

SPREADING THE EARLY-MUSIC WORD



Photo by John Meixner

Julienne Pape loved playing the flute when she was growing up on a farm in Flemington, NJ. Years later, she saw a flyer about a recorder group, and her musical life was transformed. She began learning about early music and performing in recorder ensembles. She would go on to found a non-profit organization in New Jersey, Montclair Early Music, whose mission promotes “interest in the recorder and recorder playing as well as early music in general.”

Pape (pronounced PAYP) majored in flute at Douglass College, part of Rutgers University. She taught music—including recorder—in an elementary school for eight years. Her subsequent immersion into recorder repertoire introduced her to “amazing, glorious music” she would never have experienced in band or orchestra, in which flute parts are sporadic. “With recorder, you’re pretty much playing all the time, and this music is swimming all around you with the polyphony,” says Pape, 76. “I fell in love with it. I played recorder more and more and flute less and less.”

Life intervened, and as a single parent Pape found herself needing to expand the family coffers. Today, she is on the verge of retiring from her longtime vocation in real estate and eager to have more time to pursue her artistic interests, especially

Montclair Early Music. Pape is grateful she’ll have time for another reason: She is a survivor of pancreatic cancer who wants to make sure her organization is sustainable “after I won’t be a part of it.”

Montclair Early Music welcomes players of many levels on period instruments for rehearsals and concerts. “My thought in doing our performances is that I want people to appreciate early music just the way I learned to appreciate it when I first heard it,” says Pape. “In my area, there really aren’t any early-music concerts. You have to go to New York. I wanted the public to be able to know about this wonderful music.”

With her recorder group, she has performed for people with Alzheimer’s, whom she enlisted to play percussion. Pape and colleagues at Montclair Early Music have devised programs for children, holiday concerts of medieval and Renaissance music, and performances featuring dancers. She had to postpone several events due to the coronavirus pandemic, but she’s planning concerts in the spring of 2021 of early American music that traces the Afro-American Spiritual to its roots in lining-out music originating in Scotland. The program also will include works of relatively unknown American composers.

One of Pape’s most recent projects was an elementary school recorder contest. “It’s a shame that kids learn to play recorder and it’s used just for a vehicle to play other instruments in a band,” she says. “I started this contest for children who’d be interested to play the recorder more seriously.” She contacted all of the music teachers in her area to recommend students; three winners were chosen at the 2019 event. The 2020 contest began with 10 students and ended with four performing French folk songs with the adult Recorder Consort at an outdoor concert in October following Zoom sessions and socially distanced outdoor rehearsals.

Montclair Early Music offers programs and pays its guest music directors through membership fees and ticket sales. But Pape knows the organization needs to do more fund raising and increase the breadth of its offerings. “I’d like to bring in more professionals to play at our concerts,” she says. “My goals are just to increase my knowledge of everything and play as much music as I can.”