



NEWSLETTER

Viola da Gamba Society New England

September 2016

President's Letter

Hello New England viol players! I hope all of you had a happy summer full of relaxing activities, not the least of which was some good music making. Perhaps you were able to take advantage of the many great workshop offerings this summer, including Conclave 2016. Read a bit further in this newsletter, and you'll hear about this summer's Conclave through the eyes of Janet Haas and James Williamson.

Fall is fast approaching, so as we are enjoying the last rays of summer, it's time to think ahead to what's coming up for viol players during the 2016-17 season. First, let me introduce myself as the new president of the New England chapter of the VdGSA. I have big shoes to fill – Carol Lewis has done a fantastic job over the past 6 years. We owe her a very big thank you!

Our fall workshop will take place on Sunday, October 16 at Brandeis, and we are thrilled to be having Wendy Gillespie leading us, with the help of Hannah Davidson as local coordinator. The theme for this workshop will be "On the Hexachord" - pieces built around solmization syllables – studying music by composers as diverse as Okeghem, Josquin, Isaac, Cornysh, and Ferrabosco.

The winter workshop is to be held on January 21, 2017, also at Brandeis. Loren Ludwig will be the organizer, as well as a coach in the fall, so we are happy to be the beneficiaries of his great musical wisdom twice in one year! The topic for winter is: "The Rat Pack" – consort

music from the 1620's and 30's by Cranford, Gibbons, Ives, and Peerson.

In the spring, on Saturday, April 22, 2017, our workshop will be held at Trinity Episcopal Church in Concord, where some of you may have attended recorder workshops in the past. Sarah Mead will be our leader and plans to take us into the realms of chromaticism, with a workshop entitled, "Getting out of Hand: Expressive Chromaticism on the Viol."

Once again we thank Brandeis for allowing us to use their wonderful space and thank Sarah for being our fearless facilitator in this endeavor!

Looking even further ahead, it's not too early to think about the Boston Early Music Festival, coming our way from June 11 to 18, 2017. As usual, the New England Chapter of the VdGSA will be participating in several ways. At the exhibition hall, we will run the VdGSA booth, where people can stop by to learn more about what we do. We will also offer the "Gamba Garden," where prospective viol players can try the instrument, including the young children participating in our outreach program. Lastly, we'll be hosting the wonderful "Gamba Gamut" – a showcase of short performances featuring the viol. If you know now that you want to help out with any or all of these events, feel free to contact me, or one of the VdGS-NE board members.

That's all for now. Have a happy Autumn, and keep listening and playing great music!

Rosalind Brooks Stowe

Conclave Reviews

The 54rd Viola da Gamba Conclave at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon had three highlights for me. The first highlight was traveling further than I had ever gone before and finding myself on the idyllic campus of Pacific University. Although Conclave had one of its largest enrollments (besides the 50th), the college accommodated us so well, scheduling our meals and events around two other groups so as to avoid conflicts and overcrowding in the cafeteria. The campus was small with an easy terrain, perfect for carrying instruments to and from class. The weather was gorgeous, warm and dry all week. It was a delightful setting!

The second highlight of the week was being a “hemiola” faculty. This term is for faculty who only teach two classes and use their non-teaching time to observe other faculty. What a treat! I spent mornings observing many wonderful teachers; Conclave had a full complement of wise and diverse players. The theme of the Conclave was “Plus ça Change”. On Monday and Tuesday morning, I sat in on Cathy Meints’ technique class, *Transformations - using Simpson to change your technical level*. I wanted to play and be transformed so badly! But I had to settle for taking pages of notes. On Wednesday, I went for something totally different, Sarah Cunningham’s *Ringing the Changes - applied bow technique with a focus on resonance*. The class started with an extensive improvisatory warm up that challenged all the participants to explore making sounds with their voices, their instruments and their bows. It was fascinating!

Lynn Tetenbaum’s *Changing it Up - shifting above the frets* class was also empowering. I ran back to my room to practice some of the exercises; they really helped! Late in the week, I watched Julie Jeffrey’s class, *Adjust that Dial - the art of playing in tune*. It was clear from the interactions between the students that they had developed keen listening skills and could apply them to make significant changes in intonation. In addition, I spent much of the week observing Elisabeth Reed’s beginner class because I taught the “Booster” class for beginners who wanted more gamba. By the end of the first

class, Elisabeth had those baby gambists playing a beautiful tune.

