

# The Mouthpiece



## The Newsletter of the East Bay Recorder Society

Volume 12, No. 8

[www.eastbayrecorders.org](http://www.eastbayrecorders.org)

April 2009

### Monthly Playing Session



**Friday, April 3rd** from 7:30 to 10, Zion Lutheran Church, with **Frances Blaker**. If your last name begins with A-N, please bring a snack for break, if possible. Please bring a music stand, pencil, and your instruments (SATB, if you have them).

**Frances Blaker** received her Music Pedagogical and Performance degrees from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Copenhagen where she studied with Eva Legéne. She also studied with Marion Verbruggen in the Netherlands. In addition to regular appearances with Tibia, the Farallon Recorder Quartet, and Ensemble Vermillian, Ms. Blaker has performed as a soloist and with various ensembles in the United States, Denmark, England and the Netherlands.

She teaches privately and at workshops throughout the United States, including the San Francisco Early Music Society Baroque workshop, Port Townsend and Amherst Early Music; she was co-director of the SFEMS Medieval and Renaissance workshop from 1996-2001. Our December 2008 issue of *The Mouthpiece* described an Elderhostel workshop at Hidden Valley Institute and pictured Ms. Blaker leading the recorder, viol and (one each) dulcian & harpsichord orchestra.

Ms. Blaker is the author of the acclaimed *The Recorder Player's Companion* and a collaborator and performer on the Disc Continuo series of recordings.

### President's Message

*Calling all EBRS members—Board elections are coming up!*

The Board is elected at the last meeting of the year which will be just two months away in June. You'll find the board positions and current office holders on the back page of the newsletter. Volunteers make this chapter work and new faces are always needed to keep the organization alive and to bring new ideas to the group.

A particularly important job is up for change this year, namely *Newsletter Editor*. The job is primarily one of coordination and editing. Suzanne, our current editor, prompts people to send in material. She gets the upcoming conductor to send in a bio, photo and write up of the music for the chapter meeting. She calls on people who have attended events to write about them. She organizes the material for the newsletter, shortening and formatting pieces as needed to fit. She rarely writes an article herself but of course the newsletter editor is free to write as much as they want. The newsletter editor needs to be familiar with a word processing program and be able to format in that program. Word, for example, would be just fine. Suzanne uses a desktop publishing program for her work, but it is not required. She spends about 2-1/2-3 hours per newsletter and works closely with Ellen Fisher, our webmaster, to post it to the web site and inform members that it is available.

If you are interested, please talk to any board member about this position. Suzanne will be happy to mentor the new editor. If any other board position appeals to you, please let one of us know of your interest. Being on the board is not a major commitment and can be fun and instructive.

Looking forward to hearing from prospective volunteers.

*-Susan Jaffe, President*

**Our Web site: [www.eastbayrecorders.org](http://www.eastbayrecorders.org)**



✿ The Bay Area's own **Farallon Recorder Quartet** performs a varied slate of works covering the gamut from ut to la: from Anonymous back in the mists of the 14th century, through Purcell and Bach and on up to present-day composers Blaker and Maute.

Tuesday, **March 31, 2009**, 7:30 pm  
 St. Alban's Episcopal Church  
 1501 Washington Ave., Albany, CA 94706  
 Contact: Tish Berlin [tishberlin@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tishberlin@sbcglobal.net) 510-559-4670



Marin Headlands

✿ Early Music at Los Positas:

### Mosaico

Saturday, **April 18**, 7:30 pm  
 Shira Kammen voice, vielle, medieval harp, voice  
 Susan Rode Morris, soprano  
 Tish Berlin, recorder  
 David Morris, gamba, voice, gittern  
 Peter Maund, percussion

Each concert begins with a short pre-concert talk and concludes with a reception where the audience can meet the performers and ask questions about the concert. Tickets are \$15 for individual concerts. The venue is wheelchair accessible.

For information contact  
 Marilyn Marquis  
 Artistic Director  
 925.424.1209. [mmarquis@laspositascollege.edu](mailto:mmarquis@laspositascollege.edu)

A music stand was left at the members' recital. Nobody claimed it at chapter meeting. The owner can contact me (Linda) at [mt9999@comcast.net](mailto:mt9999@comcast.net).



