

Constance Primus

Erich Katz: The Pied Piper Comes To America

Editor's note. Constance Primus is an independent scholar who lives in Englewood, Colorado. She received her bachelor's degree in music history from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1978, specializing in early music. She is currently President of the American Recorder Society, teaches recorder in the Denver metropolitan area, and conducts workshops throughout the United States. The article below is the result of her research in the Erich Katz archives in the AMRC. The University of Colorado is also the repository for the historical papers of the American Recorder Society.

Erich Katz (1900-1973) is remembered with admiration as a teacher, composer, editor, conductor, and, best of all, as the vital force behind the post-World War II revival of the American Recorder Society. Through all of these musical activities his focus was on encouraging people to make music together. Perhaps his greatest overall contribution, however, was introducing many musicians and audiences to both early music and early twentieth-century music.

Through the efforts of Dr. Gordon Sandford, the University of Colorado acquired from Winifred Jaeger, Katz's long-time associate, the Erich Katz Archive in the 1980s. Contained in twenty-eight two-inch-deep boxes and five notebooks, the archives include music (published and manuscript) composed and edited by Katz, his colleagues, and his students, as well as concert programs and reviews, American Recorder Society papers, one of Katz's early recorders,¹ and extensive correspondence and memorabilia. Now a part of the American Music Research Center, the Katz Archive offers an opportunity for students and scholars to study the musical world of an influential German-born musician who, following his immigration to the United States in 1943, played an important role in our country's musical life.

At first, Erich Katz's main interest was "modern" music. During his years in Berlin (1918-21) as a student in composition at the *Staatliche Hochschule für Musik*, he became acquainted with Curt Sachs, Paul Hindemith, and Hans Mersmann; the last-named was a prominent scholar in folksong research, performance practice, music pedagogy, and twentieth-century music. Later, at the University of Freiburg, where Erich Katz graduated with a Ph.D. in musicology in 1926, he developed an interest in early music, primarily due to his professor and mentor, Wilibald Gurlitt. During Katz's eighteen years in Freiburg he also associated with such distinguished scholars as the theorist Hermann Erpf, Israeli ethnomusicologist Edith Gerson-Kiwi, and musicologist Heinrich Bessler.

Katz made use of his musicological training and interest in old and new

music as music critic for a Freiburg newspaper and for the internationally known magazine, *Melos*, for which he wrote numerous articles. Rather than pursuing a research career in musicology, however, he shared his knowledge in a more practical way through numerous lifelong musical activities, some of which are explored below.

Teacher

Katz's teaching career spanned Germany, England, and the United States for a period of over forty years. He assumed his first important teaching position in 1928 at the Freiburg Music Seminary where he taught music history and theory. He co-founded this institution, which was formed for the education and accreditation of private music teachers, with Erich Doflein.² Later in England, to which he fled from Nazi Germany in 1938, Katz taught music history and appreciation, as well as other musical subjects, to children at the Bunce Court School. On arriving in the United States during World War II, he joined the faculty at the New York College of Music (NYCM; later incorporated into the Division of Music Education at New York University) where he taught music history, composition, and keyboard harmony for fifteen years. LaNoue Davenport, one of Katz's students at NYCM, commented on his teaching:

Consider a Music History class in which the students not only heard and discussed, but performed much of the music under study.. After all, the act of performing a piece of music is even more crucial to learning its essential qualities than hearing it. Then, a Keyboard Harmony class in which improvisation was not treated as a peripheral, but as a central element, in which music making was treated as the very first consideration. And finally, composition lessons in which the wildest flights of the untrained imagination were treated with care and encouragement. . (Davenport 1970, 43).³

As Davenport points out, improvisation was an important part of Katz's musical life and teaching. Katz's wife, Hannah, remembers him improvising duets in the style of seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and twentieth-century music with a fellow student on Gurlitt's Praetorius Organ in Freiburg.

Ilse Gerda Wunsch, a colleague of Katz's at NYCM, describes her experience as Erich's private counterpoint student in *The American Recorder*, Erich Katz Memorial Issue:

I was soon to learn why Erich was one of its [NYCM] most sought after and popular instructors. Perhaps the most striking mark of these sessions was his utterly unconventional approach. His instructions were purely imaginative and suggestive, provoking my own inventiveness. Never tied to a textbook, he extemporized each lesson (AR 1973, 123-124).

She also noted that, when Katz retired from the faculty, he asked her to take over his keyboard harmony and improvisation classes but suggested that she first observe his teaching:

I was most curious. Could improvisation ever be taught? What a revelation it was to me to see him at work! He had designed a course of study whereby the students felt so relaxed and encouraged that it was a pleasure to watch their capacities grow from inhibition and inability to liberation and capability. He strengthened their self-confidence so that they were ultimately able to come out of their shell and could project their own personalities.

