



NEWSLETTER
Viola da Gamba Society--New England
September 2020

President's Letter

Dear Gamba Community,

How our musical lives have changed in these first 6 months of the pandemic! Musicians and music lovers alike are suffering from the restrictions, and many are wondering how long this will go on. Isolated in our homes, we play by ourselves, or if we are lucky, with our family members. Music careers are on the rocks. An occasional concert is given outside for minimal but grateful audience. Brave, often quite moving and successful efforts at virtual concerts are undertaken: musicians recording themselves and technicians putting the tracks together. World famous musicians are giving Zoom masterclasses in order to make a living. The VdGSA Conclave, Amherst Early Music, Pinewoods Early Music moved on line. Creative souls are busking on Facebook. People are playing with virtual gamba consorts. We are so grateful for the internet, recording and filming technology, for orchestras and opera companies making their archives available, and for Zoom and other video conferencing apps, which we use heavily in order to keep teaching and taking lessons, to keep in touch with each other, and make up for the loss as well we can.

In this newsletter you will find a few stories of experiences in this new reality, collected from board members.

Like everyone else, the VdGS-NE has had to adjust. After canceling the Spring workshop, we tentatively scheduled an in-person Fall workshop at Brandeis, knowing well that it might not happen. And we are sad to have to confirm that an in-person workshop at this time is still beyond reach. To make up for the loss, we are organizing a virtual Fall workshop on Sunday November 1, the original date. You will soon receive a workshop flyer with all the information, and information will also go up on the website: <http://vdgsne.org/workshops/>

Jane Hershey will lead a morning class, followed by a lunch social, and Sarah Mead will teach a class in the afternoon. It will all take place on Zoom, so if you haven't yet downloaded the app, you can get ready to attend by doing so. <https://zoom.us/download>

October will be VdGS-NE Virtual Practicing Month! Every Saturday in October we will supply a Zoom link for people who would like company while they practice! On Zoom each of us will be in our muted cubbies or "practice rooms", (practicing in our own homes), and if we like to take a break and say hi to each other, get some support and have a little chat, we can break out in chat rooms. This will be a stimulating warm-up leading up to the workshop, and a great way to connect with each other and keep playing at least once a week. We are still hammering out the details; check your

e-mail and the website for final instructions and a link for the practice sessions.

If these on-line activities are successful, we hope to offer more in the coming months.

The board, with help from web master James Williamson, is also working to use our website as a means to connect you to different musical experiences, by posting links to different resources. Already you can find links to several sources of “music minus one” consorts, that allow you to play in consort with a recording. In the coming weeks we will be posting many more links to concerts, classes, and other events available on line. <http://vdgsne.org/category/resources/>

Keep up the spirits, and keep playing, everyone... I hope you are well and will stay well. Together we can brave this challenge! Let us hope that one day in the not too distant future we will be able to come together again.

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

Anne Legêne

October Saturdays – Zoom Practice Room

Feeling all alone when you practice or play music-minus-one?

Want to practice but just can't get started?

Would having some company help?

If so, then please join our FREE no-risk, no-commitment, weekly zoom practice session and half hour informal socializing.

Tune in (you will be muted when you enter - please STAY muted to respect each person's practice space)

Turn on “gallery view” in order to see who else is also practicing,

Then at 11:30, unmute yourself, have lunch or a snack, and join in the weekly socializing half hour.

Remember, you can “talk” to another participant or to the host at any time by using Zoom's “chat” function” (be sure to check whether you are chatting with a specific person or with everyone!)

Feel free to join for as much or as little practicing as you want; come just to practice, just to socialize, or do both.

The following Zoom link will be open from 9:30-12:00 every Saturday in October, leading up to our ZOOM WORKSHOP on Sunday November.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89561166126?pwd=eTRtaXpHVHTdXV2E3eXZaVDNmM2NXdz09>

Meeting ID: 895 6116 6126

Passcode: 9evLhG

Anne Legêne

From Karen Burciaga:

SoHip Concerts Online

The Society of Historically Informed Performance (SoHIP) presented 7 online concerts this summer, with music from the medieval through classical eras as well as modern works inspired by early music. Of particular interest to VdGSNE readers are Lyracle (voice and viola da gamba) with a program about Tarquinia Molza, and Seven Times Salt (English consort) with music for Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia. Other ensembles include Chapter House, Emily O'Brien, Berwick

Fiddle Consort, Cramer Quartet, and Tres Doulx.