The **EBRS Marin Headlands Recorder and Viol Workshop** is coming up soon--- **May 15,16, and 17.**

The Web site giving all the details and registration form for this enriching event is now live, at <http://www.symbolicsolutions.com/ebrs/headlands.html>. Please click on it to see the delightful musical offerings, meet the faculty, check out the schedule, and view photos of last year's workshop. The registration form may be down-loaded and can be sent in any time. Plus, this year we have some special T-shirts!

Thank you for passing the word about this harmony-filled event perched at the edge of the mighty Pacific to all who may be interested. We hope to see you! Please register before **May 1, 2009.** - *Anna Lisa Kronman*



The American Recorder Orchestra of the West (**AROW**) invites you to attend its Bay Area Spring concerts in San Jose & San Francisco: Saturday, **April 18<sup>th</sup>** at 3 pm (San Jose) and Saturday, **May 2<sup>nd</sup>** at 7:30 pm (San Francisco). The theme is "*Viva Italia*", which features Italian music such as renaissance madrigals by Caccini, Donato, Gesualdo, Vechhi and Monteverdi. The April 18<sup>th</sup> San Jose performance will be held at Foothill Presbyterian Church, 5301 McKee Road. The May 2<sup>nd</sup> San Francisco performance will be held at San Francisco Community Music Center, 544 Capp St. Contact Director Richard Geisler for more information: [richgeis@oro.net](mailto:richgeis@oro.net), 530/477-2293.

Our newsletter is published monthly with issues from September to June. The deadline for submitting items for inclusion in a month is typically the 20th of the preceding month. Please submit items to the editor, Suzanne Siebert, [ssiebert@symbolicsolutions.com](mailto:ssiebert@symbolicsolutions.com).



Debra Nagy

## Flemish Motets and Madrigals with Debra Nagy

March 14 was a beautiful, sunny day in Lafayette, where recorder (and viol!) players from EBRS and as far away as Sebastapol and Cupertino gathered to picnic around the pool and to play and learn from Debra Nagy, one of the very best of the young Early Music performers from this country. Debra plays baroque oboe, recorders of all kinds, and shawms with Ciaramella and several other groups, as well as making appearances with American Bach Soloists, and other top-flight groups.

I knew Debra as a performer, but found her to be warm, articulate, clear, insightful, and witty as a teacher. (Enough adjectives? You may have noticed that I liked her!) The music was beautiful and accessible and included old friends (Sweelinck, de Lassus, Rogier) as well as new (Pevernage, Faignient, Verdonck, and de Cleves)—the perfect mixture, for me.

What I'll retain in particular from this workshop, though, were the images Debra painted to encourage us to create lines rather than playing each note separately (what she called "the march of the potatoes") and to sustain our air stream by imagining it a garden hose with the water turned on, interrupted only by the tongue as a stop valve.

Many thanks to Britt Ascher for hosting this workshop, and to Kathy Cochran for connecting us with Debra. A very productive event, and lots of fun!

-Susan Richardson

*This is an excerpt from a welcome address given to parents of incoming students at The Boston Conservatory on September 1, 2004, by Dr. Karl Paulnack, Director of the Music Division. The article continues on pages 4 & 5. Reprinted with his permission.*

One of my parents' deepest fears, I suspect, is that society would not properly value me as a musician, that I wouldn't be appreciated. I had very good grades in high school, I was good in science and math, and they imagined that as a doctor or a research chemist or an engineer, I might be more appreciated than I would be as a musician. I still remember my mother's remark when I announced my decision to apply to music school—she said, "you're wasting your SAT scores!" On some level, I think, my parents were not sure themselves what the value of music was, what its purpose was. And they loved music: they listened to classical music all the time. They just weren't really clear about its function. So let me talk about that a little bit, because we live in a society that puts music in the "arts and entertainment" section of the newspaper, and serious music, the kind your kids are about to engage in, has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with entertainment, in fact it's the opposite of entertainment.

One of the first cultures to articulate how music really works were the ancient Greeks. And this is going to fascinate you: the Greeks said that music and astronomy were two sides of the same coin. Astronomy was seen as the study of relationships

between observable, permanent, external objects, and music was seen as the study of relationships between invisible, internal, hidden objects. Music has a way of finding the big, invisible moving pieces inside our hearts and souls and helping us figure out the position of things inside us. Here are some examples.