No wonder then, that Erich was one of the most admired and revered members of the faculty. Students flocked to him. Inspired by his vast musicological knowledge, his erudition and scholarship, they felt their lives enriched, inspired, and motivated.

Perhaps one of the inspirations for Erich Katz's improvisational teaching was that of his friend, Carl Orff, with whom he visited and corresponded often.⁴ Olga Westphal, a friend from the Freiburg days, described Katz's early association with Orff:

Orff came to Freiburg several times around 1930 and gave marvelous courses in improvisation. It was a wonderful time, so alive, active and youthful. . . . These improvisation sessions by Orff are simply unforgettable. Everyone was given an instrument . . . gongs, triangles, cymbals, xylophones. No one needed to have previous experience. Everything was improvised. Orff was highly gifted and swept us all along. Erich found himself in the right place; he was himself tremendously gifted in improvisation (AR 1973, 119).

There is no evidence that Katz used Orff's *Schulwerk* method directly in his teaching,⁵ but a report in *Childhood Education* about the Becque Summer Arts Camp, for which Erich Katz was Music Director in 1945, describes similar activities:

There was a recorder group and a choral group in music which constantly contributed to theater. Two pianos, ancient and in need of repair, could hardly be used at all, but the creative genius of the musician on the staff [Katz] not only solved this problem but stimulated the girls to similar activities. He improvised an orchestra of old brass umbrella stands, flower pots, and cooking utensils from which he produced amazing rhythms and sound effects (reprinted AR 1973, 123).

Shirley Marcus, a well known California recorder teacher, remembers a workshop led by Katz: "The most inspired teaching moment that weekend was when we found ourselves improvising a tune—starting all together with a simple phrase Erich gave us. " (AR 1973, 131). She goes on to describe how he led them into improvising a composition in rondo form by alternating his phrase, played by the group, with solo improvised phrases passed in turn from one to another. Because Katz's teaching was improvised—he never used textbooks or made up lesson plans—no concrete record of his teaching methods exists except

perhaps those revealed in his recorder method book, *Recorder Playing: A New and Comprehensive Method by Erich Katz with Many Original Rounds and Arrangements of Folk Tunes and Other Pieces* (Katz, E. 1951).

Katz's interest in the recorder developed gradually throughout his early career. In an article in *The American Recorder* he described his boyhood fascination with a similar, simpler instrument, the penny whistle, which he saw in a store window:

Somehow it seemed to hold a secret, the magic to create musical sounds out of nothing, of pure air. I did not rest until I got it and was able to try the magic myself. That was the beginning for me of a long story (Katz, E. 1961, 3).

He took up the recorder for his own enjoyment in Freiburg about 1940. He must have been introduced to the instrument much earlier, however, in the early 1920s by his professor at the Freiburg Musicological Seminar, Wilibald Gurlitt. In 1922 Katz and a group of students, under the direction of Gurlitt, gave a series of performances of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century music in Hamburg—the first modern public performances of medieval music in Germany. They used modern instruments, Katz reported, saying, “We tried to make the best of a muted viola, a flute played without vibrato, and so on” (Katz, E. 1961, 3). Gurlitt soon thereafter began to introduce early instruments to his “Collegium Musicum.” He commissioned a local organ building firm to construct five recorders, copied from a set of seventeenth-century instruments, for study in his reconstruction of the Praetorius Organ, and members of the collegium musicum played five-part music from Praetorius's time on this set of recorders. In a 1949 letter to Hermann Moeck, Gurlitt wrote: “I have always placed great importance on the fact that our music making on recorders served musicology and the understanding of the principles of sound of the seventeenth century” (Moeck 1982, 62).

According to Hannah Katz, her husband did not become seriously involved with the recorder in his musical activities until after he arrived in England, “partly because it fit the budget of poor immigrants, and could be learnt and carried around more readily than most other musical instruments” (AR 1973, 121). In New York Katz taught recorder classes through the City College Extension Division and gave a series of lessons, “You Can Play The Recorder,” on the radio station WNYC—the beginning of a long career as a recorder teacher.

In the Introduction to his method book, *Recorder Playing*, Katz summarized the contemporaneous uses of the recorder thirty years after the reconstruction of the first twentieth-century recorder by Arnold Dolmetsch:

1. First of all, old music, originally written for recorders or suitable for recorder playing, has been taken up again.

2. On the other hand, the recorder is also making a place of its own in *modern music*. Composers who—often accidentally—became familiar with it, soon found out its special virtues.



