

Somerset Hills Recorder Society

A Chapter of the American Recorder Society • Newsletter for January, 2004



Join Keith Bernstein on January 9 for an Evening of *Balletti* by Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi

Chapter News

Our “Bring Your Own Favorite Holiday Music” evening was attended and enjoyed by ten members. A large selection of music brought by many of us provided for an interesting mix of styles and musical periods. Fortunately, Mother Nature cooperated with us with dry and crisp weather.

The plan for the rest of the season is:

February 13 Sheila Fernekes
March 12 John Burkhalter
April 16 Phoebe Larkey
May 14 Sue Parisi

Please note that the date of the April meeting has been rescheduled to April 16, one week later than usual. As previously noted, the second Friday in April is Good Friday.

I am pleased to let you know that our membership now is up to seventeen, the largest roster we have had in several years.

Van Eyck Quarterly Issue

Thiemo Wind announces that the first issue of 2004 of the *Van Eyck Quarterly* is available on the web at www.jacobvaneyck.info. This publication specializes in the music of Van Eyck and his contemporaries and is always a treat. It so happens that Van Eyck wrote variations on Gastoldi's *Questa dolce sirena*.

Notes for the January Meeting

As the later sixteenth-century Italian madrigal became increasingly mannered and complicated, several lighter forms became popular. One form, the *balletto*, was invented by Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi (1554–1609), who spent much of his life in Mantua, Santa Barbara and Milan. Although he wrote much sacred music, the most popular of his compositions during his lifetime were two sets of *balletti*: *Balletti, a cinque voci, con li suoi versi per cantare, sonare & ballare*, first published in 1591 and reprinted more than 20 times all over Europe, and *Balletti a tre voci* (1594). Almost all of his *balletti* are in ABBB form with mostly homophonic textures. The poetry, concerning various aspects of love, often has nonsense syllables interpolated at the end of sections, acting as a refrain. It is hypothesized that the songs are part of a costumed dance, and may presage the development of theater pieces, such as *Intermedi*, and opera. The *balletto* form continued to be composed in Italy in the form of madrigal comedies (a modern term), cycles of madrigals held together by a plot.

For this meeting, I have chosen a collection of eight of the *balletti* in five parts (SSATB generally). These are from a book in the SHRS collection which was donated by Virginia Kenney, a former member who lived in Bernardsville. The pieces are tuneful and well within the technical reach of our members.

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Meetings are held on the second Friday of the month from 7:30 to 9:30 PM in September through May at the Somerset Hills Lutheran Church, 350 Lake Road, Basking Ridge.