Videos of all concerts are available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4P1tUZXR8uITbApOdnIMuQ/>
Donations to SoHIP are gratefully accepted.
www.sohipboston.org
From Glen Legere:

Reviews of online classes and music minus one

Pandolfo's masterclass (private subscription) I've been auditing this and enjoy it from both a musical entertainment and a learning perspective. It's great to see the players and then listen to Pandolfo's "suggestions". I'm blown away by how good the players are, and how brave! I'm also blown away by how Pandolfo can play the same line seemingly anywhere on the instrument and it sounds great, thereby offering alternatives for performance. His comment, "did you try...?", I will never forget! Anyway, there are still 4 sessions to go after the summer break, which may be ending this Sat or next, so there is still time to see something of this.

Gail Ann Schroeder's VIOL website Jane told me about this and I joined and it's been great! It's a subscription service and you get access to downloadable MP3s in music minus one format, plus a "tutti" that includes all parts. PDFs for all parts are also posted and downloadable. The downloadable MP3s are a big deal because they fill the need I expressed to Jane and others about the need consort beginners have for recorded examples to play against. Also, with downloadable MP3s, you can play the pieces back through a "slow-downer" program which then plays the pieces at

whatever tempo a student can manage. These programs also offer tone filtering so you can bring out or roll off the various lines via controls.

Gail posts 16 pieces or so a month; at \$25 per month I think the site is a bargain. Students are also invited to email comments and requests for pieces to be recorded

From Mai-Lan Broekman:

Festivals

I "attended" both the Amherst Early Music festival and Conclave/ Nonclave, as well as some of the Amherst Early Music weekend classes. These were especially significant to me because I have stopped attending either workshop live. The last time I was at a Conclave was in 2005, the time of the original Consort Cooperative program, and the last time I was at Amherst Early Music, it was still at Amherst! This summer I used both online experiences to explore music with which I am less familiar - at AEM, medieval music, original notation and dance, and at Nonclave, music for lyra viol. Conclave/Nonclave had two very interesting lectures and a concert in addition to classes, and also hosted some "social" events including random breakout groups. It was especially fun seeing folks whom I haven't seen for a very long time. Advantages to the online format included easy participation from all over the US and Europe and more students in some classes than would have fit into an actual room (Shira Kammen apparently had 100 students in one of her AEM classes and I believe the lyra viol classes had 40-50 participants - Martha Bishop even dropped in!). In lieu of Conclave's late night consorts, both Gail

Schroeder and Phillip Serna offered limited time access to their paid consort-minus-one sites, and a few others, including our own James Williamson, added their own consorts-minus-one. I enjoyed both festivals very much, with no need to haul instruments around or travel any further than my music room.

Consorts minus one

I subscribed to both Sam Stedlen's and Philip Serna's sites. Audio quality in both sites is excellent and both provide minus-one recordings for all parts (Gail Schroeder only provides 3? parts regardless of size of consort). I believe neither site is really pitched at beginners, although they both have some easier music up, with pointers to it, but neither one has the sort of teaching points and encouraging comments that Gail Schroeder's does, and some of the music on both Serna and Stedlen's sites is quite challenging.

Comparison of Stedlen and Serna:

Stedlen: both audio and video, includes downloadable PDFs of sheet music for each recording, downloading of recordings costs extra, encourages requests for future repertoire, has some unusual music up (*e.g.* Tye Trust, plans to add lyra viol music for 2 and 3). Cost £15/ month so roughly \$20- depending on exchange rate

Serna: audio only, includes links or, in a few instances, places to purchase the music (therefore requires a little more effort to get the music), allows downloading automatically, has some less well known music available, based on his own commercial recordings. Includes a version that is slowed down 15% as well as performance speed for each piece. Cost \$25/ month with a discount for 6 month and 1 year subscriptions.

For me, it's been fun to continue playing consorts in a situation where it's difficult to get together in person (well, 3 of us have done it, masked and distanced in a large space, but consorts for 5 or 6 would be a challenge) and to work my way through each of the lines in a given consort, also to hear Stedlen's and Serna's interpretations from the inside of the piece.

Yes, I miss live consorts and performances too, but at least the news isn't all bad.

Mai-Lan

Resources

In these trying times, it is an interesting process to navigate the internet to find a variety of performances, workshops, classes and music-at-home resources. Anne and Karen already mentioned VdGS-NE and Sohup, and provided links. The VdGSA website (vdgsa.org) is always worth visiting, where you will find music, journals, and videos to peruse; if you are a member, it's worth checking out the members area as well. Amherst Early Music (<https://amherstearlymusic.org>) continues to offer online weekend classes this fall; in upcoming weeks, the viol is featured in sessions offered by John Mark Rozendaal, Tina Chancey, Brent Wissick and others. You can sign up for each individual class for a very reasonable fee.

If you have an interesting link to share – concerts, lectures, classes, music – please let us know!

Hannah Davidson