Erich Katz, 1960s

3. The recorder offers to amateurs the opportunity of learning to play an instrument without devoting many years of painstaking study to it. It is fortunately still a fact that to most people the pleasure of making music, even if only in a simple way, gives much more satisfaction, and satisfaction of a different kind, than mere passive listening.

4. The educational value of the recorder has been widely recognized by music teachers (Katz, E. 1951, 3).

According to Winifred Jaeger, *Recorder Playing*, which was one of the first method books published in America,⁶ provides an example of how Katz taught:

Erich's *Recorder Playing* . . . grew out of his need for printed material to put into the hands of his students for practise [sic] at home. [Previously] he wrote two-part settings on the blackboard, out of his head, and later found that a printed volume would be helpful. . . . Erich used this book by going back and forth a bit, supplementing it with improvisation and some other sightreading material (Jaeger 1990, 2).

This method book is obviously based on the author's experience and preference for teaching recorder in classes—it is intended for a mixed class of C (soprano and tenor) and for F (sopranino and alto) recorder players, but can be used by a single student with a teacher. The book presumes some musical literacy but would work using a rote approach for those learning to read music. New fingerings are presented as “connections”—the student learns to “connect” each new note with other notes learned previously. When these “connections” are presented in rote, students learn to hear, as well as play, intervals rather than isolated pitches and fingerings. The author advises in the “Introduction” that

Playing by ear should go along at all times with playing from notes. Also, the pupil should be encouraged to make up little tunes of his own, and improvise within his acquired range. This will help to build up confidence, and counteract the danger of too mechanical an approach (Katz 1951, 3-4).

Katz composed exercises for each lesson in the form of two-part rounds, “making possible from the beginning the fun of two-part playing by two or more students, or by student and teacher. Yet each partner plays the same melody and thereby learns to handle the same difficulties” (Katz 1951, 4).

Practice pieces (mostly folk music from various countries) are arranged as duets for F and C recorders, with each part equally challenging and interesting. The book covers all recorder fingerings and introduces trills and other baroque ornaments, with the advice, “Let your fingers be playful.” *Recorder Playing* is surely a “playful” and social, as well as serious and pedagogically sound, approach to learning the instrument.

The Archive contains many letters and tributes from Erich Katz's

students that give clues to his teaching methods and personality. Like his method book, his lessons were serious as well as fun. Suzanne Ferguson, who studied with Katz in Santa Barbara during his retirement years, described her teacher as “gentle but firm in his insistence that even beginners could develop a good tone through conscientious daily practice, albeit brief;[and] good musicianship by *counting* accurately and articulating justly, and by regular practice in improvisation” (AR 1973, 130). Another Santa Barbara student, Francis Dwight, writes, “My relations with Erich were not always the sunniest. For anyone who had been playing the recorder for two years, and even owned a bass, my inability to keep strict tempi was a source of constant annoyance to him, and he never failed to let me know it” (AR 1973, 130).

Through his teaching Katz shared his love of music with a great variety of people: children, college students, private music teachers, professional performers, and amateur recorder players. His classes in music history, theory, composition, sightsinging, and recorder all led to practical music making. Such a creative teacher, he needed no textbooks or lesson plans but extemporized musical examples and inspired his students to improvise their own. No wonder the recorder and voice were his favorite teaching media—they made early and modern music accessible to so many!

Director and Performer

Probably the most outstanding effect of Erich Katz’s teaching was the encouragement and opportunities he gave to his students in performing experiences. For instance, as an outgrowth of his sightsinging class, he organized a performing Madrigal Group at NYCM and, from the Madrigal Group, he developed his Musicians’ Workshop, which became involved with the American Recorder Society. Davenport, who succeeded Katz as conductor of the Musicians’ Workshop, explains, “Of course if you studied with Erich you were drawn into his activities” (Wollitz and Blue 1989, 4). Jaeger describes the Musicians’ Workshop as “a loosely organized group of Erich’s—sort of a study group,” with twelve or fifteen members meeting once a week. It was primarily an a cappella singing group, but instruments were also used. “We did early and also contemporary music, mostly for our own enjoyment and edification. We also put on quite a few public performances, including a lot on radio” (Seibert, Bixler, and Blue 1989, 54).

For a NYCM student newspaper, *Tempo*, Erich Katz wrote about the Musicians’ Workshop:

It was about five years ago that I was sitting and debating with a group of young musicians who were not only talented but also full of ideas as to how to improve the world—the musical world, at least. During the discussion, it struck me that what they needed most was an outlet for their ideas and gifts, an opportunity to do something for which there was not sufficient room in the normal routine of our concert life. Thus, the “Musicians’ Workshop” was born.