One of the most profound musical compositions of all time is the Quartet for the End of Time written by French composer Olivier Messiaen in 1940. Messiaen was 31 years old when France entered the war against Nazi Germany. He was captured by the Germans in June of 1940 and imprisoned in a prisoner-of-war camp. He was fortunate to find a sympathetic prison guard who gave him paper and a place to compose, and fortunate to have musician colleagues in the camp, a cellist, a violinist, and a clarinetist. Messiaen wrote his quartet with these specific players in mind. It was performed in January 1941 for four thousand prisoners and guards in the prison camp. Today it is one of our most famous masterworks. Given what we have since learned about life in the Nazi camps, why would anyone in his right mind waste time and energy writing or playing music? There was barely enough energy on a good day to find food and water, to avoid a beating, to stay warm, to escape torture—why would anyone bother with music? And yet—even from the concentration camps, we have poetry, we have music, we have visual art; it wasn't just this one fanatic Messiaen; many, many people created art. Why? Well, in a place where people are

only focused on survival, on the bare necessities, the obvious conclusion is that art must be, somehow, essential for life. The camps were without money, without hope, without commerce, without recreation, without basic respect, but they were not without art. Art is part of survival; art is part of the human spirit, an unquenchable expression of who we are. Art is one of the ways in which we say, "I am alive, and my life has meaning."

In September of 2001 I was a resident of Manhattan. On the morning of September 12, 2001 I reached a new understanding of my art and its relationship to the world. I sat down at the piano that morning at 10 AM to practice as was my daily routine; I did it by force of habit, without thinking about it. I lifted the cover on the keyboard, and opened my music, and put my hands on the keys and took my hands off the keys. And I sat there and thought, does this even matter? Isn't this completely irrelevant? Playing the piano right now, given what happened in this city yesterday, seems silly, absurd, irreverent, pointless. Why am I here? What place has a musician in this moment in time? Who needs a piano player right now? I was completely lost. And then I, along with the rest of New York, went through the journey of getting through that week. I did not play the piano that day, and in fact I contemplated briefly whether I would ever want to play the piano again. And then I observed how we got through the day.

At least in my neighborhood, we didn't shoot hoops or play Scrabble. We didn't play cards to pass the time, we didn't watch TV, we didn't shop, we most certainly did not go to the mall. The first organized activity that I saw in New York, on the very evening of September 11th, was singing. People sang. People sang around fire houses, people sang "We Shall Overcome". Lots of people sang America the Beautiful. The first organized public event that I remember was the Brahms Requiem, later that week, at Lincoln Center, with the New York Philharmonic. The first organized public expression of grief, our first communal response to that historic event, was a concert. That was the beginning of a sense that life might go on. The US Military secured the airspace, but recovery was led by the arts, and by music that very night.

From these two experiences, I have come to understand that music is not part of "arts and entertainment" as the newspaper section would have us believe. Music is a basic need of human survival. Music is one of the ways we make sense of our lives, one of the ways in which we express feelings when we have no words, a way for us to understand things with our hearts when we can't with our minds.

I'll give you one more example, the story of the most important concert of my life. I must tell you I have played a little less than a thousand concerts in my life so far. I have played in places that I thought were important. I like playing in Carnegie Hall; I enjoyed playing in Paris; it made me very happy to please the critics in St. Petersburg. I have played for people I thought were important; music critics of major newspapers, foreign heads of state. The most important concert of my entire life took place in a nursing home in a small Midwestern town a few years ago.

I was playing with a very dear friend of mine who is a violinist. We began, as we often do, with Aaron Copland's Sonata, which was written during World War II and dedicated to a young friend of Copland's, a young pilot who was shot down during the war. Now we often talk to our audiences about the pieces we are going to play rather than providing them with written program notes. But in this case, because we began the concert with this piece, we decided to talk about the piece later in the program and to just come out and play the music without explanation.

Midway through the piece, an elderly man seated in a wheelchair near the front of the concert hall began to weep. This man, whom I later met, was clearly a soldier—even in his 70's, it was clear from his buzz-cut hair, square jaw and general demeanor that he had spent a good deal of his life in the military. I thought it a little bit odd that someone would be moved to tears by that particular movement of that particular piece, but it wasn't the first time I've heard crying in a concert and we went on with the concert and finished the piece.

