A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN RECORDER SOCIETY: A MEMOIR

by Martha Bixler

The following portion of the “history of the ARS” (which covers 60 years in its entirety; more will appear in AR, and all of it will be posted on the ARS web site) originated as a gleam in the eye of the ARS Board of Directors at the fall 1988 meeting. Its planned appearance in 1989 was to be a feature of AR50, a year-long celebration of the founding of the Society designed to publicize the ARS and recruit new members. The Board designated me to be in charge of this history.

I accepted this assignment with some misgivings, as I knew there would be a lot of work involved, but I was given two helpers: Kenneth Wollitz, an ex-President of the ARS, a good writer, and one who had had a lot of experience with the inner workings of the ARS; and Marcia Blue, an enthusiastic member of the Society, who was willing to put in (as it turned out) thousands of hours of work on the project.

According to the original plan, Ken was to contribute a chapter on the ARS workshops and Marcia would write another on the history of the ARS chapters. Ken soon found that his task required more time than he could devote to it, so he had to drop out of the endeavor. Marcia devoted many years to the Sisyphian labor of gathering data on the 90-plus chapters—much of the material that she assembled is available to the public at the Recorder Music Center (RMC) at Regis University in Denver, CO—but she found that this mass of information did not lend itself to organization in the form of a narrative chapter in the history. (Her summary is included in two appendices to the full “History.”)

Other assistance came from Judith Wink and a former student, Giocille Terenzio, but the responsibility for what is written here is mine.

As part of the research for this history, Ken, Marcia, Sigrid Nagle (a former editor of AR), and I conducted a number of meetings with people who had been involved with the ARS in the 1960s, ’70s and ’80s. We even interviewed the founder of the ARS, Suzanne Bloch—twice, since the tape of the first interview turned out to be untranscribable. (The second was also almost impossible to transcribe; Suzanne spoke softly, with great rapidity, and with an unplaceable foreign accent.)

Peter Seibert interviewed Winifred (Wini) Jaeger in Seattle, WA. These interviews, which were all taped and then carefully transcribed, have been a very valuable source—an “oral history” of the ARS. The transcriptions and tapes are now also at the RMC.

Around 1990 I was lucky enough to visit the Erich Katz Archives, which were then at the University of Colorado, Boulder. These archives, which were generously presented to the American Music Research Center at Boulder by Wini Jaeger, Erich’s companion in his later years, are a treasure-trove of information concerning the ARS in the 1940s and 1950s. They have since been moved and have become the Erich Katz Papers of the RMC, in the Archives and Special Collections at Regis University.

There were, of course, many other textual sources. I have minutes of meetings that took place as far back as the 1940s, and other documents from the ’40s and ’50s. I had access to office records going back to the time of our first secretary, Clara Whittaker; in the 1960s, through the tenures of Bill Leatham, Andrew Acs and Mary Ann Fleming, our administrative directors in the 1970s; and Waddy Thompson, our executive director in the 1980s.

I have my own voluminous correspondence, dating back to the very early 1960s, when I was editor of The American Recorder, and then in my two presidencies of the ARS in the 1970s and 1980s. I have used the minutes of meetings of the Board of Directors from 1960 until 1990 as well as 12 “Letters to the Board,” (about 15 in all, written during my presidencies). These “letters” were written to Board members in an attempt to keep them apprized of what was happening in the ARS, which in those days mostly meant what was happening in New York City, NY.

In addition there are the earliest editions of the ARS Newsletter, from 1950-1960; all issues of AR from 1960 to the present; later (after a 20-year hiatus) editions of the Newsletter, from 1980 to the present; and other publications, such as the British Recorder News, later called Recorder and Music magazine.

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As time passed it became apparent that writing a history of the ARS was a much bigger project than any of us had thought, and it would take much longer than anyone would have liked. Moreover, there was no way I could write a “history of the ARS” without its turning, at least partially, into a personal memoir. I was heavily involved with so much that happened that it was impossible for me to write about some issues without introducing my own personal slant—but I have tried to avoid misstatements of fact, and to be fair, even when writing about situations where I had strong opinions.

This is not a scholarly paper, and I have no footnotes or references to sources for some of my assertions of fact, but I have done my best to see that I’ve said nothing that is untrue. In some cases I have had to rely on my own memory or that of others. There will be errors—this is inevitable—but they will be corrected.

In closing, I must acknowledge those who have been “cheerleaders” in this endeavor—Valerie Horst, Gene Murrow, Connie Primus and others—and those long-suffering witnesses to many of the events herein recorded who have been good enough to read the manuscript, or parts of it—John Nelson, Scott Paterson, Richard Sachsteder, Judy Whaley and, especially, Connie Primus. Many thanks to you all.

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Chapter One: Beginnings
A letter addressed to Erich Katz and signed by Douglas Perrin (which is preserved in the Erich Katz Papers at the Recorder Music Center, Regis University, Denver, CO) makes the following assertion: in 1939 J. Homer Wakefield, who was teaching at Brigham Young University in Utah, gave a series of concerts with some friends. They called themselves “The American Recorder Society.” This group of players, for the most part anonymous, has vanished without a trace—and the tale may be apocryphal; as anyone over a certain age knows, for a long time every piece of stationery, every brochure, every important document connected with the ARS bore the legend: “Founded in 1939 by Suzanne Bloch.”

Suzanne was always firm in her recollection that she was the founder of the ARS, now a 68-year-old organization of recorder players not only from the U.S. but from all over the world: young, old, from every walk of life, including professional musicians and amateurs, those who are “serious” about the instrument, and those who use it only as a source of recreation and social intercourse.

In a letter addressed “to whom it may concern,” dated March 30, 1939, and signed by Suzanne Bloch, a lutenist, devotee of early music, and daughter of composer Ernest Bloch, the birth of the ARS was announced to the world. In this document, Suzanne (above in an undated photo) tells of the founding of the ARS “in answer to the growing need for a center of information regarding the instrument, its players and its literature.”