Erich Katz conducting recorder class at New York City College, 1950s

Concerts, by and large, have to comply with certain limitations set by the average taste of a prospective audience. Performers, therefore, are often more concerned with the degree of technical polish than with the program itself. Even where a program is interesting, it will usually mix the extraordinary with some well-known and proven pieces. The Musicians' Workshop started with an entirely different premise. The unknown, or rarely performed, work was our only concern. Obviously, contemporary music is high up on our list of presentations, and since a "workshop" has the right, or even the duty, to try things out and to experiment, we could afford a great many "first performances" (Katz, E. Feb. 1952, 1).

Announcements, programs, and reviews in the Katz Archive show that Musicians' Workshop concerts and broadcasts between 1948 and 1952 included works by Krenek, Milhaud, Stravinsky, Satie, Poulenc, Bartok, Hindemith, Persichetti, and other important twentieth-century composers. Many of these performances were American premieres; for instance, the *New York Herald Tribune* review describes the first American performance of four choral songs by Carl Orff by the Musicians' Workshop at "Circle in the Square" in Greenwich Village (10 December 1951). The Musicians' Workshop concerts also became a showcase for compositions by Katz and his students. In the same review was a description of the first concert performance of the *Suite for Clarinet and Keyboard* (which "adventured . . . into dissonance") by Katz's student, LaNoue Davenport.

In his article for *Tempo* Katz credits radio station WNYC for its support of the Musicians' Workshop:

We are fortunate to have in New York a station such as WNYC which, under the musical leadership of Herman Neuman, is always open for interesting music and progressive ideas. WNYC gave us a haven which we would not easily have found elsewhere (Katz, E. 1952, 1).

During the years from 1949 to 1954, Katz took advantage of WNYC's annual American Music Festival radio concerts to perform works by his students and himself for various combinations of woodwinds, strings, piano, and voices. The purpose of this festival, which occurred for ten days between Lincoln's and Washington's birthdays, was:

To showcase the American musical heritage;
To provide radio hearings for American composers and artists, known and unknown; and
To present festive public concerts by the foremost musical organizations in the metropolitan area, with the accent on American composers and artists (Siegel 1949).

Performances by the Musicians' Workshop not only featured twentieth-century music, but often early music, or a combination of both. Typical is a concert, part of a series for children and adults, on 4 April 1954, entitled, "A

Program of Merry Music from the Past and Present with Voices, Recorders, Guitar, Keyboard, and Percussion Instruments.” The first part of the program included dances by Tylman Suzato and Michael Praetorius, canzonets by Thomas Morley, seventeenth-century rounds, and light songs from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. After intermission the group performed modern music: Katz’s *Toy Concerto*⁷ and rounds by the teacher and his students.

The Musicians’ Workshop’s Manhattan debut featured twenty-five singers with instrumentalists in Heinrich Schutz’s *St. Matthew Passion* and a Buxtehude cantata. The reviewer (F.D.P.) of this concert for the *New York Herald Tribune*, on 3 May 1950, wrote: “The singing was not always polished, but the program as a whole spoke well for the enterprise and aims of the recently organized Workshop.” Later concerts by the Musicians’ Workshop included works by early composers such as Dunstable, Dufay, Ockeghem, Compère, Josquin, Byrd, Obrecht, and Gabrieli.

In his *Tempo* article Katz commented about “ancient music” in the Musicians’ Workshop performances:

We have followed certain principles in our choice. Not all old music is good just because it is old, and some so-called ‘forgotten music’ is rightfully forgotten. On the other hand, there is a wealth of great master-works from the Middle Ages to the Baroque Period unknown to the majority of people that should be brought back to our concert halls or places of music education. Much of this music has a strong and direct appeal to us (Katz, E. Feb. 1952, 1).

Hannah Katz wrote:

Erich loved and lived his knowledge of old music and made it come alive wherever he went. His loving admiration of Medieval and Renaissance music became the fundament of all his professional activities. The lucidity of the linear polyphonic setting of the old music had a strong emotional and spiritual equivalent in modern music from Eric Satie through Hindemith and Stravinsky and to Erich Katz (AR 1973, 117).

She has also pointed out that the recorder was important to her husband “because it had the tonal quality for old music” (AR 1973, 121). He certainly was a pioneer in using the recorder for performances of early music. Katz has written about meeting Curt Sachs again in 1943: “My old teacher. . . was a wonderfully broad-minded man in his field [organology], yet I shall never forget the utterly shocked expression on his face when I told him that I liked to play the recorder on occasion!” (Katz, E. 1961, 3).