When we came out to play the next piece on the program, we decided to talk about both the first and second pieces, and we described the circumstances in which the Copland was written and mentioned its dedication to a downed pilot. The man in the front of the audience became so disturbed that he had to leave the auditorium. I honestly figured that we would not see him again, but he did come backstage afterwards, tears and all, to explain himself.

What he told us was this: "During World War II, I was a pilot, and I was in an aerial combat situation where one of my team's planes was hit. I watched my friend bail out, and watched his parachute open, but the Japanese planes which had engaged us returned and machine gunned across the parachute chords so as to separate the parachute from the pilot, and I watched my friend drop away into the ocean, realizing that he was lost. I have not thought about this for many years, but during that first piece of music you played, this memory returned to me so vividly that it was as though I was reliving it. I didn't understand why this was happening, why now, but then when you came out to explain that this piece of music was written to commemorate a lost pilot, it was a little more than I could handle. How does the music do that? How did it find those feelings and those memories in me?"

Remember the Greeks: music is the study of invisible relationships between internal objects. The concert in the nursing home was the most important work I have ever done. For me to play for this old soldier and help him connect, somehow, with Aaron Copland, and to connect their memories of their lost friends, to help him remember and mourn his friend, this is my work. This is why music matters.

What follows is part of the talk I will give to this year's freshman class when I welcome them a few days from now. The responsibility I will charge your sons and daughters with is this:

"If we were a medical school, and you were here as a med student practicing appendectomies, you'd take your work very seriously because you would imagine that some night

## Some East Bay Recorder Teachers

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Letitia Berlin	<a href="mailto:tishberlin@sbcglobal.net">tishberlin@sbcglobal.net</a>
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Van Proosdij	

at two AM someone is going to waltz into your emergency room and you're going to have to save their life. Well, my friends, someday at 8 PM someone is going to walk into your concert hall and bring you a mind that is confused, a heart that is overwhelmed, a soul that is weary. Whether they go out whole again will depend partly on how well you do your craft.

Frankly, ladies and gentlemen, I expect you not only to master music; I expect you to save the planet. If there is a future wave of wellness on this planet, of harmony, of peace, of an end to war, of mutual understanding, of equality, of fairness, I don't expect it will come from a government, a military force or a corporation. If there is a future of peace for humankind, if there is to be an understanding of how these invisible, internal things should fit together, I expect it will come from the artists.

As in the concentration camp and the evening of 9/11, the artists are the ones who might be able to help us with our internal, invisible lives."

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## EBRS Board Members

**President:** Susan Jaffe ([thesmurph9@aol.com](mailto:thesmurph9@aol.com))  
**Treasurer:** Sue Wetzler ([skwetzler@yahoo.com](mailto:skwetzler@yahoo.com))  
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**Webmaster:** Ellen Fisher ([erfisher@gmail.com](mailto:erfisher@gmail.com))

**Member Performances:** OPEN

**Hospitality:** Anna Lisa Kronman ([annalisakronman@gmail.com](mailto:annalisakronman@gmail.com)); Jim Biggerstaff ([james\\_biggerstaff@sbcglobal.net](mailto:james_biggerstaff@sbcglobal.net))

**Workshop Committee:** Cindy Keune ([cindy\\_keune@yahoo.com](mailto:cindy_keune@yahoo.com)); Anna Lisa Kronman; Jody Harcourt

**Publicity:** Glen Shannon ([glen.shannon@k183.com](mailto:glen.shannon@k183.com))

**Librarian (& composer-in-residence):** Glen Shannon

**Members at Large:** Britt Ascher ([brittascher@comcast.net](mailto:brittascher@comcast.net)); Kathy Cochran

## Summary of Upcoming EBRS 2009 Events

(All at Zion Lutheran Church, 5201 Park Blvd., Oakland, and beginning at 7:30 pm unless otherwise noted)

Friday, April 3rd—Playing session with Frances Blaker

Friday, May 1st—Playing session with Cindy Beitmen

Friday - Sunday, May 15th-17th—Marin Headlands

Friday, June 5th—Playing session with Shira Kammen