The aims of the fledgling society were rather grandiose considering its small size—perhaps a dozen amateur players who gathered in a New York City schoolroom once a month to entertain themselves with amateur music-making. “Members will be entitled to a monthly bulletin answering questions pertaining to the recorder received by the ARS, and the use of a lending library of recorder music. The encouragement of ensemble playing will be stressed; members will be asked to form groups wherever they are.... More recorder music for school, home and concert use will be the Society’s greatest aim.... Contemporary composers will be urged to write for the recorder.” And, most important: “Dues for members will be $2.00 yearly, payable every sixth month on April first and October first.” For the magnificent sum of $1.00 every six months, the recorder players of America could belong to a Society of their own very.

A copy of the above-mentioned document was received at the headquarters of the ARS at the end of October, 1987. It had been forwarded by a member of the Chicago (IL) chapter of the ARS, Ruth Feucht, who had been given it by an older member, Jane Cook. Jane had told Ruth that the document was “from the first organization of the ARS.” Although Suzanne had no memory of the document or its contents, it appears to have been signed by her, and was presumably sent to recorder players she knew around the country as an invitation to join. Suzanne herself thought it may have been sent to colleges as well. In any event, in view of the date on the letter, April 1, 1939, seems a convenient date to set for the founding of the ARS.

In the summer of 1935, Suzanne went to Haslemere, in Surrey, England, to study the lute (then an almost-obsolete instrument, like the recorder) with the celebrated antiquarian, musical instrument maker, and lutenist Arnold Dolmetsch. Dolmetsch’s son Carl, then 25 years old, was already coming into his own as a recorder player, and he persuaded Suzanne that she should learn to play. After a half-hour lesson with Carl, Suzanne became, in her own wry words, an “instant professional”—although, to give her credit, she was always modest about her recorder skills.

Carl Dolmetsch came to New York on tour in winter 1936 and performed with Suzanne. Carl played the recorder, and Suzanne played recorder, lute and virginals. One of the places they visited was the City and Country School; one of their listeners was a young music teacher, Margaret Bradford. So enraptured was she that she, too, went off to Haslemere to study recorder with the Dolmetsches. She, too, became an instant professional—not at performing, but at teaching recorder to adults at New York University, and children at the City and Country School.

G. Schirmer published How to Play the Recorder by Margaret Bradford and Elizabeth Parker in 1938/39. In the meantime, Suzanne had started importing Dolmetsch recorders to sell in the U.S., mainly as a favor to the Dolmetsch family, and began publicizing the recorder in concerts along with her lute.

There is no doubt that Suzanne played a large part in getting the recorder movement started in this country. Her contributions, she believed, were three: 1) bringing recorders to the U.S.; 2) popularizing them by playing them in concerts; and 3) founding the ARS.

Suzanne’s aim, stated in an interview many years after the founding of the Society, was to get people to play better. Even in those very early days, it became obvious that the recorder was an easy instrument to learn to play badly, and for true musicians it was often a trial to listen to the squawks of amateurs. “We’ve got to start a Society where people can meet,” said Suzanne. “I want to have them learn to hear each other.”

Suzanne and Margaret had a recorder-playing friend, Irmgard Lehrer, whom they considered a true professional; they asked her to be the first president of the ARS. Conflicts arose almost immediately—between those who wanted to use the Society for the benefit of the amateur members (Suzanne and Margaret) and those who were mainly interested in furthering their own careers (according to Suzanne, Irmgard, who “was using it [the ARS] for herself”—as in printing ARS stationery with her name on it, for instance).

Others involved with the Society in its infancy, who were undoubtedly motivated by a combination of both altruism and self-interest, were: Alfred Mann, musicologist, conductor, college professor and recorder player; Theodore Mix, founder of Magnamusic, first a retail storekeeper, then a distributor, then a publisher of recorder music and importer of recorders and harpsichords; Carleton Sprague Smith, chief of the Music Division of the New York Public Library; and Harold Newman, an accountant called in to help with practical matters, and later a distributor, arranger and publisher of recorder music.

Irmgard was persuaded to resign as president of the ARS about a year after she took office, and Harold became the second president. Harold was not a professional, according to Suzanne, but “the one man who can handle things. He knows about business, things we don’t know. And he also is not in the profession. He’s not trying to make a living from the recorder, so he’s ideally suited.”

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Chapter Two: Faltering Forties
Meetings of the ARS were held fairly regularly in the early 1940s in schools, apartments, and occasionally, Steinway Hall. Sometime in 1943, it was decided to suspend operations until after the end of the distractions of World War II.

Recorder-playing in the U.S., however, did not cease. Two interesting documents from that time are two issues of the American Recorder Review (A.R.R.), “a quarterly devoted to the Revival of the Recorder...” dated “Summer, 1942,” and “Winter, 1943-44.” They turned up in the archive of the late Dr. Emmanuel Winternitz, a former curator of musical instruments at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and have found their way to me.

In the first issue its editor, Dr. William Charles Carle, writes: “This is the first issue of a magazine devoted entirely to a single musical instrument: the recorder or block flute... The American Recorder Review will try to become an information center, a clearing house for different opinions and an encouraging guide in future developments.” The first issue of A.R.R contains contributions by Irmgard and Carleton (“Standards [should be] maintained at a high level... The recorder is not as easy to play well as many people think.”); an article on the “renaissance of the recorder” in the U.S.; a “survey [of the movement] from coast to coast,” including discussions of possible uses for the recorder as a therapeutic instrument for soldiers at war and handicapped children at home; advertisements for recorder courses at Smith College and the Juilliard School (both taught by Irmgard); advertisements for American-made instruments by William Koch, David Dushkin, and Irmgard; notices of recorder performances (Irmgard in Elizabethan costume); and reports of recorder activities in Washington (D.C.), Pittsburgh (PA), Chicago (IL), Portland (OR), San Francisco (CA) and, of course, New York City.