Once when Katz needed a recorder performer for a forthcoming concert, he persuaded LaNoue Davenport to borrow one and teach himself to play it, within a month! —the beginning of Davenport’s illustrious career as a professional recorder player. All members of the Musicians’ Workshop were singers, but often they would alternate singing and playing recorders within a piece. Eventually those who played the recorder became a separate entity, “The

Recorder Consort of the Musicians' Workshop." This recorder group accompanied renaissance dances by members of the Choreographer's Workshop at a performance sponsored by The Early Music Foundation in Times Hall.⁸ Two years later "The Recorder Consort of the Musicians' Workshop" produced a recording, *Recorder Music of Six Centuries*,⁹ in which LaNoue Davenport, Robert Dorough, Bernard Krainis, and Erich Katz performed on recorders, with percussion accompaniment by Herbert Kellman. The recording was reviewed in a *The New York Times* article, "Little-Known Baroque," which begins:

Nowadays, thanks to long-playing records, we can all be musicologists. So much early music is being recorded that laymen, who used to be dependent on books for their ideas of medieval, renaissance and baroque music, can now hear it in their own living rooms and make their own judgments.¹⁰

Concerning *Recorder Music of Six Centuries*, the reviewer writes:

Here the centuries are the twelfth to the seventeenth, Orlando Gibbons being the final composer represented. "Music of six centuries played by recorders" would describe the contents more accurately, for this is not all original music composed for recorders. . . . The lively dances with percussion accompaniment are especially delightful.

Bernard Krainis, one of America's foremost pioneer recorder players, credits Erich Katz with introducing him to early music. He contacted Katz in 1949 after hearing some recorder music played by the Musicians' Workshop on WNYC, and soon, as Krainis recalls, he was performing with the group:

The programs included works by Dufay, Josquin and Obrecht, as well as a Susato dance suite (strange how some things stick in the memory). . . . It seems incredible now, but not only was the music new to me, but with the exception of Josquin I'd never heard of the other composers.

Working with Erich was the most exciting thing that had ever happened to me. I had taught myself the recorder without ever having heard another player. I knew almost nothing about early music except that I loved it and that Erich Katz knew a lot about it and was the only one performing it in public. I couldn't get over my good fortune in being part of such a momentous event.

Erich Katz was important in my life—he appeared when I most needed him (AR 1973,125)

As a musical director, Erich Katz was a leader in exposing audiences of various types—children and radio listeners, as well as the more adventurous concert-goers—to works that were new to them. As a performer on the recorder, he was responsible for introducing many Americans to the instrument and to early music. Furthermore, he gave opportunities to his students and associates to share their own compositions, their performing skills, and their broadened music appreciation with audiences.

Music Director of the American Recorder Society

Erich Katz is considered by Martha Bixler, recently President of the American Recorder Society (ARS), to be “the giant, the most important person in the [United States] recorder movement” (AR 1973, 123). Gloria Ramsey and Diana Kellerman, faculty members at California State University, credit Katz with the “American recorder sound” because of the inspiration and knowledge that he gave to professional recorder players such as Krainis and Davenport, and “Father of us all” because of his early leadership of the American Recorder Society (AR 1973, 131).

In an interview for *The American Recorder* Bernard Krainis tells how Erich Katz involved him with the ARS even before he was allowed to join the Musicians’ Workshop:

It quickly became clear that this would be a quid pro quo arrangement; that in order for me to gain entree 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 (Nagle and Blue 1989, 98).

Perhaps Katz’s most lasting achievement in the United States’s recorder movement is his work with the ARS. The organization had been founded in 1939 by Suzanne Bloch, daughter of the composer, Ernest Bloch. She had learned to play the lute and recorder from the Dolmetsches and performed with them in 1935 on an American tour, which created some interest in recorder playing in the United States. She then began importing Dolmetsch recorders, did some teaching in New York City, and formed the Society so that amateurs could learn to play together musically (Bixler and Wollitz 1988, 136-140). Erich Katz met Suzanne Bloch in New York City soon after he arrived in the United States. On 13 March 1944, they performed together at the Gallery of the National Arts Club in a concert sponsored by a new society, “Players & Singers.” The purpose of this society, which was organized as a “coöperative effort of musicians and sponsors,” is stated in the program for this concert, which is in the Katz Archives:

Players & Singers . . . has been organized to bring into our musical experience some of the rare and seldom-heard music which forms so large and so vital a part of our cultural inheritance. The programs will be made up mainly of religious and secular music of the XIth to the XVIIIth century, transcribed directly from original sources and presented as nearly as possible in the spirit of the original. Early instruments will be used, but not exclusively. . . . From time to time, music of our own day will naturally find a congenial place in these programs (Box 2).

