



NEWSLETTER
Viola da Gamba Society
New England
March 2018



President's Letter

Spring might seem like it will never really arrive, but here we are, approaching the Vernal Equinox, and with it comes cheery spring greetings to all of you New England Viol enthusiasts!

We can hope that the snow is gone for good, but what better time to look back on winter whiteness. Appropriately, our winter workshop was entitled “**William White and Shades of White – William White and his Contemporaries**”. Patricia Neely was the director for this workshop at Brandeis, and we all appreciated her enthusiasm, humor and expertise. Sybil Kevy served as the local coordinator and music mailer. Jane Hershey, Sarah Mead, and Emily Walhout were coaches for the day, with Hannah Davidson leading the beginners' class. The day began with an interesting and informative lecture demonstration in which Pat explained and demonstrated several of the characteristics of White's compositions in relationship to those of his contemporaries. The coaches did a masterful job of playing through lots of great music, some of which they had only seen for the first time that morning!

Now to the greening of spring! At Brandeis, on Sunday, April 29, members of Long and Away consort of viols will present “**Music at the Württemberg Court and beyond - German music of the 16th and 17th centuries for voices and viols.**” The workshop will focus on music by Kapellmeisters at the court, including the little-known Samuel Capricornus, as well as music of other composers from southwestern

Germany. Details will be posted soon on our website. Please apply early!!

As always, we give great thanks to Brandeis for providing a perfect venue for our workshops twice a year, and thank you to Sarah Mead for being our stalwart liaison.

The Silbiger grant application period is coming up soon, so keep an eye on our website for information and application details. As most of you know, the Silbiger Grant is one of our outreach activities - a competitive award, which supports New England viol players and vocal ensembles, who would like to present music for viols with voices.

Please remember to pay your VdGS-NE dues! You can always check with our treasurer, Sybil Kevy (thebarbate@gmail.com) if you're not sure whether you have paid. Dues and contributions are what enable us to keep offering our programs.

Feel free to send us your questions or suggestions any time. You can go to the “Contact Us” page of our website to find the appropriate contact person. Have a happy spring and keep making and listening to beautiful music!

- Rosalind Stowe

Silbiger Grant Applications Due

The application period is now open, with a deadline of June 15, 2018. Notice of the Selection Committee's decisions will be given by July 15, 2018. Performances must occur between Sept. 1, 2018 and Aug. 31, 2019. Application form available on our Web site,

vdgsane.org. Send questions to silbiger@vdgsne.org

Beginner's Class

A committee of interested Board members (Jane Hershey, Anne Legêne, Janet Haas, and Hannah Davidson) is working to improve our offerings for beginning players, hoping to develop a new generation of enthusiastic viol players.

Glen Legere, a student of Jane Hershey, wrote these notes about his experience in the beginners' class at the last workshop and his suggestions for making a better experience.

For Teachers/Organizers

Advanced Beginners?

Olivier, Lise and I were surprised to see that we were suddenly Advanced Beginner's. Panic might be too strong a term, but needless to say, we were somewhat surprised, as we do not feel "advanced" even relative to the term beginner. I'm sure it was a matter of available resource (teacher, time, etc.) but we beginners are all filled with fear of the unknown, so any additional uncertainty just adds to the anxiety.

Send the music ASAP

We had the shared observation that as a workshop class approaches, we are all pressed for time to prepare for it, as well as put in enough time for our individual lessons. So getting music say 4 - 5 weeks in advance vs. 10-11 days would be a huge help in preparing. I'll take 10 days if that's the best that can be done, but 10 minutes a day for several weeks would put us all in a much better place on the day of the workshop. So, who signs up 4 - 5 weeks in advance? I know I didn't, but in the future I would if I knew I'd be getting the material

shortly after I signed up. So maybe include a paragraph:

Attention beginners! By signing up early you'll ensure 1) That there will be a class and 2) The earlier you'll receive the music for the pieces to be covered in the class. I know there is an issue here with the instructor having time to decide on the music and then send it out, possibly multiple times, and then keeping track, but I thought I'd lobby for it anyway.

Conducting the Class

When picking a piece up "in the middle" be as specific as possible as to how it will be counted-in (e.g. 1 + 2 + PLAY, 2 + PLAY, etc.) and which measure is being talked about. Which measure was not a problem in our class, but how we were all going to start together was - for me at least.

For Students

Auditing

1. All beginners/intermediates should audit at least 1 class. Among other things you will learn: a. To take heart! Because even experienced players struggle at their own level to make music off of printed notes, and it's good to see the instructors using the same tricks on them as they do on beginners!. b. You will see what you are getting into if you want to pursue consort playing. c. You will listen to some interesting music and learn how to break it down and better understand it.