The ubiquitous Irmgard Lehrer is at the forefront of recorder activities in New York; she also has advertisements in the A.R.R. for recorder classes and music published by her “Center for Recorder Music” on West 119th Street. There is even a musical supplement to the A.R.R., ostensibly the beginning of a supply of “more recorder music for school, home and concert use” that was one of the original aims of the ARS.

The second issue of A.R.R., the winter 1943-44 edition, describes more of the activities of Irmgard. A short article about the Trapp family’s use of the recorder is included. Curiously, there is no mention of the ARS in either of the two issues of A.R.R. that have been preserved. (And yet there may have been a connection: in its first issue of a Newsletter, in 1947, the ARS announces plans to “re-issue the ARS Review.”)

In 1947, Harold was the “Director” of the ARS, and Carleton its Honorary President. Meetings were a combination of concerts and “supervised playing time for members.” Membership dues were $3.00 per year or 50 cents a meeting. One could become a Friend of the Society for $5.00. To save money, meetings were moved from Steinway Hall to branches of the New York Public Library, starting with the Nathan Straus branch on East 32nd Street.

Two issues of an American Recorder Society Newsletter published in 1947 (later aborted; ARS News Letter [sic] No. 1 appeared in 1950) give programs of mini-concert performances, under the aegis of the ARS, of both early and new music for the recorder. Erich Katz’s many arrangements and original music appear frequently on the concert programs: Old Christmas Carols and Songs for three recorders, his Sonatina for two alts, and his Trio for alto recorder, flute and viola. There are reports of New York appearances of Suzanne, Alfred Mann and Erich, of recordings of recorder music (on “unbreakable material,”) and of the new Dolmetsch plastic recorder.

Once again, some rather grandiose plans are presented to the ARS membership. Newsletter No. 1, October 1947, announces a re-issue of the ARS Review and more ARS Newsletters to come. “Outstanding American Composers will be encouraged to write for the recorder, and if funds are available, some commissions will be offered for compositions.” As far as I can tell, none of these plans was carried out, at least not immediately.

What happened to the ARS? Although abandoned by its first president, presumably for more lucrative undertakings, it continued its modest activities, and then went into hibernation during the Second World War. We owe some of the earliest chronicles to Lois M. Hutchings. A graduate student in biology at Cornell University in the winter of 1939-40, she read an ad in the New York Times that changed her life. Margaret was teaching a course in...
recorder playing at New York University. Lois joined the course in the fall of 1940, and was soon invited to attend meetings of the ARS. Like many a new convert—then as now—Lois quickly found herself involved in the administration of the ARS. Lois was probably the very first secretary of the ARS.

“An incident of the early days,” she writes, “does the Society [little] credit. In 1941 we were assembled on the stage of the Metropolitan Museum of Art to perform a concert. Three times the conductor tried to get us started and failed. So, Alfred Mann and his talented, professional mother, harpsichordist Edith Weiss-Mann, took over and presented the concert.” Saved by the professionals! Then, as now, the yen to perform sometimes took over from the commonsense recognition that one might not be ready.

From the minutes of the ARS, October 27, 1942: “During the business meeting, which was called to order by the President, Mr. Harold Newman, … many different members of the society voiced opinions and offered suggestions. Several people expressed the opinion that the original purpose motivating the formation of the Recorder Society was to bring together proficient players, and, also, … that each one might receive stimulation. We are an association of amateurs and … professional standards are not applicable. Regarding the last spring concert (May 1942, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art), the general consensus of opinion was that there was a lack of careful planning. For instance, most of the players did not even know the order of the program. It was recognized that the most successful numbers were those in which the participants had rehearsed together several times.”

From a later memo: “World War Two took more and more of the men so ... in 1943 ... it was decided to suspend meetings until more normal times came back. An interesting incident occurred in 1943 while we were still holding meetings. To one of our meetings someone brought a distinguished recorder conductor who had recently come to the U.S. from Germany. We found him unnecessarily precise according to our lax standards. I’m not certain, but it may have been Erich Katz [it was].”

If Suzanne Bloch was the mother of the ARS, Erich Katz was its father. A distinguished German Jewish musicologist, with a doctorate from the University of Freiburg, Dr. Katz had escaped to England in 1939 from Nazi Germany, and from there to the U.S. Like many of his compatriots, he had endured the horrors of concentration camp, life in a foreign country (England, where he taught music at a girls’ boarding school from 1941-1943), and a harrowingly dangerous trip across the Atlantic in a small passenger ship escorted by a U.S. military convoy.

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With his second wife, Hannah Labus Katz, Erich journeyed by train from Halifax to New York City, where the couple’s first residence was a tenement Hannah derisively called “Buckingham Palace.” Although trained as a physician, Hannah could only find work as a nurse. Erich started copying music at 45 cents a page.

The children of Columbia professors Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr were among his first students at Riverside Church. Later Erich secured teaching positions at the City College of New York, the New School and, most fortunately for the ARS, the New York College of Music (NYCM) in 1944. The NYCM later became the headquarters of the ARS.

Dr. Katz was not accepted at first by the ARS with open arms. A post card dated December 2, 1943, from then-president Harold Newman, preserved in the Erich Katz Papers, invites Erich to attend and perform at the Christmas meeting of the ARS at Steinway Hall in New York. Whether he performed or not, the distinguished musicologist did not make a terrific impression upon the members. Suzanne, who was by then beginning to lose interest in the Society, concluded that Dr. Katz “was a very dull man.” (But then she also held that Edith Weiss-Mann was “a sour-faced woman who played as though she were doing the family wash.”)

Erich was, however, an extraordinary man whose greatest gifts were as a magnetic and inventive educator—and he was also a composer, conductor, musicologist as stated, and a completely free spirit. Determined not to be fettered by convention, he dressed badly, living close to squalor in a cramped New York City apartment, and yet he loved the out-of-doors with something close to passion.

He was also passionately devoted to music, though he often wrote and spoke of the joys of silence. Another of his passions was the ARS. Probably the greatest service to the ARS ever performed by Harold was his introduction of Erich to the ARS.

