



NEWSLETTER

Viola da Gamba Society--New England

March 2019



Greetings dear Viol Players,

A great sadness has come over our society as we have had to take in the unimaginable sudden illness and death of our beloved Janet Haas. Janet had only recently taken over the VdGS-NE presidency, and we felt secure in the promise of strong and capable leadership stemming from her long association with the society and abundant energy. She was so looking forward to her retirement and having time to serve us all. How she will be missed! Elsewhere in this newsletter there is more about Janet's memorial, and ways that we will honor her.



So it has come to pass that I am writing to you in a capacity that I had not expected would fall to me anytime soon. The board just recently elected me to be president. I will serve to my best ability in honor and in memory of Janet.

At our recent Winter Workshop, our former president, Rosalind Brooks Stowe, spoke about Janet in her welcoming words to the participants. She dedicated the workshop to Janet's memory, and invited all to write a few reminiscences in a little book she had prepared, to be given to Janet's husband Eric for the family. A lovely photo of Janet graced the desk

with the booklet. Thank you, Ros, for this thoughtful gesture and for gracefully steadying the boat during rocky times, stepping back into your role as captain. I am particularly grateful for Ros's support during that interim time when, as vice president, I was called to serve. And you, dear members, may rest assured in the knowledge that both former presidents Ros and Carol Lewis, as well as several board members much more seasoned than I am, have all pledged their support to me, Ros in her new role now as vice president.

In times of great sadness there is nothing like music to bring people together, to dispel gloom for a moment, focus our attention and give us joy. Thus our Winter Workshop on Hannah Davidson's transcriptions of Motets by Ferrabosco the Younger connected us with each other, and allowed us to enjoy what we all love best, the experience of playing viols together.

After Ros's opening words, Hannah treated us to a well-researched and interesting lecture, touching on the relationship between Ferrabosco's vocal and instrumental music, on comparisons between his music and that of his father and his peers, on word painting, and on music set to the same or contrasting texts. The faculty: Emily Walhout, Carol Lewis, Sarah Mead, Ros Brooks Stowe, and I, played examples from Hannah's meticulous edition of the motets. We were joined by Yi-Li Chang who happened to be visiting from Malaysia!

Many thanks to Hannah for her splendid direction of this successful workshop! The classes were well enjoyed, and I would like to make special mention of the beginners' class,

for which the board has been developing a new model for integration in the workshops. It has been very successful and we are so happy to keep welcoming newcomers to the viol and to the society.

And, speaking of which, one of the key ingredients for a successful workshop is.... all participants signing up BEFORE the deadline! I'm not sure how well it is understood that putting together great classes from a miscellaneous group of individuals who each play a particular instrument, at a specific level, and indicate preferences for certain classes, is a BIG puzzle. There is a very good reason the deadline for signing up falls well ahead of the workshop, especially when participants expect to receive music ahead of time. While out of the goodness of our hearts we do not like to turn people away who sign up late, and totally understand that you might want to wait till the last minute to sign up, I would like to stress here that signing up by the deadline is a matter of courtesy to be taken seriously. Late enrollment should be an exception, not the rule! Thank you so much for your consideration.

Let us start that great habit with the next workshop: "Comme femme desconfortée: a fifteenth century tune goes viral!" a song by Binchois becomes the basis for some of the most beautiful renaissance music in the universe by Isaac, Josquin, Senfl, and Agricola. Please note that there has been a date change: this workshop will take place on April 27 at Trinity Church in Concord MA.

[For a preview of this lovely music and Wendy's research on its appearance in works of various composers go to:
<https://indianapublicmedia.org/harmonia/comme-femme-fifteenth...>]

We very much look forward to welcoming workshop director Wendy Gillespie, viol player and teacher extraordinaire of stellar reputation.

It promises to be a fantastic workshop, a great occasion to come together.

See you there!

We are also looking forward to the Boston Early Music Festival in early June. As always, our chapter will be involved helping out the VdGSA at the booth, the Gamba Gamut and the Gamba Garden. Read more about this elsewhere in this newsletter and do come and help out if you can!

Give your viol a few (bow) strokes for me!

Anne Legêne

There will be a memorial service for Janet at BEMF. It will be held at 4 PM on Tuesday, June 14, at Old South Church.

Gian Lyman Silbiger Grant now accepting applications for its 23rd season

The first Gian Lyman Silbiger Grant was awarded in 1994. to Paul Brunelle and Janet Haas, with Carol Lewis, Kathleen Pittman, Sarah Mead, Paul Johnson and Alice Mroszczyk, in music of William White and Eric Haas at St. Paul's Church in Dedham, MA. Since then the Grant has been given yearly to worthy musicians throughout New England, from Blue Hill, Maine to the Berkshires and to five towns in Connecticut. The Grant often brings the viol to audiences which have had little or no exposure to the instrument and its music. Many churches in the greater Boston area have received the Grant, with Emmanuel Church of Boston and Harvard's Memorial Church winning it more than once. Many viol players in our wider community have participated in GLS events multiple times, as organizers or consort members, and have had the benefit of playing music that they seldom

have a chance to experience and sharing their expertise with a like-minded group of singers. The Grant is supported entirely by donations from members and friends of the Viola da Gamba Society--New England, and has served to encourage these collaborations between singers and viol players, and to spread appreciation for a wonderful repertoire.