The concert, entitled “An Introduction to Early Music Using Early Musical Instruments,” included lute, virginals, harpsichord, voice, violin, viola da gamba, and “a group of Renaissance recorder players.” Music was chosen from an outstanding number of composers: Heinrich Schutz, Thomas Morley, William Byrd, Orlando Gibbons, Hans Newsidler, Francesco da Milano, Matthais

Waisselius, Louis de Caix D'Hervelois, John Bull, John Dowland, Marco Cara, Alfonso Ferrabosco, Guillaume Costeley, Robert Jones, Claude Bilbastre, Dr. Arne, and Georg Philipp Telemann.

In 1947 Katz, with the help of Suzanne Bloch and others, took the lead in reorganizing the ARS, which had been moribund during World War II.¹¹ Soon Bloch lost interest in the ARS, and Katz, as Music Director, with the help of Jaeger, "ran the show" (Seibert, Bixler, and Blue 1989, 55). They scheduled and notified members of monthly meetings, kept records, published and distributed a newsletter, and organized annual concerts. The purpose of the concerts, according to Jaeger, was to interest people in the recorder: "They were wonderful affairs, very exciting programs" (Seibert, Bixler, and Blue 1989, 54). The best players in the ARS performed on recorders, harpsichords, viols, and other early instruments, sometimes with the singers of the Musicians' Workshop.

In 1959, before he retired to Santa Barbara, Katz worked on the incorporation of the ARS. At that time it had grown from less than a dozen New York members in 1947 to about 600 members and ten chapters throughout the United States. (Now in 1991 there are over ninety chapters and over four thousand members.) As Honorary President of the ARS during his retirement years, Katz continued to serve the ARS by his active involvement in the Santa Barbara Chapter and as Associate Editor, for music reviews, of *The American Recorder*.

Katz was convinced that the ARS would make an important contribution to spreading a love of music in the United States. Davenport credits the ARS, along with the New York Pro Musica, for spreading the early music movement throughout the United States: "It has enabled many, many people to make a livelihood out of doing early music." He says further, "I think the ARS is an important social phenomenon, because it's so rare in this culture for a group of people—and disparate types of people—to get together just to make music" (Wollitz and Blue 1989, 6).

Only because of Katz's dynamic personality, organizational powers, and dedicated work did he succeed in rejuvenating the ARS where others might have failed. His involvement with the ARS combined his teaching, directing, and performing skills, resulting in joyful music making by many recorder players. Perhaps his greatest accomplishment with the ARS, however, was his skill in successfully combining in one organization professionals (teachers, musical directors, composers, arrangers, and performers) with amateur recorder players—a challenge the ARS has eagerly pursued since the Erich Katz days.

Editor, Arranger, and Composer

In the early days of the ARS little music was available for recorder players, who were limited to sopranos and altos with a few tenors and hardly any basses. Through his own practical editions and compositions and those by others whom he encouraged to edit and compose for recorders, Katz played an important role in introducing recorder players to early and contemporary music;

furthermore, he convinced publishers, such as Schott, E. C. Schirmer, and Galaxy, to print recorder music. From 1950 to 1960 Katz served as General Editor of the American Recorder Society Editions, Series I (Numbers 1-40),¹² which were first published by Clarke and Way, then by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. Mostly early music (from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries), these publications also include arrangements of folk music, early American music, and contemporary pieces composed for recorder ensemble by Henry Cowell, LaNoue Davenport, Erich Katz, and others. While most of these early ARS Editions are edited by Katz himself, others are edited by recorder players such as LaNoue Davenport, Bernard Krainis, Sidney Robertson Cowell, Alfred Mann, and Joel Newmann. In the *American Recorder Society Newsletter* of 3 March, 1952, Katz discussed the purpose of these editions:

The publications are not presented with any musicological pretensions. 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.

With such an idea in mind, three principles had to be followed for the ARS editions. First, the music had to be of high standard, excluding any compromise. Second, while upholding musical quality, the pieces had to be fairly easy to be within reach of the majority of players. And third, for the same reason, the arrangements had to be for those instruments most commonly used: Sopranos and Altos; or Sopranos, Altos and Tenors. . . . These arrangements can also be used without much difficulty by those groups lucky enough to have a Bass player (Katz, E. March 1952, 1).

In the September, 1955, *Notes* of the Music Library Association, Alfred Mann, a well-known musicologist and conductor who played the recorder and edited the first ARS publication in 1940,¹³ reviewed several ARS editions along with recorder music recently published by Schott & Company, London, saying:

This choice of recent publications reflects some of the progress made in the first twenty-five years of modern recorder music publishing. The “Classical Tunes” and “Easy Arrangements” have gradually given way to carefully presented original works—some of them “easier” than the arrangements and many of them true “classics” of the recorder literature. . . . The editions of the ARS have made a valuable contribution towards regaining the earlier literature (Mann 1955, 654).

Mann goes on to say, however:

Surprisingly, the word “arranged” still figures too prominently in these publications, and since sources are not always clearly identified it would often be difficult to find out whether “arranged” means “transposed,” “transcribed,” or “rewritten” (Mann 1955, 655).