In a February 1961 letter to then-vice president A.C. Glassgold, Erich mentions that when he got seriously involved with the ARS it had 18 members. This confirms his letter of March 12, 1961, to Rhoda Weber, stating that when he “took over” in 1947 or ‘48 he “started to reorganize with the 17 remaining members.”

The first postwar meeting of the ARS was held on October 29, 1947, at the NYCM. Erich had started teaching there, and the ARS was fortunate to be able to use its auditorium as a convenient venue for meetings for many years.

In 1949, LaNoue Davenport joined the ARS. A jazz trumpet player of extraordinary musical gifts, he had come to New York to study music and, especially, composition with Erich at the NYCM. “Of course if you studied with Erich you were drawn into all of his activities, so I began to sing with a group he directed called the Musicians’ Workshop. At some point around 1948 or 1949 Erich arranged to do a concert of early music over WNYC. We needed someone to play a recorder, which I’d...
never heard or had in my hands. The concert was about a month away... So a month later I made my debut on alto recorder... I think [the music] was an arrangement of a DuFay piece. After that I was hooked. I became a disciple and began to do a lot of things with Erich, one of which was the ARS—which he resuscitated about that time.”

[Interview 6/8/88]

In the 25th anniversary issue of The American Recorder (November 1964), LaNoue writes: “In 1949 [the ARS had]... several visions of projects which would further the interests of the recorder in particular, and early music in general.”

1. The establishment of ARS chapters [these were begun in 1955]
2. A teachers’ certification program [started in 1961]
3. Publication of a national magazine of high quality [begun in 1960]
4. Summer schools for recorder players [the first “ARS Seminar” was held at the National Music Camp in Interlochen, MI, in August of 1961]

Chapter Three: Flourishing Fifties

In 1950, membership in the ARS was still very small (20-25, according to LaNoue [interview, 6/8/88]), but this tiny flower was about to burst into bloom.

The influence of Erich on the Society was making itself felt. He often performed at or conducted meetings of the Society, using his own arrangements of early music and his own original music for recorders, which was being published by Harold Newman’s newly organized Hargail Music Press. Erich was also “spreading the news” about the recorder by teaching adult classes through the City College Extension Division and giving a series of lessons on the radio entitled “You Can Play the Recorder!” In 1950, the first meetings of the Society were held in summer months.

An important event for the development of the ARS was the arrival of Winifred (Wini) Jaeger upon the scene. Wini was a student of Erich at the NYCM who helped out with managing the ARS, and then became more and more involved. In the end she was Erich’s lifetime companion and amanuensis for the ARS. Wini’s kitchen table and Erich’s studio apartment on East 85th Street alternated as the ARS “office.” Erich and Wini, in a “complete reorganization,” set out to make the ARS a viable organization for recorder players.

Erich was appointed “Musical Director” of the ARS on June 15, 1950. His assistant musical directors were Betty Krohn, Eleanore Scovill, LaNoue and Bernard (Bernie) Krainis.

It should be stated here that LaNoue and Bernie were the “young Turks” of the 1950s. They were probably the first two bona fide professional recorder players in the U.S. Each was, as a young man, strongly influenced by Erich, but each was self-taught on the recorder; each discovered, on his own, how to create a truly beautiful sound and to make music on the recorder in a way that had surely not been heard in professional music circles for some hundred years.

Bernie, like LaNoue, came to the ARS via Erich. Bernie had played the trombone, but his introduction to the recorder came in the form of a 21st birthday present of a Dushkin alto
recorder from his father on December 28, 1945. “Until that moment, until I had the thing in my hands, not only had I never seen or heard the instrument, but I had never even heard of it. It was the absolute first. I stayed up all night and figured out the notes, and since no one told me that it was supposed to be an easy instrument, I started to practice. I’ve kept practicing ever since....

“In 1949 I tuned into station WNYC and heard, all by accident, a program by the Musicians’ Workshop. It was maybe a half hour of unusual madrigals and two- and three-part recorder things. I was very excited. It was the first time I had ever heard anybody else play the recorder with any degree of fluency. The group was directed by Erich Katz... I got in touch with him. I expressed interest in playing with the Musicians’ Workshop. He suggested I come to an ARS meeting and asked if I was a member of the Recorder Society. I said no. I had heard of the ARS, but it’s such an imposing name that I thought it consisted of seasoned professional players, that I couldn’t really keep up.... I walked in and there were...eight or ten people sitting around very casually and unprepossessingly. One of the great culture shocks of my life was hearing them play for the first time....

“It quickly became clear to me that this would be a quid pro quo, that in order for me to gain entrance into the Musicians’ Workshop, I was expected to put in my time with the ARS. That first year or two I believe I conducted every ARS meeting with absolutely no experience in conducting.” [Interview 9/12/88]

By 1951 Harold had, according to an interview in AR in February 1972, “turned over” the ARS to Erich. As Harold became more involved in the mercantile area of the recorder world—selling recorders and publishing and selling recorder music—the ARS became Erich’s domain.

Erich’s administrative help came from devoted amateurs—Drusilla Evans, Isabel Benedict and Lucinda Ballard—who, according to Bernie, “held things together in the early 1950s.” With the musical director and his “assistants” (soon two prominent teachers—Gertrud Bamberger and Johanna Kulbach—were added to their number) the group formed a loosely organized “administrative council.”

Bernie edited the Newsletter from 1950 until June of 1953, and then LaNoue edited it until the summer of 1959. Wini was treasurer, then secretary-treasurer, membership chair and general factotum and aid to Erich. This unincorporated “Board of Directors” continued to function in much the same way until 1959, when Erich retired to California.

In 1950, the first “membership committee” of the ARS was formed, to actively recruit and maintain membership.

