



NEWSLETTER

Viola da Gamba Society--New England

May 2020

A special issue for these sad distracted times

President's Letter

Greetings, Dear Gamba Community,

In these strange, socially distant times, I do hope this finds you healthy and well! We as a community thank you warmly if you are an essential worker, braving the world to provide for others. If you are homebound, I hope you are, as I am, experiencing a deepening of spirit amid the quiet pleasures of home life, and the rebounding of nature in the emerging spring.

What do we do, when what we love so much, getting together to play music, is not possible? Teachers are keeping their students going with video lessons via the internet, and I hope many of you find solace and inspiration in taking out your instrument and choosing a project to work on, be it a piece of music, a particular technical challenge, bettering your sight reading, or something else that will keep you improving and staying connected to your instrument! Like a person, your gamba does not like being neglected, and I know from experience it gives back any love you give it multifold...

We keenly feel the loss of our workshop with Parthenia on May 2, and the annual meeting, which was to take place during the lunch break. The board presents you here with the annual report, the financial report, and the outcome of our recent election of board members, in lieu of the meeting. Thankfully, Parthenia has agreed to do next year's Spring workshop.

Give your gamba a few sweet (bow) strokes for me!

With heartfelt wishes for your wellness,

Anne Legêne

Annual report

Looking back over the past year, the Society, like everything else, was humming along just wonderfully till the corona virus reared its ugly head and caused both the Silbiger Concert and the Spring workshop with Parthenia to be canceled, putting a sudden end to the year's activities.

Back to the summer of 2019, VdGS-NE volunteers once again helped out at the VdGSA booth at the BEMF exhibit. In the late summer the sad news reached us that long time member and former president of the VdGS-NE Joan Boorstein had passed away. Many members wrote lovely remembrances of Joan for the Winter newsletter.

October brought a well-attended Fall workshop at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, MA. Led by members of the Arcadia Viols, faculty of the 5 colleges and local teachers, the workshop, "Mostly Maximillian", attracted players from a wide geographical area. In January, James Williamson directed a workshop on English composers abroad at Brandeis University, which also was very well received.

The Silbiger Grant Committee awarded this year's grant to Sarah Mead with a quartet of

Renaissance Viols and Fred Jodry, director of Schola Cantorum, for a program of Gibbons Anthems and Ferrabosco Lamentations. As mentioned before, the concert, which was scheduled to take place in March, was cancelled at the beginning of the COVID19 outbreak, but we hope it will be played in the fall.

We were very much looking forward to having the members of Parthenia in our midst to lead the Spring workshop on Venetian Music, but again, of course it could not happen. Parthenia immediately promised to reschedule for next Spring.

The VdGS-NE pilot program to provide workshop experience for beginners and less experienced players, inspired by Jane Hershey, has become a successful regular feature at the workshops. Led and designed primarily by Hannah Davidson, the Ensemble Skills class for those with some ability but little experience in ensemble playing has fostered a group of new players, many of whom are now ready to join the regular classes. True beginners take one technique class and are invited to audit two other classes.

Members of the board, in particular Rosalind Brooks-Stowe, have moved heaven and earth this year in order to restore our lapsed tax-exempt status with the IRS. It was a Herculean task, and we do thank Ros very warmly again for her amazing dedication to getting it done. We are very happy to announce that she was successful in getting our tax-exempt status approved.

Another topic that the Board of Directors looked at is what we as a society can do to lessen our environmental impact. With input from members it was decided that in order to reduce our carbon footprint, beginning with the Fall 2020 workshop, participants will be asked to bring their own plate, cup, silverware and napkin to workshops, and we will do our best to

minimize and sort our trash. Participants can make a special donation that will go toward offsetting the impact of our travels to the workshop. The board will reduce its use of paper.

In the spring members cast their ballot for members of the board up for re-election. I am happy to announce that Mai-Lan Broekman, Jane Hershey, and Annette Somers have been reelected to the board.

Please join me in thanking the members of the board: Vice president Ros Brooks-Stowe, Corresponding Secretary and long-time keeper of all the society ins and outs Martha Davidson, Treasurer and workshop administrator extraordinaire Sybil Kevy, Newsletter Editor and Recording Secretary Hannah Davidson, members Mai-Lan Broekman, Annette Somers (our trusty keeper of the supplies!), Jane Hershey, Karen Burciaga, June Matthews, Alexandra Hawley, and Glen Legere, as well as our Brandeis Liaison and advisor Sarah Mead, Past President Carol Lewis, and webmaster James Williamson. There have been many instances when as a relative newbie to the society I have been ignorant, forgotten things, or blundered. I am so grateful for the support of this extraordinary group of people, for all the work they do, for their collective memory and intelligence, and their readiness to lighten our meetings with laughter. THANK YOU!

