder is neither a high-resistance instrument (like an oboe) or a high-flow instrument (like a tuba). She cautioned against playing with the beak of the recorder too far into the mouth, which increases the likelihood of clogging the instrument. Instead, she suggested placing the bottom of the mouthpiece on the dry part of the lower lip, leaving the upper lip free to articulate a variety of different sounds. To help with playing in tune, she emphasized the importance of hearing the note you are about to play before actually playing it.

As always, Gwyn combined humor, patience, deep musical knowledge, and insight as a teacher. All of us ended the day feeling energized, enriched, and motivated!

In Case of Inclement Weather

If there is inclement weather on a Monday night when an Antiqua or Nova session is scheduled, or on a Saturday when a workshop is scheduled, contact the Church of the Atonement to find out whether the church is closed. The phone number for the church is 301-649-4131; the email address is officemgr@atonementlife.org. The church’s website is <https://www.atonementlife.org>.

Plan on Attending Amherst Early Music’s Washington, DC, Weekend, March 21–22, 2020!

AEM’s “Spring Break” workshop in Washington, DC, will be Saturday and Sunday, March 21–22. This will be their third year in our city. The past two workshops have been attended by a number of WRS members and received rave reviews.

This 2-day weekend is an ideal introduction to AEM for those who have not yet experienced it. It will be an opportunity to explore early music, as well as advanced technique and musicianship, more intensively than is possible in a 1-day workshop. It will also be a chance to learn from new and different teachers; to meet other recorder players from the mid-Atlantic region; and to meet, hear, and play with lutenists and viol players.

More information about AEM and its programs is at <https://www.amherstearlymusic.org>. More information about the Washington, DC, weekend, and opportunities to help for those who are interested, will be forthcoming soon. In the meantime, reserve the dates!



Local Recorder Teachers To Help You Improve Your Playing Technique

ADÉLA GARDAVSKÁ-BALIMA

Washington, DC

Phone: 240-688-2809

Email: cameladel@gmail.com

Lessons offered: children, teens, and adults. Individual lessons and ensemble coaching.

Other information: Higher Professional Education Degree in Music-Recorder, Evangelical Academy Conservatory in Olomouc, Czech Republic.

RACHEL ISAACSON

Travels to students' homes in the Washington, DC, area.

Phone: 571-338-4606

Email: isaacson.rachel@gmail.com

Lessons offered: children, teens, and adults. Individual students and ensemble coaching.

Other information: Studied in the Historical Performance Institute and Early Music Department at Indiana University (Bloomington).

CAROLE ROGENTINE

Bethesda, MD

Phone: 301-530-6386 (home); 301-523-5515 (cell)

Email: crogentine@gmail.com

Website: www.learnrecorderwithcarole.com

Lessons offered: teens and adults. Individual students and ensemble coaching.

Other information: Offers harpsichord accompaniment; former music director, WRS; recorder faculty at the Levine School; studies with Gwyn Roberts; past study at Indiana University School of Music and the Oberlin Summer Performance Institute.

WRS Board Members

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WRS YEAR AT A GLANCE

Dec. 16	Holiday Party
Jan. 6	Nova
Jan. 27	Antiqua
Feb. 3	Nova
Feb. 17	Antiqua
Mar. 2	Nova
Mar. 7	Shelley Gruskin Workshop
Mar. 16	Antiqua
Mar. 21–22	Amherst Early Music Workshop in Washington, DC
April 6	Nova
April 20	Antiqua
May 4	Nova
May 18	Antiqua
June 1	Nova
June 6	Spring Recital

**Regular meeting, workshops, and spring
recital at Presbyterian Church of the
Atonement.**

**Amherst Early Music Workshop at George
Washington University**

