

The Recorder, An Ancient Instrument Enjoying a Contemporary Revival

The article "Recorder" in the Harvard Dictionary of Music says the following about this instrument: "The recorder is an end-blown flute with a 'whistle' mouth-piece. In the 16th century a complete family, from treble to bass, was developed. It played an important part in the music of the late renaissance, but gradually passed out of use after 1750. In the early 20th century a revival took place, begun by Arnold Dolmetsch in England, to be followed in 1918 by German manufacturers and, finally, on a much smaller scale by makers in the United States. The Alto (recorder) owing to its widespread popularity as a chamber music instrument during the 18th century, possesses an important literature written for it by composers of nearly every nationality; much of this has been reprinted."

Bach, Dowland, Telemann, Schein, Schuetz, Loeillet, Handel, Vivaldi, Corelli, Byrd, Gibbons, Locke, Frescobaldi, Gabrieli, Melchior, Franck, and others of the Baroque and pre-Baroque period made their contributions to the repertory of this instrument. Catalogs showing the wealth of material available for recorders may be secured from:

Hargail Music Press  
130 W. 56th Street  
New York 19, New York

Peripole Products Inc.  
2917 Avenue R.  
Brooklyn 29, New York

Omega Music  
19 W. 44th Street  
New York 36, New York

Associated Music Publishers, Inc.  
One West 47th Street  
New York 36, New York

The recorder is easy to learn, even for children. With growing skill in playing it, it is possible to produce artful effects on it which are enhanced when several recorders are played together. The impression given by such an ensemble is very similar to that of several voices played on a beautiful reed stop of an organ, except that the individual voice has dynamic freedom in the recorder ensemble. Recorders can also be used in all sorts of combinations, together with the human voice, string instruments or piano (clavichord or harpsichord originally). They are therefore, not only ideally suited as an aid for instruction in singing, ear training, and selfeggio, but also for ensemble playing by music lovers as well.

In contemporary musical life, the recorder has again assumed an important place. During the past two or three decades, numerous organizations have sprung up dedicated to the furtherance of interest in recorder playing. In England, the Dolmetsch family has done much for this cause with the British Society of Recorder Players. The celebrated Trapp family has brought the beauty of recorders to many.

In this country, many recorder groups are flourishing, foremost among them is the American Recorder Society. This organization was founded in 1939 by Suzanne Bloch, and its present director is Erich Katz. Dr. Katz, aside from being a fine contemporary composer, has long devoted strenuous efforts toward furthering interest in pre-Bach music and early instruments. The ARS has chapters in many cities throughout the nation, the newest among them being in Phoenix. Sanford Kaye, recently arrived from New York, where the ARS is centered, has begun this new chapter, and is in search of new members. He can be reached at, 129 W. Pierson or phone CR 9-2515.