Looking ahead to next year's workshops:

IF we can be socially close again in the Fall, we will have a workshop on November 1 at Brandeis University. The workshop, a brainchild of Martha and Hannah Davidson, will be titled "Old Favorites: Comfort Food for the Viol Consort". Coaches will all be members of the board, and Jane Hershey will direct the workshop. (If it needs to be canceled, no outside people would be affected). Music will not be sent out ahead of time (except for the Ensemble Skills classes, which Hannah will lead again).

The workshop will be a celebration of the fact that we can all get back together! In January Will Ayton will direct a workshop on contemporary compositions for viol consort. And the spring will bring Parthenia.

Let's hope and pray that all these workshops can happen!

Have a wonderful, safe, healthy spring and summer everyone!

Anne Legêne

Treasurer's Report

Assets

Checking Account

\$11,878

(\$1530 dedicated to Davidson scholarship fund)

Certificates of deposit

Sheehan \$4787

Powers \$1467

Ferabosco CD's 116 @ \$10 each: \$1160

Liabilities

Uncashed checks to Silbiger players: \$300

Income

90 Membership dues: \$1800

Sybil Kevy

Relief Funds and other musical offerings

During this time of shutdown, performing artists and teachers are among the most devastated professionally, being deprived of ready sources of income due to the need to practice social distancing and avoid gatherings of more than very small numbers. Students, too, are deprived of the opportunity to experience playing in ensembles and hands-on lessons. Some of our

early music organizations have made interesting efforts to address these distressing concerns.

Early Music America has established the EMA Relief Fund, which awards small mini grants to those early music performers who have had concerts cancelled. Currently the award, which relies on contributions, is out of funds, though you can still apply to a waitlist. Visit <https://www.earlymusicamerica.org/support/weareearlymusic/>. EMA also offers short lectures on a variety of topics; these run live on Monday afternoons but can be viewed afterwards as well.

La Donna Musicale/Rumbarroco, directed by gambist Laury Gutierrez, has also established a relief fund for its own musicians, also funded by donors. If you can make a donation, visit ladm.org. La Donna's concerts of music by Maria Teresa Agnesi planned for March are now rescheduled for October; Agnesi, a very fine early Classical composer, is well worth encountering.

Our own VdGSA has had to cancel Conclave for 2020. Their notice says they will honor their commitment to this year's faculty. The VdGSA website, vdsga.org, is a treasure mine of interest, where you can browse music, videos and scholarly publications – hours can be spent looking at all of this!

Amherst Early Music has also had to cancel its 2-week summer Festival; they have decided to offer the same program planned for this year in 2021. In addition, they are currently offering weekend online workshops; for example, May 2-3 has 4 separate classes, which include Playford dances taught by Lisa Terry, ensemble dances from early 17th c. Germany, and a harpsichord masterclass. Information about these classes is easily accessed from their main website, amherstearlymusic.org.

Hannah Davidson

Betsy Bayer

I wanted to let you know that Betsy Bayer, who was a member of VdGS-NE for many years, passed away on April 15. She had been struggling with memory problems, and a few years ago moved from her apartment in Roslindale to Goddard House in Brookline - in their memory care unit. She was already in a weakened state when COVID-19 hit. Her three daughters took very good care of her and visited as much as they could. Jeri, the oldest, told me that they often played some of her favorite gamba CDs for her, including a Jordi Savall album.

I have looked for an obituary for Betsy, but I don't think there is one. I asked her daughter, but haven't heard back. Betsy is a close relative of mine, my father's first cousin, which makes her my second cousin (I think!). I met her when I was 16, when I was her "mother's helper" one summer on Martha's Vineyard. She had 4 very active kids, so it was a challenging job! Betsy and I have been fairly close since then. I was her first viol teacher - from 1999 to 2003. We had so much fun together, and I was always impressed at how determined she was - always open to new ideas and new challenges. She diligently practiced the music I gave her, and never made excuses! Betsy attended many VdGS-NE workshops, and played with her own viol consort on the side. Sometimes that group would come to my house for coaching - a real delight.

Per my suggestion, Betsy's daughter donated her tenor and bass viols to the VdGSA for their viol rental program. The viols are residing at Sarah Mead's house until it's safe for them to travel :-)

Rosalind Brooks Stowe

Betsy made such a valiant effort to keep up with her Powers consort, using Lyft after she could

not handle the long drive from Roslindale. And she kept up with Sybille's consort for quite a while after that.

I have many wonderful memories of Betsy, from her participation in the many Powers consorts for years - and a few private lessons she had with me in her later years, and her participation in World Fellowship for several years. She was always a wonderful addition to all of these groups.

I am so glad that the family found a good plan for her viols. I think they will make excellent additions to the VdGSA rental program. Those viols are always so appreciated.

Jane Hershey