The ARS Newsletter was reborn January 20, 1950, with Bernie as its first editor. “With this first issue of its News Letter, the ARS inaugurates a policy, long awaited and hopefully discussed, of presenting a fairly regular periodical devoted exclusively to the interests of the growing number of recorder players throughout the U.S.” Bernie goes on to say that “the recorder movement is at the present time mainly concentrated in the New York City area,” but he feels, evidently, that what interests New Yorkers will interest the nation. The first Newsletter reports on classes in recorder given by Gertrud Bamberger at the YMHA, Reba Mirsky at the New School for Social Research, and Erich at the New College of New York.

Newsletter 2, April 1, 1950, tells of a Honolulu (HI) Recorder Society started by Dr. and Mrs. Leonard J. Goldwater during World War II when Dr. Goldwater was stationed at Pearl Harbor. “It is believed that this group has introduced some new combinations into ensemble playing, particularly through developing ukulele accompaniments for the recorder. Our informant states that he does not believe that this combination is one which will find widespread adoption outside of the Hawaiian Islands.”

Newsletter 2 tells of meetings, concerts, and live radio broadcasts of recorder playing, of newly released recorder publications and recordings, and complains of the difficulty of finding places to buy recorder music (then lists some). It also lists places to study the recorder and gives news of the activities of the British Society of Recorder Players (SRP).

The ARS Newsletter was published continuously until 1960. For a decade, it was a valuable source for its readers, not only of news of the recorder world and the activities of the Society, but of places to find instruments, music, and instruction on the recorder—three basic needs of recorder players. And it was the first source, for players, of educational and scholarly articles in the emerging field of early music performance practice.

An announcement was made in Newsletter 4 (November 1, 1950) of an exciting new project, the ARS Editions, a music series for recorder ensemble to be published by Clarke and Way. These modest editions were priced at 60 cents a copy—40 cents for members. AMP (American Music Publishers) became the publisher and distributor in April 1954, and the ARS was no longer the distributor for its own editions.

At the same time, it began to lose editorial control of the content of the editions. But in the beginning, Erich was editor-in-chief in every sense of the word. One of Erich’s most important contributions to the ARS was getting members of the ARS interested in early music, both
to listen to and to play. Like a number of musicologists and composers of the 1950s, Erich was deeply interested in early music. He had founded the Musicians’ Workshop, a group devoted to the performance of both early and new music, for students at NYCM soon after he started teaching there in 1947. He started publishing music for recorders, both arrangements and original works, with Hargail Music in the 1940s. As editor-in-chief of the new ARS Editions, Erich had complete control over the musical fare of the amateur recorder players at ARS meetings.

Some examples of the early editions are: Salamone Rossi, Five Sinfonie a Tre Voci (SAT) arranged by Erich Katz; Melchior Franck, Four Dances (SSAT) arranged by Erich Katz; and Girolamo Frescobaldi, Canzona (SSAT) arranged by Bernard Krainis. These editions were often very much simplified versions of the music, and hardly “authentic” or musicologically correct.

Early ARS Editions ran heavily toward Renaissance and early Baroque music—though there are some original compositions. Bass recorders were rare in the 1950s, and the ARS Editions did not make much use of them, trying to make do with very low tenor parts. “The publications are not presented with any musicological pretensions,” Erich wrote in ARS Newsletter 9, 3/3/52. “Our intention is to add valuable material to the existing literature for group playing, serving mainly those many people who are amateurs in the true sense of the word; music lovers for whom recorder playing is a means—sometimes the only one—to active participation in music. The joy of music-making—not just listening—for which there is no substitute, is the main reason for the growing popularity of recorder playing. There is always a need for more literature to satisfy the yearning for good music in this field.”

In short, the early ARS Editions were designed to make early music accessible and palatable to amateur recorder players, with the result that some of the editions are barely recognizable as being music by Josquin Desprez, William Byrd or Guillaume de Machaut. The recorder-playing community of the 1950s did not, on the whole, worry much about authenticity.

There were, however, even from the beginning a few voices of dissent. A letter to Erich from David Way (one of the publishers of the early ARS Editions) of March 19, 1952, says in essence that David thinks some authenticity is important, at least insofar as stating original instrumentation and scoring (transposition, etc.) are concerned. “The person with real knowledge of this field will, of course, recognize our additions [sic] for what they are. It is the half-learned that we must beware of and it seems to me that we should make some effort to persuade them that we know what we are talking about.”

A small battle, with tiny swords, continued to rage in the pages of the ARS Newsletter through the 1950s, but in those years Erich’s views prevailed. Indeed, many of Erich’s publications for recorder, including his superb method, Recorder Playing, are famous for the amount of pure Katz that is interpolated into folk songs, Christmas carols, and arrangements of early music. Erich’s purposes were pedagogical and pragmatic; he wanted to provide material for the growing ranks of amateur recorder players—and this he did, indefatigably and successfully.

The year 1950 brought the first of the two Newman brothers (Joel and Morris, who are not related to Harold Newman; see pages 4 and 6 of this AR for information about the Newmans) into the web of the ARS. Joel, a Columbia University graduate student later to become a distinguished musicologist, met the talented and charismatic Bernie, started studying with him, and was soon involved in a “mini-performance” at a meeting of the ARS conducted by Bernie. Like many other practicing musicians before and after him, Joel was astonished at the sound of a roomful of 40 or 50 people playing the recorder simultaneously, but he was intrigued nevertheless.

Joel moved rather quickly into the (then very modest) top echelons of the ARS, as a performer, musical director, education director, and later as editor of the ARS Editions. With LaNoue Davenport and Bernie Krainis, Joel Newman brought the aura of the professional musician to this Society of amateurs. This aura was in many ways beneficial, as it helped to bring about standards in recorder playing that the amateurs—often derisively called “tootlers” in the early days—could never have attained by themselves; but it also brought the beginnings of conflict between the views of those who thought the recorder should be a purely recreational instrument and those who thought it should be an instrument for professionals only.

This conflict has been the source of one of the primary problems the various administrations of the ARS during its first 60 years have had to face, beginning with the goals of the “professional” Irmgard Lehrer vs. those of the “amateur” Suzanne Bloch and lasting until sometime in the 1990s. There have been strong partisan feelings on both sides of the question.

