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## September 2014 Newsletter

### CELEBRATING 50 YEARS DENVER CHAPTER!

#### President's Message

Happy Birthday everybody! The Denver Chapter is 50 years old this year. As you know, we are celebrating by co-sponsoring Recorderfest in the West, September 18-21, along with the American Recorder Society and the Recorder Music Center at Regis. For those of you who have signed up to attend, this should be a very special event, with an incredibly talented faculty, an amazing list of workshop sessions, wonderful concerts, well-known vendors and more.

Recorderfest is taking the place of our usual September meeting, so our regular monthly meetings will kick off on Sunday, October 19<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm (Newbies at 12:45). Joe Wilcox, our program director, has once again put together a fun and varied program for the year.

It's not too early to mark your calendars for "Rocky XI", which will take place May 15-17<sup>th</sup> 2015 at the Estes Park YMCA. "Rocky" is the ever-popular premier workshop in the Rocky Mountains, and takes place every other year.

I look forward to seeing everyone as we begin another exciting season.

Jon Casbon

*...so much music, so little time!*

#### Recorderfest Activities Open to the Public!

During *Recorderfest in the West*, Sept 18-21, 2014, some of the events will be open to the public. These are outstanding opportunities to hear wonderful music performed by some of the top professionals in the country. Here is your link to sign up for these events: <http://www.regis.edu/recorderfest>

**Recorder Music Center Wine and Cheese Reception,**  
 Thursday September 18th, 4 pm, Dayton Memorial Library

**Baroque Chamber Orchestra of Colorado, featuring soloist Paul Leenhouts,** Friday September 19th, 7:30 pm, Claver Recital Hall. The concert theme is "Music in Motion" and will feature works of Praetorius, Muffat, Telemann, Handel, and Bach. A public reception will follow the concert.

**Festival Faculty Concert,** Saturday September 20th, 7:30 pm, Claver Recital Hall. The concert title is "Recorders Without Borders," and features Vicki Boeckman, Mark Davenport, Clea Galhano, Laura Kuhlman, Paul Leenhouts, Hanneke van Proosdij, Anne Timberlake, and Tom Zajac playing an eclectic mix of international ensemble pieces. A public reception will follow the concert.

### 2014-2015 Season

Date	Presenter	Topic
September 2014	no chapter meeting	Recorderfest
October 19, 2014	Jennifer Carpenter	Lamentations
November 16, 2014	Dick Wood	The Varied Music of Dick Wood
December 21, 2014	Various volunteers	Holiday grab bag
January 18, 2015	James Grush	Tales from the Boulder Woods
February 15, 2015	Miriam Rosenblum	Folk Music from Around the World
March 15, 2015	Peter Schimpf	Instrumental Music in Early 17 <sup>th</sup> Century Italy
April 19, 2015	Karl Reque	With Strings Attached
May 2015	no chapter meeting	Rocky XI



### **Denver Chapter Members/Friends in good standing as of August 2014:**

Louise Adler, Karen Anderson, Rebecca Beshore, Sharon Bolles, Jeannine K. Bramwell, Paul Brunson, Marlys Butler, Jon Casbon, Sally Collins, Bill Conklin, Virginia Cortes, Lynda Coy, Keith Emerson, Barbara Fahey, Nancy Fey, Judy Fritz, Joice Gibson, RoseMary Glista, Elaine Granata, Pamela Grotegut, Janet Handmaker, Patrick Heid, Diane Hoepfinger, Eve Johnson, John M. LeVett, Maureen Liegl, Bob McCarroll, Lisa McInnis, Pat Midyet, Judy Miller, Dick Munz, Lori Murphy, Jennifer Myers, Bruce Nelson, Ruth Neubauer, Gail Nickless, Susan Osborn, Margaret Peterson, Sally Pyle, Justine Romero, Virginia Schlieker, Mary Scott, Pat Selby, Mary Sloan, Victoria Taylor, Gerrie Vendegna, Diane M. Wagner, Trudy Wayne and Joe Wilcox.

Starting in September we will be collecting dues for the September 2014 to May 2015 season. Dues for the Denver Chapter are \$20 and are due by November 15, 2014. We also accept payment for ARS National Dues if you would like us to process the national dues for you. Please complete the Dues Form under "Join" on the website and submit the form with the dues.

## **Agony of De-Feet**

The foot joint is the most overlooked section of your recorder. When problems in this joint occur it can very quickly affect the entire instrument's tuning. The foot joint is not simply an extension of the instrument it is an *integral* part of the instrument's bore. We think of it as one or two extra holes and at most a rather fancy turned section of the recorder. Remove it even for a few brief moments of playing and you'll see why it demands your attention. Environmental changes as well as professional adjustments need to be understood. We will take a brief look at common problems, how to recognize them and how they affect your instrument, and in future installments I will cover addressing these problems and how to correct them.

Quite often in my shop I see instruments with very little wrong with them overall yet they fail to play in tune. The complaints are usually that the lowest notes on the recorder are weak, airy, breathy, flat, or sometimes even sharp, yet all too often there is nothing on the surface that screams that there is a problem. The problem is quite often in the foot joint. I'm not trying to exaggerate, but I'm betting that most of you are thinking that you have never even given the foot joint any real thought at all. Here I will take a brief look at the common problems in no particular order, but all are important enough for you to be aware of them.

