

CLAYTON STATE COLLEGE AND
LYLE NORDSTROM: EARLY MUSIC
EDUCATION IN THE SOUTHEAST

by: Letitia Berlin

Dr. Lyle Nordstrom, the new chairman of Clayton State College's music department and the founder of the highly acclaimed Musicians of Swanee Alley, is excited. His appointment at Clayton State College comes at a time when Atlanta itself is experiencing a surge of growth in early music. The slow but inexorable spread of early music activity from the northeastern U.S. to other regions of the country is making itself felt more and more in the southeast now, especially in Atlanta, where a small but strong base of early music has existed for many years.

In a recent conversation with Dr. Nordstrom, I asked about his reasons for coming to Clayton State College. Very few schools in the U.S. offer early music performance practice degree programs, though several offer instruction on period instruments and many have strong early music ensemble traditions. Those schools that do offer degrees in the field often find that a division exists between the performance practice faculty and the mainstream music faculty, thus placing the former in an academic and musical ghetto. The unique circumstances at Clayton State will give Nordstrom the opportunity to realize a long-held ambition: that of integrating performance practice study with the traditional music school curriculum. Rather than developing the early music degrees to the exclusion of others, Nordstrom's goal is to have every music student at Clayton State take one performance practice class each year he or she is enrolled. Classes to be offered will include the study of 18th century arias, rhythm and articulation throughout history, *musica ficta*, improvisation, and a senior year class in performance practice and the history of instruments. Currently, Clayton State early music students may study voice, recorder, viola da gamba, baroque oboe, harpsichord and forte piano. Plans for the immediate future include a visit by Ken Pierce and Indrig Matthews in May to stage theater works by Purcell. This exposure to performance practice study and the notion that each period of music should be subjected to its own stylistic consideration, will, Nordstrom hopes, make an important contribution to producing well-rounded and historically-aware musicians for the future.

Early music, he believes, offers one of the best possible training grounds for musicians. In learning the techniques of improvisation and ornamentation, the student is forced to think-- to take an active part in interpreting the written notes rather than merely recreating them.

Another attraction of Clayton State is the Spivey endowment, which was given to the school to promote musical activity on the campus. The very generous fund provided the wonderful new hall with its first-class acoustics. The student activities fund and the endowment share the expenses of bringing in concert artists of the highest caliber. In addition, generally scholarships are available for almost all students, an unusual occurrence in undergraduate education in this country. Another advantage cited by Nordstrom is the already low tuition, which, coupled with these scholarships, makes Clayton State's education very accessible.

Dr. Nordstrom's interest in early music started when he sang in the chorus for Bach's *Mass in b* while a student. He subsequently changed majors from chemistry to composition, and began to teach himself recorder. He played his senior recital at McAlester College in St. Paul, MN on the recorder, then went on to Stanford for the MM and DMA degrees in early music. He was the first DMA graduate in early music at Stanford, a school which has produced many of the well-known names in early music in the U.S. but which has unfortunately recently abolished its DMA program.

From Stanford, Nordstrom went on to teach at Oakland University in Rochester, MI where he stayed for the next 21 years.

Oakland was one of the very few schools in the U.S. to offer an early music degree in the early 1970's. Nordstrom's influence on today's early music scene is shown by his illustrious former students at Oakland which include Michael Lynn, David Douglass, Ellen Hargis, and Joel Frederickson. David Barnett, another former student and now a performer and teacher of recorder in San Francisco, recalls the intensive concert schedule kept by the Oakland Collegium, remembering a total of 45 concerts one year. From the looks of Spivey's 1992-93 schedule of student and faculty concerts, Dr. Nordstrom intends to keep giving the community plenty of chances to hear early music.

The signs of changing times at Clayton State appeared rapidly. Dr. Nordstrom enticed several students to Georgia from Oakland. These include three singers, a conducting major and an instrument

builder. The latter two are pursuing recorder studies as a secondary instrument. Since January, a lutenist has moved to Morrow to enroll in the music department. Future possible students have scheduled auditions for enrollment in the fall. According to Nordstrom, the students already at Clayton State have adjusted well to the initial shock of a new chairman, new students, new faculty, and a new curriculum, and several have shown interest in participating in the early music ensembles. The quality of the students and faculty already at Clayton were important attractions for Nordstrom and his wife, Pat, also a musician.

Dr. Nordstrom feels that a strong undercurrent of interest in early music exists in the Atlanta area, and he hopes that Clayton State will help to encourage and focus its growth. High attendance at Spivey Hall is crucial for its continued success. Concerts at Spivey have not been as well attended as they should be so far, although attendance was good for January 22's faculty concert. Tentatively scheduled for next year are Canada's baroque orchestra **Tafelmusik**, Aldo Albreu, Reinhardt Goebel and **Concerto Köln**, and the vocal ensemble **The Sixteen** or **Theatre of Voices**, directed by Paul Hillier. The College will be looking at concert attendance to determine the series' benefit to the community, and therefore whether and how much funding is justified. We, the concert-going public of Atlanta, must not only attend events but also inform the administration at Clayton State College that we are enjoying the series. Dr. and Mrs. Nordstrom are delighted to be here. We extend them a hearty welcome and best wishes for a successful tenure at Clayton State College.