The concerts were the last highlight of the week for me. Sarah Mead masterfully orchestrated the faculty concert so that each faculty member got to play twice but moved only once! The concert flowed smoothly from piece to piece around the stage. Sarah Cunningham opened the performance with an improvisation using her voice and viol in an Olympian way. Her strength and agility astounded all of us! The concert closed with a mesmerizing, 24-part canon, “Qui habitat in adjutorio” by Josquin. It was tricky to put together but performing it was very rewarding.

The student concert opened with the beginners, performing the Tallis Canon. There were 11 beginners at Conclave this year and they exceeded everyone’s expectations. Five of them formed a study group and practiced between 2 and 3 hours each day. They all had beautiful bow holds, lovely tone and played beautifully in tune! Their performance brought the audience to their feet. At least 6 of them are serious about continuing and I look forward to seeing them at future Conclaves. As usual, the week went by too quickly and I didn’t get to stay up late and play consort music nearly enough. BUT, there is always next year in Ohio! Put the dates on your calendar (July 23-29) and start saving the pennies in your Conclave jar.

Janet Haas

I recently returned from the 54th Conclave of the VdGSA at Pacific University in Forest Grove, OR. This year was one of the largest conclaves ever with two hundred attendees—nearly a quarter of them first timers. The theme was change, as this was Sarah Mead’s last year as music director. At the banquet at the end of the week, Lisa Terry was officially crowned as the next president. Pacific University is nearly ideal as a venue for Conclave. Everything is flat and close together and the main dorm is beautiful with plenty of places for participants to gather and play consorts at all hours of the day. The commercial area had a number of regular vendors as well as less familiar west coast faces like luthier Wes Brandt and bow maker Ralph Ashmead. This year also featured a screening of the film *Draw on Sweet Night* about the life of John Wilbye, with music performed by I Fagiolini and

Fretwork among others. Finally, Conclave wouldn't be complete without public performances and this year did not disappoint. The biggest was a masterfully organized faculty concert, closing with a seven part Gabrieli canzona which Sarah Mead arranged for twenty-one viols and a twenty-four part canon by Josquin. The student concert was very good, with many groups choosing to share their work for the week with the rest of the participants. The Consort Cooperative played repertoire from Ghiselin to Bach's Art of the Fugue. There were also more informal performances, including a number of short concerts before meals and tag team performance of several of Telemann's newly discovered Fantasias for solo viol. As always, everyone had a great time reconnecting with old friends and making new ones through the ageless medium of consort music and the viol. Looking ahead to next year, the 55th Conclave will be held July 23-30, 2017 at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, a lovely venue that we greatly enjoyed in 2014. Ros Morley will take over as music director. Also the Traynor competition for new music for viols will take place next year, so if you compose or know someone who does, more information about the contest is available here: <https://vdgsa.org/pgs/traynor.html>.

I'll be at Conclave next year and hope to see many of you there as well.

James Williamson

Silbiger Award

The Harvard Consort of Viols has been named the recipient of this year's Gian Lyman Silbiger Grant awarded by the Viola da Gamba Society of New England. This student group, created by Professor Kate van Orden with the assistance of Laura Jeppesen is created anew each Fall semester in Music 181r: "Performance and Culture: Renaissance Music." The goal of this class, which combines academic research with hands-on study of the viola da gamba, is to teach students to become cultivated amateurs and to find the ease of a Renaissance viol player. The Silbiger grant will enable students who enroll in this class Fall semester 2016 to perform with professional local viol players in a performance with the Harvard choir under the direction of Ed Jones in the Knafel Center on December 11. They will be joined by Jane Hershey, Emily Walhout and

James Williamson in a double choir piece by Johann Hentzschel and other works to include a Gibbons verse anthem.

Early Music America Grant

I'm excited to announce that I have received an Outreach Grant from Early Music America for the Somerville High School viola da gamba class! This means that we will be able to offer the class again this coming year (Spring 2017). The class performed music by Tallis, Gervaise and Arcadelt in the Somerville High School chamber music concert this past May, and some of the players hope to be able to take the class again next spring. Amherst Early Music loaned us their tenor viol again, and we've received several donated instruments. We can still use more instruments, so if you have a viol you're not using (any size), please consider donating it to Somerville High. For any questions about the program or the instruments, get in touch with me at catlines@aol.com. For further information about Early Music America Outreach Grants, go to <https://www.earlymusicamerica.org/education/outreach-grant/> The enthusiasm of these young people is impressive – and infectious! Let's continue to support a school that offers students a musical education that they would find in very few other places in this country.