Well made recorders leave the factory with perfect fitting joints which unfortunately will change over time. Wood swells and shrinks and cork wears with repeated use. The lower male/female joint is the smallest on the instrument regardless of the recorder's size. Relatively speaking it is also the most susceptible to changes of cork fit, shrinkage or swelling, or at the extreme end, warping of the middle joint. On soprano or sopranino recorders the male end of the middle joint is often so small that the fit is often entirely dependent on the cork, which might only measure 1/4" across its width. Being malleable, the cork is the least likely to hold its shape over time over such a small surface area. Threading the lower joint can often alleviate the poor fit because thread tends to lay flatter and is less likely to compress after the initial fitting.

If the foot joint wobbles at all when installed there is the chance for air to leak through the joint itself. Sometimes a small amount of movement is inevitable, but reducing the amount of movement will always help. Although the total amount of air leaking might be miniscule, when you consider the breath pressure of the lowest notes on your recorder, which is often quite low, especially in the largest recorders, any air escaping the joint will have a detrimental effect on tone production in the lowest register and occasionally in the highest as well.

If your recorder has been "voiced" or tuned by a professional there is a small chance you will see a small lump of wax in the bore inside the foot joint. That wax was probably placed there for a good reason. Understand the obstruction before you attempt to remove it. Constricting the foot joint's bore with a small obstruction like beeswax can often effect great

tonal changes. That small lump is probably all it took to bring the bore in tune at that particular point. Do not remove this. Cleaning the bore with a soft swab is best to avoid removing the wax. If you use a bristle style cleaner and it scrubs away the wax you have effectively also scrubbed away the recorder's tuning.

Wear from recorder stands is a common problem with session players who play often and continually place their recorders on those small wooden stands with vertical pegs. Over time the peg can wear down the edges of the foot joint. You might think that this is not a major problem, but when you consider that even a small amount of uniform wear to the opening edge of the bore effectively shortens the bore. Shortening the bore by even a fraction of an inch will raise the pitch of the lowest note and force you to use even lower breath pressure to get that note in tune.

Occasionally I have come across larger basses with adjustable posts, effectively end pins that have been retrofitted to the end of the bore. A properly fit post should be installed into the joint itself and not the bore. By placing a post in a cap over the lower end of the foot joint you are actually reducing the size of the bore and restricting airflow exactly where you need it. If you have a bass set up with an end pin where the pin fits into the bore itself at the very least have the post cut to its shortest possible length so that when you are playing the post is completely removed from the bore itself.

Moisture and its effects will be covered in detail in a future installment, but generally the biggest issue with moisture that affects the foot joint leads to clogging of the small c/ c# or f/f# holes. Every player plays their instruments, sometimes for hours, then simply places the recorders back in their cases at the end of the session. You are guilty of it. We all do it. When was the last time you saw the entire group of players leave their instruments out to dry after your group finished playing?

Condensation left behind, usually only obvious in the upper portion of the instrument, is often responsible for the accumulation of particulate matter in the lower portions of the middle and foot joints. Because this is also the lowest breath pressure portion of the instrument there is less air to expel any of that moisture or dust, unlike in the upper joints. Because of the nature of the holes in the foot joint they tend to clog the easiest and usually quickly especially on the smaller instruments. Your recorder is probably stored like most in a padded case, or left to roll around loose in a bag of some sort where lint collects in the finger oils left behind after playing. Oil build up from poor oiling job is often the most responsible for poor tone production in the lower register for all of the above reasons. Oiling an instrument and then storing it in the case before the oils are dry, as with humidity and moisture, acts like glue.

Now that hopefully you have a better understanding how tiny changes in adjustment, wear to the bore opening, poor

maintenance, and cork or thread joints affect the overall quality of tone of the entire instrument you know how even that tiny, easily overlooked, and usually neglected last joint of your recorder is responsible for tone production. It is the difference between music and just notes on a page. That tiny section of your recorder holds sway over the whole. Without it there might not be a single note on the entire instrument in tune. Heed that tiny joint, it demands your attention.

My name is John. I am a recorder maker and repair technician. I am a lifelong luthier who looks forward to going to work on my dreams everyday. I will be answering your questions each month and sharing in this love we share. I am asked regularly about what can be done to improve recorders. The problems range everywhere from basic additions like thumb rests to full restoration of valuable antiques. Upcoming articles will look at various aspects of the recorder often overlooked or neglected, as well as common problems misunderstood. Most of these articles derive from my work as a recorder repair technician and are the result of having faced these issues numerous times. By working through some of these issues in a detailed manner my hope is that you will better understand your instrument, its common problems, and general maintenance. While most of what I will discuss in these articles should be left to the professional, having a solid grasp of the all aspects of the recorder will leave you better informed to make decisions and have the knowledge to ask the right questions. Please submit any repair and general recorder maintenance questions to [Orthwest@gmail.com](mailto:Orthwest@gmail.com) or contact me directly by phone 772-321-1498. I await your call.

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