(The author would like to thank Dr. Lyle Nordstrom for giving his time for in interview. **The Musicians of Swanee Alley** will perform at Spivey Hall on Tuesday, March 9 at 8:15. Dr. Nordstrom has kindly donated two tickets to the winner of this month's quiz, found elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Dr. Lyle Nordstrom

ATLANTA EARLY MUSIC NEWS

QUIZ

(Submitted by Martha Bishop)

What talented mid-18th century cellist and composer died as a young man from eating spiders which he said tasted like strawberries? The account comes from Schilling in his *Musik Geschichte* and is corroborated by at least one other early source. The anecdote is passed on to us by Edmund Van der Straeten in his *History of the Violoncello* published in 1914.

Answers should be sent to Frances Blaker at 592B Linwood Ave., NE, Atlanta, GA, 30306. The prize will be two tickets to the concert given by Musicians of Swanne Alley at Clayton State College on Tuesday, March 9 at 8:15. First post-marked correct entry will be the winner. In case of a tie, a drawing will be held.

ATLANTA EARLY MUSIC NEWS
SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Name: _____

Address _____

Phone: _____

The Atlanta Early Music News will begin official publication in March 1993. Subscriptions will be \$6.00. Make checks payable to The Atlanta Recorder Society (the agency handling the subscriptions) and send to:

Ms. Martha Armour
5536 Wylake Drive
Norcross, GA 30093

Please note the payment is for The Atlanta Early Music News.

If you wish to contribute to the newsletter, please send material to Frances Blaker, 592B Linwood Ave., NE, Atlanta, GA, 30306. Articles and suggestions are welcome. Articles will be subject to editing.

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS IN EARLY MUSIC

Ongoing: Garden Hills Cinema. *Tous les Matins du Monde* with Jordi Savall, viola da gamba. Fictional but very period life of Marin Marais.

Feb. 5. **Martha Bishop**, viola da gamba. Early French and Spanish music including *Folia* by Marais. Jane Flynn, harpsichord and organ. Emory Little Chapel, 8:15.

Feb. 5. **Musica Antiqua** presents a Valentine's Day program, "Courtly Love." Teresa Texiera and John Boling. Rock Spring Presbyterian Church, 1824 Piedmont Ave. NE, 8:15. FREE

Feb. 20. Viol workshop in Montgomery, AL. Contact Martha Bishop, 325-4735.

Feb. 22. Music for Organ and Recorders performed by Mark Mathews, Frances Blakey and Tish Berlin. St. Philip's Cathedral, 3:30. Free. *Canceled due to illness.*

Feb. 28. Baroque Flute class/club. Call 476-1725 for time and place.

Mar. 7. **Concerto da Camera**, vocal and instrumental Baroque ensemble using period instruments. Emory Presbyterian Church, 3:00.

Mar. 20. **Atlanta Bach Choir**, Porter Remington, Director. 8:15, Spivey Hall, Clayton State College. The *Mass in b* by Johann Sebastian Bach. Tickets \$15.00, \$7.00.

MUSIC THEN, MUSIC NOW

Early music at Clayton State College, Spivey Hall under the direction of Lyle Nordstrom. The concerts are free unless otherwise noted.

Feb. 7. **Music for Shakespeare's England**. Enjoy the music of "Merry Olde England" featuring the vocal and instrumental ensembles of CSC's early music program.

Feb. 12. **Music from the Age of Enlightenment**. A concert of music by Mozart and his contemporaries given by the CSC faculty directed by George Luckenberg.

Mar. 9. **The Musicians of Swanne Alley**. Named after a 16th-century Elizabethan ensemble, this critically acclaimed group of performers specializes in the later Renaissance English and Italian repertory. Formed in 1976 by lutenist Paul O'Dette and Lyle Nordstrom, the newly-appointed head of Clayton State College's Music Department, they have received consistently enthusiastic critical acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic for their "joie de vivre, rhythmic sense and technical clan." Tickets: \$15.00 and \$7.50.

This is the fledgling issue of The Atlanta Early Music News, which appeared with Pipelines (the newsletter of The Atlanta Recorder Society) February 1st. The Atlanta Early Music News is a newsletter focusing on subjects of interest to performers of early music (Medieval - Classical periods). Its goals are to provide an organ of communication for early music enthusiasts; to provide interesting and informative news, articles, and reviews; to be entertaining.

The March issue will include the events calendar - a quiz - concert reviews - an interview of an Atlanta musician - comments on "Tous les Matins" - recording reviews.

If you wish to contribute material, or have information for the calendar, please contact Frances Blaker (address is on subscription form).