In the *ARS Newsletter* Katz (1956, 2) responded to Mann's article, describing the processes used by an editor to produce a performing edition and the fine line between the terms "arranging" and "transcribing." He reiterates: "The purpose of practical editions is not discovery or research, but the providing of music for enjoyment in a form legible and familiar to the ordinary player." Krainis (1956, 3-4), editor of the *ARS Newsletter*, also responded to the article by Mann, who responded in turn (Mann 1956, 5-8); both letters were printed in the July, 1956, issue of the *ARS Newsletter*.

Katz also edited early music for chorus: works by Josquin des Pres, John Wilbye, Jan Pieters Sweelinck, Orlando di Lasso, and Hans Leo Hassler.¹⁴ Perhaps more important, however, is Katz's ten-volume edition of twentieth-century choral music, *Das Neue Chorbuch*, which was published by Schott & Company (Mainz) in 1931, when, according to Erich Doflein, it "created considerable interest" (AR 1973, 118). This collection includes works by Karl Marx, Carl Orff, Matyas Seiber, Conrad Beck, Ernst Pepping, Igor Stravinsky, Paul Hindemith, and others, including Katz himself. Katz knew many of these composers personally and urged them to compose music especially for this collection. Titles of the volumes are clues to their usefulness for choral performances: "Church and Ecclesiastical Songs," "Serious Songs and Chants," "Dance and Joking Songs," "Songs of the Time," and "Play and Children's Songs."¹⁵

Erich Katz's compositions, as well as his editions, focus on accessible, functional music for recreational playing and/or singing or for performance by amateurs or professionals—*gebrauchsmusik*. Following in the steps of Hindemith,¹⁶ whom he knew personally, Katz strove for his music to be idiomatic with each part interesting—challenging enough to be enjoyable to practice and rehearse, yet simple enough for a convincing performance and immediate audience response.

The composer used mostly polyphonic textures, but for a medieval effect he often wrote in open fifths and octaves and parallel fourths. His favorite compositional devices were the canon and the ostinato. He composed canons, which are fun to play or sing and an excellent introduction to contrapuntal style, for nursery rhyme settings,¹⁷ piano teaching pieces,¹⁸ dances for clarinet trio,¹⁹ and several recorder and choral works. He also used ostinatos extensively, such in his *Six Inventions for Piano: Studies in Modern Rhythm*,²⁰ to contrast with, and serve as a metronome against, the rhythmic challenges in the other hand or other parts. The use of ostinatos for pedagogical purposes seems to be derived from the composer's own skill in keyboard improvisation—one can imagine that he taught his students to improvise over simple ostinatos at the keyboard or recorder.

Complex rhythms provide the main interests and challenges for the performer of Katz's compositions (as also in many of the works he chose to edit). He was fond of the hemiolas of early music and asymmetrical and additive rhythms (demonstrating his admiration of the music of Stravinsky, Bartok and

other early twentieth-century composers). Popular dance rhythms, such as he used in the *Santa Barbara Suite* for three recorders²¹ were not accepted, however, by some recorder players, as Katz writes in a commentary on this work:

At the time the Suite was written . . . a Tango for recorders was something of a novelty, and there was some objection in certain circles of recorder purists. Even fairly recently a nice elderly lady in one of my classes refused steadfastly to play this movement which she considered a horrible aberration from the true path which music for recorders should follow. However, I can see no reason why recorders should be less suited to sounding the rhythmical patterns and syncopations of a modern dance than those of its 16th- or 17th-century counterpart. Indeed, the mellow timbre, the “blue” mood of a Tango, seems particularly fitting to the sweetness of tone that recorders are capable of. (Katz, E. 1964, 37)

Katz undoubtedly used his publications of music in his own teaching, performing, and conducting throughout his life. Although his editions may not meet the standards of some musicologists, such as Alfred Mann, or of today’s more knowledgeable early musicians, they certainly served the purpose for which they were intended—joyful singing and playing of quality music. His compositions demonstrate his creativity as a teacher, his skills of improvisation, and a high degree of craftsmanship. Katz’s music is “Neo-Classical,” serving as an introduction for performers and audiences to early forms, textures, and tonalities; at the same time he often incorporated new rhythms and harmonies—an introduction to “modern” music. But, most important of all, Katz’s music is always *gebrauchsmusik*—music to be enjoyed!

Conclusion

Hannah Katz has said of her husband:

Music was a profession only peripherally—it was his language, the expression of being alive, of joy and of sadness, of the whole range of feelings, of erotics, and of the sacred. Music was action, it was singing and dancing, and it was teaching (Katz, H. 1983, 4).