Originally a pianist and organist, Gian Lyman took up the viol when she was at McGill University, traveling to New York to study with Barbara Mueser. In 1964, she married Alex Silbiger and settled in Boston, where she taught at the Longy School of Music and Brandeis. She performed with the Cambridge Consort and at Emmanuel Church and taught many private students who have continued to flourish in the years since her untimely death in 1974.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2019-2020 season, and may be for church and synagogue services or for regular concerts. For more information and to apply on line, go to vdgsne.org or contact Jane Hershey, chair of the VdGS-NE Silbiger Grant Committee at janelhershey@gmail.com. The deadline for application is June 15, with notice given by July 15.

To donate to the GLS Grant Fund, please send your gift to the VdGS-NE Treasurer, P.O. Box 192, Belmont MA 02478.

Silbiger Grant, 2018-2019

This year's Silbiger Grant goes to Emmanuel Church for the April 14 performance of Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri*, with Ryan Turner, Director and Laura Jeppesen, Viol player/organizer. The performance will be part of the church service. The players are Andrew Arceci, Sarah Freiburg, Jane Hershey, Shirley Hunt, and Laura Jeppesen., with John McKean, organist.

Looking forward to BEMF

The VdGSA booth is a bustling place, with flyers, video, friendly booth attendants ready to engage with the public, and a viol to try out. We will be looking for volunteers for the booth again and will send out an e-mail closer to the time. But if you already know you want to volunteer at the booth, please contact Anne Legêne: alegene@simons-rock.edu. The booth will be closed during VdGSA events, but otherwise open during exhibition hours: Wednesday June 12-Saturday June 14 from 10am to 5pm each day at the Courtyard Marriott Boston Downtown, 275 Tremont Street, Boston.

Gamba Garden at BEMF: come and play consort music!

This year the Gamba Garden will be different from past years! It will be petting zoo and consort playing session combined. Our chapter members will provide some instruments, music stands and music for all viol players who drop by to do some playing. People new to the viol will get a chance to try one out, listen to people playing, ask questions, etc. Cookies and cider will be served! Please put it on your calendar... browse the exhibition that day and plan to drop by, help out, and have some fun playing.

The Gamba Garden will take place on Saturday June 15 from 3:30-5pm, in the Wilbur/Colonial Ballroom of the Courtyard Marriott Boston Downtown, 275 Tremont Street, Boston, in conjunction with the BEMF Exhibition. It would be great to know that some people will definitely be there to form a core for consort playing. Please contact Anne Legêne or Hannah Davidson if you can set aside the time and commit to being there. It will be fun!

BEMF Gamba Gamut

Calling all viol players! Do you or your viol group want to perform at this year's Boston Early Music Festival? If so, read on!

We are thrilled to announce that the Gamba Gamut, a showcase of short performances by viol soloists and ensembles, will again be an official Fringe Event at BEMF 2019. The Gamut will take place at Gordon Chapel of Old South Church on Friday, June 14, 2019 from 11:30am to 3:30pm.

This is a great opportunity to perform--for free!--in a central location during BEMF, and to take advantage of the publicity and other support that the VdGSA can offer!

Please submit your Gamut proposal by April 10, 2019 and include the following:

- The name of the individual or group, including contact information, with a listing of all members
- Title of the proposed concert program, plus the program itself. Plan for 20 minutes (individuals) to 30 minutes (groups).
- Short bios of all members of the group
- Sample copies of prior programs
- A CD or electronic file sampler of the individual or group's playing

Questions and completed proposals may be submitted electronically or on paper/disc by April 10, 2019 to vdgsafestivals@gmail.com

This year there will be a question on the VdGS—NE ballot asking the membership to ratify the Board's decision to increase annual dues. The fee will rise by \$5 (from \$15 to \$20) to address rising costs of our workshops. This is a first ever dues increase and we hope it will be acceptable to the members.

New Music for viol consort: a meditation

Having the good fortune to be able to look regularly at the newsletter of The Viola da Gamba Society of Great Britain, I was interested to see (Winter 2018/19) a review of two collections of Fantasias for six viols, one by Martha Bishop and one by VdGS-NE member Will Ayton, both published by PRB. The reviewer, Philip Redfern, acknowledges how much viol players like to stay within our usual bounds of 16th and 17th century music; he then praises PRB Productions for their commitment to offerings outside of that repertoire, which include famous names such as Bartok and Scriabin along with contemporaries of our viol world, Peter Ballinger himself, David Loeb, Carol Herman and many others – have a look at <http://www.prbmusic.com/productCat21719.ctlg>

Of the six-part fantasias he reviews, Redfern describes Bishop's music as "adventurous in harmony and melodic contour;" of Ayton's fantasias, he says they are "more familiar in form and method...moving easily from counterpoint to more homophonic writing...these are very effective and attractive works for the medium."

In concluding, he adds "I confess I don't play in a consort that has – so far – dared to tackle modern works." Probably that is true of most of us as well; it is indeed difficult to reach outside of our worthy objectives of playing fantasias of our familiar composers well. Yet, it is also important to be open to other kinds of music, whether by playing, improvising(!), or listening to something adventurous from time to time; it brings a different kind of refreshment to mind and ear.

Hannah Davidson