Much later, on March 15, 1967, Erich, then retired and in Santa Barbara, CA, wrote to Joel: “The real problem, and I think you will agree with me, is not East–West, but ‘professionals’ against ‘amateurs.’ The ARS, for better or worse, is an organization of amateurs and can’t be compared with ... an organization of professionals like the AMS.”

Now that, at long last, the lines between amateur and professional players have been more clearly drawn—with professionals of astounding virtuosity the world over playing on instruments of a much higher caliber than those of the 1950s and 1960s—the recorder is fully recognized as a musical instrument, not merely a toy for children, or a stepping-stone to a “real” instrument like a clarinet. Due in part to the consciousness-raising done in this country by the ARS and by similar organizations in other countries, notably the SRP in England, the argument seems to be settled: the recorder is many things to many people. It is a true instrument, heard in concerts not only of early music, but with “mainstream” groups as well, in jazz performances, in television commercials, movie scores, pop recordings, classical CDs, and wherever music is played, in many different venues.

The recorder is also a source of cultural enrichment, musical fulfillment, and enormous pleasure to amateur players. Both pursuits of the recorder have their legitimate place, and both are supported by the ARS.

Plans were made, and duly announced in Newsletter 1 (January 20, 1950), for an annual concert of the

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ARS to be presented at Carl Fischer Hall in New York City. The ARS concert presented at the NYCM on May 23, 1950, was free to members and $1.00 for others.

ARS concerts were not, of course, the only early music concerts in the New York of the 1950s. There were other performers on the recorder; Suzanne gave concerts at Town Hall with her mathematician-cum-recorder player husband Paul Smith; The Weavers used recorders; and Pete Seeger was a proficient player. Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 was a favorite, as people discovered it had been composed for recorders, not flutes. Salford Cape’s Pro Musica Antiqua, a Belgian group, was giving U.S. tours. Again, Krainis in the Newsletter: “We can only wishfully regret that there is not yet such an organization in the U.S.”

Concerts under the aegis of the ARS (really the New York group) continued through the 1950s, adding performers like LaNoue’s first wife Patsy Lynch Davenport, Herbert Kellman, Alfred Mann, Lois Wann, Johanna Kulbach, Tui St. George Tucker, Robert Dorough, Martha Bixler, Joel and Morris Newman, and many others.

An ARS concert at Circle-in-the-Square was given a favorable review in the New York Herald Tribune on May 6, 1952. Reviewer Jay Harrison’s concept of the recorder is, however, in some ways curious: Although he states flatteringly that “the participants [in the concert] were of a technique equal to the demands of the music and of a sensitivity commensurate with its content,” he goes on to say that “the personality of the recorder is a strange one, being based not upon the skill with which it is played but upon the inherent delicacy of its timbre.” And then, appallingly, after stating that the pieces included in the performance “are compositions of elegance and power, spilling over with life, and everywhere neatly made,” he continues, even using the “t-word”: “as tooted [italics mine] across the centuries by the members of the ARS they told a tale as vibrant and contemporary as though they had been put to paper not twenty-four hours before their performance.”

The debut performance of the New York Pro Musica Antiqua, the pioneering group of the early music movement in the U.S., took place at the New School for Social Research in Manhattan on April 26, 1953. The recorder soloists were Bernie and LaNoue.

This was a significant event for many reasons. The New York Pro Musica was not only a pioneering group but also the leading American professional group devoted to the performance of early music for 20 years or more. Bernie and LaNoue, already engaged in a rivalry that stimulated the development of recorder playing in this country, were at different times regular members of this influential group—Bernie until 1959 and LaNoue from 1960 to 1970. Both Bernie and LaNoue were extremely influential in the recorder movement in North America—partly because of their travels with the Pro Musica, partly because of the large number of people they taught, and partly because of the involvement of both in the administration of the ARS. Each was president for a time—LaNoue twice, from 1959-1962 and again briefly in 1966; and Bernie from 1962-1964.

A cultural milestone of the 1950s was the beginning of commercial recordings featuring the recorder and/or early music. These were not promoted by the ARS financially, but they were made possible partly by the atmosphere created by the existence of the ARS. In 1953, Esoteric put out a recording of the Primavera Singers (an antecedent of the New York Pro Musica Antiqua) under the direction of Noah Greenberg. Classic Editions issued Recorder Music of Six Centuries performed by the “Recorder Consort of the Musicians’ Workshop” (LaNoue, Bob Dorough, Erich, Bernie and Herbert Kellman). Both recordings were reviewed in the New York Times on August 12, 1953.

An awakening interest in professionalism among recorder players can be noted in an editorial by LaNoue in Newsletter 14, October, 1953. He emphasizes the role of the ARS in encouraging performance of Baroque music on Baroque instruments, i.e., recorders. “While the main endeavor [of the ARS] will continue to be towards informal music-making, the professional [italics mine] aspect of the recorder also has a definite place in a recorder society, particularly in concerts.”

Another “first” for the 1950s: Newsletter 6, April 20, 1951, mentions contact with a summer resort, South Wind, near Woodburn, NY, for use for a week or weekend organized by the ARS for its members. Quoted rates by the resort for one room, double occupancy, were $42 a week through July and August and $14 for a weekend. Nothing came of this first attempt, but the groundwork was laid for what eventually became an important and influential part of the infrastructure of the ARS: the summer and weekend workshops held in increasing numbers in the 1960s, ‘70s and ‘80s. Along the way, David Dushkin started a series of summer recorder weeks at a camp in Kinhaven, VT, beginning in the summer of 1954.

The ARS’s interest in and involvement with the education of recorder players began in the 1950s and has never ceased. Erich’s previously mentioned Recorder Playing, a method based on his amazing “massed recorder” classes at City College teaching soprano and alto players simultaneously, was published by Clarke and Way in 1951. A list of 20 members who taught the recorder was published by the ARS in 1953. (Here again it must be stated that the ARS at the time was an almost completely provincial organization based in New York City. There must certainly have been teachers of recorder in other parts of the U.S., but we didn’t know about them!)