2. When you audit: a. Sit where you can see how the players play. How do they finger the notes. How do they bow? b. As they play, watch how the players respond to, or ignore. the instructor's direction. c. As they play, watch how the players interact with, or ignore each other. d. Sit where you can unobtrusively look over a player's shoulder to follow along by reading the music if a copy isn't handed out.

3. What I learned a. When working on a problem section, subtract something - usually notes - to clarify what is going on. b. When you are playing in a group, providing visual cues to, and interacting with, the other players is essential if the piece is to flow in a musical way. I don't actually know how to do this. But it seemed to be important. c. Listen to and watch the instructor/conductor

That's about it from beginner-land.

- Glen Legere

Concert announcements

“Mascharada!”

Consort Music from 17th-century Germany, with canzonas, dances, & music for masked balls by Hammerschmidt, Rosenmüller, Reusner, Becker & others performed by **El Dorado Ensemble** (Carol Lewis, Janet Haas, Paul Johnson, Mai-Lan Broekman & Alice Mroszczyk, viols; Olav Chris Henriksen, lute & theorbo)

Two performances:

Friday, April 13, 2018 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, April 15, 2018 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

Come hear the Somerville High School viola da gamba class perform in the annual SHS chamber music concert!

Tuesday, May 15, 2018 at 6:30 pm in the Somerville High School Library, 81 Highland Ave., Somerville MA 02143
Free admission. For information, email Carol Lewis at catlines@aol.com

Viol Music in Parts Free on the Web

Have you ever played from music transcribed by Al Folop? Some 1200 pieces by 166 composers are available on imslp.org, and we have used a number of them in our workshops. They are in a bold typeface, easy to read, and are an enormous boon to viol players everywhere.

Here is Mr. Folop's own description of his project.

When I first started playing viols in 1964, I was struck by the scarcity of music parts to play from. About the only source was in the SP publications of the VdGS-UK. Music was available in Musica Britannica, but it was all in scores and each player needed the whole volume, a rather expensive proposition. I soon made arrangements with Gordon Dodd, the editor of the SP series, that, instead of sending me the usual copies, he would send Ozalid masters so that I could reproduce copies and provide them at cost in the US. It was just on a private, non-commercial level.

I soon discovered sources for microfilm copies of some 16th and 17th century manuscripts and acquired a number of them. I obtained a microfilm projector and at first, transcribed parts from the microfilms onto Ozalid masters. Then when photocopy machines became available, I was able to make just ordinary copies to reproduce parts from.

In the mid 1970's I acquired a computer; one I had to solder together myself. Since there were no music editing programs available then, I coded my own. It was in the Forth language and

very simplistic; it did only the essential functions that I needed to make viol parts. I could make only single voice parts, but I used my own version of entering notes and other symbols and of spacing the notes on the page. I gradually added features such as "one-click" transposing, making scores and MIDI files and clef changing to any clef. And I am still using this program today. The entry method allows me to enter the notes rapidly so that the main speed limitations are in deciphering the manuscripts I am reading from.

Later when computer CD-ROMs became available I passed my copies around on them, and now have welcomed the opportunity to make the material more widely available on the internet for all to enjoy.

In addition to providing parts and scores in printable .pdf format, I have also used the Personal Computer program for presentation of the scores and have included a .pc version for each score. This has an additional advantage in that the program easily allows much more complete control of the playback by computer or MIDI instrument than any other program I know. It allows changing tempo, and instrumentation, volume, and even clef, selectively for each voice. It is all too seldom that players can regularly assemble enough viol players to play five and six part pieces. By playing these on the computer and reading the scores on the computer screen, or perhaps a TV set, while they are being played, small groups can comfortably play these pieces, with the computer filling in the missing parts. Or, as was not unusual in the 17th century, the organ can also be used to support the voices of those playing. This is perfectly possible using the demo version of the Personal Computer program which is freely downloadable from the web site www.pcomposer.com. Selecting an appropriate tempo allows a "Music Minus One" type of playing at any skill level.

I have continued transcribing parts from the microfilms and other sources sporadically for the past forty years and as you see, have accumulated quite a collection. My goal was to make parts available in modern notation for viol players to play from and not necessarily to make scholarly researched versions. If a version was adequate for 17th century players to use, it was good enough for me in the 21st century. I have also continued many of the spelling variations abundant at that time in the composers names. That seems to add a 17th century "aura" to the pieces.

On a personal note: I retired as a Commander after 24 years in the US Navy, having served principally in electronics, radar, and ship operations. I then obtained a Bachelor of Music degree in Music History and Literature with organ as my principal instrument. Subsequently I worked as a computer programmer for 16 years, and I now live in a retirement community just outside of Washington, DC., spending much of my time teaching seniors to use computers. I play treble, tenor, or bass viol, and flute with several local groups in the area for enjoyment, not for performance.

Source: Newsletter of the Australian Viola da Gamba Society, Issue 42, October 2010. Accessed on imslp.org. March 7, 2018.