Carol Lewis

Book review

The Dark Lady's Mask by Mary Sharratt (Houghton Mifflin, 2016)

Very few seventeenth century women poets had their work published during their lifetime; fewer were related to great families of court musicians or married into such families; and only one has become a candidate for Shakespeare's "dark lady" of the sonnets. What little is known of the life of Aemilia Bassano Lanyer lends itself to glorious fictionalizing, and Mary Sharratt has taken advantage of the existing facts to create a roistering historical romance.

Swallowed with many grains of salt *The Dark Lady's Mask* does touch on real concerns of the early 1600s, from uneasiness about the new Scottish monarch, to the position of women and of Jews in England and on the continent, the character of William Shakespeare, and life on the fringes of court

and theatre in comfortable circumstances and in deep poverty. Unlikely as many of the events may seem, they propel the narrative and make this novel hard to put down as they introduce us to a woman writer we've probably never heard of.

Martha Davidson

Viols at Powers Music School

This fall there are openings in both Tuesday viol consorts, 11:30-1:00 and 1:30-3:00, 12 classes per semester. For more information, and start dates, contact Jane Hershey (instructor) at 603-547-7837 or janelhershey@gmail.com, or contact the Registrar at Powers at 617-484-4696.

The Powers Viol Collection has all three sizes, treble, tenor and bass, available for rent. Introductory rate is \$100 for 3 months, longer rentals available. Contact information above.

Concert Announcements

“The Pardessus de Viole”

Carol Lewis will demonstrate several instruments, including a 5-string original pardessus made by Benoit Fleury (1752) and the very first copy of that instrument made by Francis Beaulieu (2015), as well as some other originals by Guersan and Gilbert. Also performing will be **Olav Chris Henriksen**, baroque guitar.

Two performances:

Monday, September 12, 2016 at 11:00 am in the Musical Instrument Gallery at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. For information, go to www.mfa.org

Wednesday, December 7, 2016 at 6:00 pm in the Musical Instrument Gallery at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. For information, go to www.mfa.org

“Affetti Musicali”

Countertenor and cornettist **Michael Collver** joins **Duo Maresienne** (**Carol Lewis**, viola da gamba; and **Olav Chris Henriksen**, archlute & Baroque guitar) in an all-Italian program of songs, dances and sonatas by Monteverdi, Frescobaldi, Castello, d'India and Bassani.

Two performances:

Thursday, November 10, 2016 at 8:00 pm in Lindsay Chapel, First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, 11 Garden St. (entrance on Mason

St.), Cambridge, MA. For information, call [\(617\)776-0692](tel:6177760692) or go to www.duomaresienne.com

Sunday, November 13, 2016 at 3:00 pm at the Somerville Museum, Central St. at Westwood Road (entrance on Westwood Road), Somerville, MA. For information, call (617)666-9810 or go to www.somervillemuseum.org

“La Folia”

Ensemble Très Maresienne (Lisa Brooke, violin; Olav Chris Henriksen, vihuela & Baroque guitar; Carol Lewis, viola da gamba) perform renaissance & Baroque music by Ortiz, Cabezon, Milan, Selma, Scarlatti, Sanz & de Murcia.

Two performances:

Saturday, January 7, 2017 at 8:00 pm in Lindsay Chapel, First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, 11 Garden St. (entrance on Mason St.), Cambridge, MA. For information, call (617)776-0692 or go to www.duomaresienne.com

Sunday, January 8, 2017 at 3:00 pm at the Somerville Museum, Central St. at Westwood Road (entrance on Westwood Road), Somerville, MA. For information, call (617)666-9810 or go to www.somervillemuseum.org

Arcadia Viols presents:

'Viols on the Edge'

Extraordinary works from the 17th and 21st centuries, all inspired by the intimate, inventive and sonorous world of the viol consort. Striking juxtapositions of ricercare, fantasias and dances by Jacopo Peri and David Loeb, Henry Purcell and Etienne Moulinie, Larry Wallach and Matthew Locke, Alfonso Ferrabosco II and Brook Green.

Jane Hershey, treble, **Alice Robbins**, tenor, **Anne Legene**, tenor and bass, **Bob Eisenstein**, bass
October 30, 2016 at 3:00pm

Tufts University Sunday Concert Series, Distler Hall Admission free

For more information about parking, etc visit: <http://as.tufts.edu/music/musiccenter>
617-627-3679

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