Lists of teachers and places for instruction continued to be published through the 1950s, but it was not until 1960 that a scheme for testing teachers was worked out, and the ARS got into the business of deciding who should be doing the teaching—that is, endorsing teachers, schools and workshops on the recorder. This was opening Pandora’s box, as will be seen later.

On February 1, 1954, the ARS boasted of having 220 members, of whom only 73 lived outside the New York metropolitan area and 24 away from the east coast. The ARS clearly had a long way to go before it would live up to its name: ARS.

In July of that year annual dues were raised to $4.00 for members living in the
New York metropolitan area and $2.50 for "those outside." This small group, the "non-natives," however, were getting restless. For their modest dues they were getting Newsletters, of course, and news of all the exciting doings in New York—and indeed constant news of the rapid expansion of the world of the recorder and early music in other countries (recorder playing in Quebec, the founding of the SRP in New Zealand in 1953, and the claim in Recorder News, the magazine of the British SRP, that there were over 8000 recorder players in New South Wales), but they wanted more.

They wanted organized playing in their own areas. There were groups outside New York: the San Francisco and Seattle Recorder Guilds are mentioned early in the 1950s; an article published in House Beautiful, June 1954, and reprinted in Newsletter 17, reports on the formation of the Southern California Recorder Association; a Chicago Recorder Society was germinating. Newsletter 18, October 1954, tells us that "several inquiries have been received about establishing chapters of the ARS ... and perhaps this year will see the first ARS organizations outside of New York."

At a meeting of the officers of the ARS on July 1, 1954, "the ARS... decided, in response to numerous inquiries, to establish chapters outside of New York City." Six or more members of the ARS could constitute a chapter, and the chairmen of the various chapters would be members of an advisory committee to the Board of Officers of the ARS. On April 2, 1955, 16 years after the founding of the ARS, the Boston (MA) Chapter of the ARS was unanimously and officially welcomed by the officers of the national organization. Chapter membership dues were to be $3.50 annually, with $2.50 going to the ARS. A condition of chapter membership was individual membership in the national organization, but this first chapter and future chapters were to have "considerable freedom of method, organization and objective."

The Philadelphia (PA) Chapter of the ARS followed close behind Boston, becoming official in July of the same year. In 1956, the Memphis (TN) Chapter came into being; in 1958, Chattanooga (TN), Washington (D.C.) and Chicago (over 80 members and four musical directors by June 1959—first chapter concert on May 15, 1959). In 1959 Austin (TX), Milwaukee (WI) and Buffalo (NY) formed their own chapters. The ARS Newsletter started carrying chapter news in its pages, recognizing the needs of members in the "hinterlands."

Other developments of the mid- to late-1950s: Meetings of the ARS were held regularly at the NYCM. At a typical meeting the "assistant musical director" would conduct 30-50 amateur players in arrangements for recorders by Schott or Bärenreiter, or one of the new ARS Editions, and with a few cohorts, give a short performance.

The ARS continued to publish lists of teachers of the recorder for its members (in 1955 there were 22 names on the list; in 1956, 29). In April 1957, the ARS Newsletter began publishing a series of 10 articles on recorder technique by the English pedagogue Anthony Rowland-Jones (see page 5 in this issue for more information about him).

LaNoue taught at a Labor Day weekend in 1954 at the Indian Hill Music Workshop, Stockbridge, MA. David Dushkin continued to run summer music and recorder camps in Vermont. The National Federation of Music Clubs included recorder for the first time in its 1954 Festival. Patty Grossman taught at a recorder workshop at the Idyllwild (CA) Arts Foundation, and Eric Leiber began teaching recorder at Folk Music Week at Pinewoods Camp (MA). A recorder seminar under the direction of LaNoue was held in two installments at a hotel in Lakeville, CT, September 20-21 and 27-28, 1958. Days were spent with small ensemble classes in the hotel rooms.

In the evenings, the faculty (LaNoue, Martha Bixler, Shelley Gruskin) performed. We were paid $25 for each weekend. I thought it a fortune at the time. The two weekends were "produced" by Ted and Alice Mix of Magnamusic Distributors, Inc., in Sharon, CT. The Mixes were much involved in the founding of the ARS, and were always strong supporters; their firm remains a business member of the ARS to this day. This event was not an ARS event per se, but it was probably the model for the very first week-long recorder summer seminar under the auspices of the ARS in 1962.

The noted English recorder maker and player Carl Dolmetsch and his accompanist, harpsichordist Joseph Saxby, came to New York City at the beginning of an American tour (the last had been 20 years earlier, in 1937) and were presented in a concert on October 6, 1957, by the ARS. Dolmetsch conducted a meeting of the Society at the NYCM on October 7.

The ARS’s own concerts and those of its individual members continued at an increasing rate. The "assistant musical directors" performed as well as taught at members’ meetings. Suzanne organized a series of solo concerts for children at the NYCM, playing lute, virginals and recorders. In a New York Philharmonic Young People’s concert, 60 children played transcriptions of music by Mozart, Handel and Beethoven. The grandly-named New York Recorder Ensemble and Telemann Society (I hasten to say neither had any connection with the ARS) gave astonishingly amateurish performances, in that innocent age, at places like New York’s Town Hall, Carnegie Recital Hall, and the Museum of the City of New York.

Erich was still musical director of the ARS and nominally in charge of the ARS concert presented at PS.6 on May 22, 1955—but it was LaNoue and Bernie who, each directing his own consort, brought the first hints of professionalism to an ARS performance. (ARS members were still admitted free, with non-members paying $1.50 a ticket.)

In July 1957, a review in the Musical Courier of the annual ARS concert at Carl Fischer Hall states that "though many of its members are amateurs, it [the Society] demonstrated the power to present concerts of genuine musical excellence." On January 9, 1956, recorders were played in Carnegie Hall for the first time.