Erich Katz himself was action, a very active leader who involved everyone—his students, colleagues, professional performers and composers, and amateur musicians—in singing and playing together, often with himself. He was not known as a virtuoso musician, but rather as a vehicle for the performance of new compositions and older works unfamiliar to most audiences. Performance did not have to be public, however, to be meaningful to Katz. Mervin Lane, a faculty member at the Santa Barbara City College, where Katz taught after his retirement, reminisced:

The Collegium Musicum, which Erich directed for over ten years in Santa

Barbara, played together always in the spirit and atmosphere of house and chamber music. We met in his tiny studio on Mountain Drive, playing on cold evenings in front of a fire, which he alone tended, taking care to arrange it—as he did with his own musical arrangements and the settings and seatings he employed to have the parts just right—to gather and capture the effects of its warmth and light. This, I would say, was the essential criteria of his appreciation of music and performance: warmth and clarity (AR 1973, 130).

Warmth and clarity is also the essential element of the music Katz loved the best and of his own compositions and arrangements. With careful craftsmanship he strived for each part to contribute to a satisfying musical experience. With similar craftsmanship and his warm personality he reorganized the American Recorder Society, inspiring many to contribute their part so that recorder players all over America could enjoy playing together “in the spirit and atmosphere of house and chamber music.”

Martha Bixler, former President of the ARS and a long-time friend of Erich Katz's, summarized his musical contributions in a memorial tribute:

But above everything else his interest was in music-making, more than in writing, performing, or perhaps even teaching. His great mission in life, and it really was a mission, was to bring people together to make music. This could be accomplished by means of the recorder, that little instrument that now has such a solid place in the early music revival. If there was no music available (and a few years ago there was very little) he wrote or arranged it, tirelessly, endlessly. If there was nobody to play it, he taught people, singly and in groups, sometimes in classes of fifty or more. If there was no one to organize the players so that they could get together to exchange information, learn, and simply play together, he re-organized the American Recorder Society so that it became a going concern, directly spawning the enormous amount of recorder activity going on in this country today (AR 1973, 123).

By playing and singing with others, Erich Katz led many to love music as he did. As a teacher, he led his sight-singing classes into the Madrigal Group, then to the Musicians' Workshop. He led his keyboard harmony classes into free improvisation, then to composing. He led recorder players from folk tunes (in his method book) to early music (through his editions) and to new music (compositions by himself and others). As a performer and director, he led American audiences into a new appreciation of early and modern music. As Music Director of the ARS, he led it from a handful of players to a national organization of thousands. The Pied Piper surely came to America in the form of Erich Katz!

NOTES

1. An alto in D, with one key, made by Peter Harlan (1898-1966)
2. Doflein later developed a form of music education combining avant-garde with older music resulting in a collection, *Geigenschulwerk*, which he compiled with his wife,

Elma Axtfeld (Mainz, 1931, 2/1951; Engl. trans., 1957).

3. Davenport went on to become a founding member of the New York Pro Musica, an early leader in the American Recorder Society, and a well-known conductor and recorder teacher.

4. The Archive, Box 3C, contains twenty-three letters from Carl Orff.

5. An ink manuscript of the *Orff-Schulwerk Elementare Musikübung, Kleines Flötenbuch I*, by Gunild Keetman, is in the Archive, Box 11.

6. The popular *Enjoy Your Recorder* by the Trapp Family Singers, who were also responsible for introducing Americans to the recorder, was published three years later in separate editions for C and F recorders (Sharon, CT: Magnamusic, 1954).

7. New York: Omega, 1950.

8. Reviewed in *The New York Herald Tribune*, 22 March 1951, clipping in Archive, Box 2.

9. Volume I, Classic Editions CE 1018.

10. Archive, Box 2, clipping dated July 12, 1953.

11. The announcement of the first postwar meeting of the American Recorder Society, on 29 October 1947, is in the Archive, Box 6.

12. Now out of print, copies of each are in the Katz Archive, Box 8.

13. Jacob Regnart, *Lively Airs for three recorders* (New York: Hargail, 1953).

14. New York: Music House Binzer, Old Masters Choral Series, 1952-1956.

15. See Table of Contents, *AR* 1973, 119.

16. In 1932 Hindemith composed a *Trio for Recorders* (published the same year by Schott, Mainz, and in 1952 by Schott, London) which he performed with two friends for a school music festival in Plön.

17. *New Rounds on Old Rhymes* (New York: Omega, 1946).

18. *Merry Go Round* (New York: Hargail, 1950).

19. *Three Canonic Dances* (New York: Omega, 1954).

20. New York: Omega, 1949.

21. *ARS* #18 (New York: Associated Music Publ., 1955)

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