My own involvement with the ARS, which has continued until the present day, began in 1955. As a conservatory graduate deeply attracted to early music, I was easily drawn into the ARS orbit. I started singing with the Musicians’ Workshop, then directed by LaNoue, heard him play, and decided I must study the recorder with him. When LaNoue "turned pro"—that is, began to play for money—I turned right along with him. We played in concerts, including those for school children funded by the New York State Council for the Arts, made radio broadcasts and recordings, and taught at early music workshops. Later we entered the lucrative world of television commercials.
I owe my entire career in early music to LaNoue and to the ARS. But I certainly paid my dues. I played in my first ARS concert in May 1955 as part of LaNoue’s consort, the Manhattan Recorder Consort. I became one of Erich’s assistant musical directors, and began conducting meetings of the Society. Later I was a member of the ARS Board of Directors; still later president, twice.

In October 1958, I became associate editor of the ARS Newsletter, then editor in 1959. In 1960, I found myself the first editor of a new quarterly, The American Recorder. Later I went back to editing the Newsletter. All of these jobs were unre-munerated at the time that I held them. And I have been, over the years, on committees including education, workshop, office, nominating (sometimes chair), Katz competition, executive, publications, music, and various search committees. As the afore-mentioned editing positions began to be paid positions, I would find myself in a new job I could do gratis—like that of editing the Members’ Library Editions (which I did until 2002).

Morris Newman, a brilliantly talented bassoon player, became involved in the ARS as a teacher, performer and administrator, through his brother Joel and Bernie, c.1957. The ARS and Morris had a big influence on each other; the ARS got Morris interested in early music, and Morris brought a militant spirit of professionalism to the Society.

There were two aspects to this professionalism: the first, and most obvious, was the “pay me for whatever I do” attitude; the second, perhaps more important, was an increasing demand that the Society’s exponents, or those with some pretensions toward professionalism at least, actually practice and play like professionals on other instruments—an idea that was still fairly new at that time.

Although this “professional” attitude had its destructive aspects, it was on the whole a shot in the arm for the ARS, at least at the administrative level—and signaled the beginning of the end of the ambience of mediocrity and amateurism, in the worst sense, that had clung to it from the beginning.

On September 28, 1957, a momentous event took place: the Board of Officers of the ARS met and agreed to approve a newly drafted constitution and bylaws for the ARS. Erich was beginning to think about retirement to his beloved Santa Barbara, CA, where he and Wini had been building a cottage for themselves for years, stick by stick, during her two-week summer vacations. After a decade of running the ARS with an iron hand, Erich wanted, in his careful way, to make sure that his (also beloved) Society would be well-organized and off and running when he left it on its own.

The ARS was legally incorporated on July 18, 1958. At the first annual business meeting of the Society (of course only New York metropolitan area members were physically able to attend) on May 16, 1959, the new bylaws were presented to the membership and a Board of Directors for the newly-incorporated ARS was elected by secret ballot among the members present. Board members elected for two years were Martha Bixler, LaNoue Davenport, Shelley Gruskin, Bernie Krainis and Joel Newman; elected for one year were A. C. (Cook) Glassgold, Albert Hess, Johanna Kulbach, Marvin Rosenberg and Elizabeth Watson.

Chosen in a unanimous vote of the Board of Directors on May 28, 1959, LaNoue was the first constitutional president of the ARS; Cook Glassgold was chosen vice president. We thus had one professional and one amateur player in the two key administrative posts.

Other new appointments were Donna Hill, a writer, artist, and amateur recorder player, as secretary; and Yrsa Damman Geist, a student of Erich’s, and a colleague at the NYCM, as assistant secretary. Donna was a real find: she had seen the ARS Newsletter in the New York Public Library and offered to make an index of it. She soon discovered, however, that she was needed badly as a secretary of the organization, and she took over from Wini the members’ lists, mailings, and minute-taking at Board meetings.

Marvin Rosenberg became treasurer (replaced a year later by Rhoda Weber, who became at the same time, informally, an assistant secretary); and Ralph Taylor, owner and CEO of a company manufacturing men’s cologne, also an amateur recorder player, was made assistant treasurer. Thus it took six people to take over the work of two.

The newly appointed officers—all very hard working volunteers—plus a representative from each chapter of the ARS were to make up the Executive Board of the ARS. At this meeting also, Joel was appointed general editor of the ARS Editions (it had been up until then entirely Erich’s enterprise) and educational director of the Society, and I was appointed editor of the ARS Newsletter.

We were the obvious candidates for these positions; Joel was already making his name as a musicologist, and had the sources, the knowledge and the musical intelligence to make him a competent editor of musical editions. I had been for some time helping the newly-appointed president with the Newsletter, so it was natural for me to take it over, thus putting my head firmly into that particular yoke.

LaNoue had a wonderful time as president, presiding over the beginning of this halcyon period. He was extremely good at getting others (as I remember it, mainly me) to do whatever legwork was required for any particular project. I remember a reception given by the ARS after a concert presented by Carl Dolmetsch and Joseph Saxby in Town Hall. LaNoue directed me to ask a student of mine if she would let us have her beautiful town house for the reception. That was all well and good; the student was delighted. However, a couple of days before the concert, I realized that my student and I were responsible for the whole thing. I still remember her startled words: “Then I guess we’re doing it, you and I!” As we made drinks, peeled and cut vegetables and fruits and made dainty sandwiches for the visiting bigwigs and local ARS brass, I understood once again the role of a volunteer in a not-for-profit Society; be there for whatever is needed!

Erich resigned as musical director of the ARS in July 1959, after his first stroke, and at the May meeting was named “Honorary President” by the members of the ARS. (Erich suffered a second stroke in 1972 and died July 30, 1973.) Wini was named “Honorary Vice President.”

At the end of 1959, with 10 chapters, two publication series—the Newsletter and 40 ARS Editions of music—600 members in the U.S. and foreign countries (including Norway, Turkey, Vietnam, England, Canada and Australia), and a yearly budget of $1,150, the ARS embarked upon its third decade full of hope for becoming at last a truly national organization worthy of the name.