



**President's Letter**

Greetings! I hope December finds you well. I write this just before Thanksgiving, and there is a chill in the air as the last few leaves float down from the trees. I'm always a bit jealous of those who have fireplaces—the smell of woodsmoke is a favorite of mine.

Although the VdGS-NE is not yet back to offering in-person workshops, I'm glad that many of you have taken advantage of our online classes, and it's heartening to see so many ensembles returning to live performance over the past several months. As we move into wintertime, there are plenty of viol-related offerings coming up. Our Dec. 12 special topic "French Music for Everyone!" with Carol Lewis promises to be excellent—be sure to register by 12/8. We're also looking forward to our January and February sessions with Sarah Mead and Mary Springfels. Auditors of any playing level are always welcome.

There are several wintertime concerts, both live and online, that will appeal to gamba enthusiasts. See below for listings, and check out the New England Early Music Calendar at [www.neemcalendar.org](http://www.neemcalendar.org) for more. You'll find a report about the recent Silbiger Grant concerts in Boston and Providence, as well as news of the 2021 grant recipients and application guidelines for next year's grant. Our online Saturday practice sessions continue, and I hope you'll "drop by" to

practice, change your strings, or just say hello.

Finally, as we head into the busy holiday season, please consider the VdGS-NE in your year-end giving, if you haven't already. We are so very grateful for your support. And, donations towards the special green fund are well on the way to our goal of \$900—thank you all!

Happy playing and happy holidays,  
Karen

**Practice Saturdays:**

- Nov 27 Thanksgiving - no session
- Dec 4, 3-5 pm
- Dec 11, 10-12 am
- Dec 18, 3-5 pm
- Dec 25 Happy Christmas - no session
- Jan 1 Happy New Year - no session
- Jan 8, 10-12 am
- Jan 15, 3-5 pm
- Jan 22, 10-12 am
- Jan 29, 3-5 pm
- Feb 5, 10-12 am
- Feb 12, 3-5 pm
- Feb 19, 10-12 am
- Feb 26, 3-5 pm

**Upcoming Special Topics:**

**Sun. Dec. 12, 3-4:30pm.**

Carol Lewis: "French Music for Everyone"

## Spring Special Topics Classes

-Sat. January 22, 3-4:30pm. Sarah Mead: “Psalm to Table” Artisanal settings of vernacular psalms for the home market. English, French, Dutch and German Reformation music in four and more parts intended for amateur music-making. For all levels and sizes of viols.

-Sun. February 20, 3-4:30pm. Mary Springfels: “Trios of Gibbons, Lupo and Coperario”

-Sun. March 13, 3-4:30pm. John Mark Rozendaal: “Renaissance Notation for Beginners”

-Sat. April 2, 3-4:30pm. Patricia Ann Neely: “Susanna Rare on Susanna Fair” Consort settings of this popular melody by Byrd, Ferrabosco, Lupo, Farnaby, Sweelinck, Sommer, and Dowland.

-Sun. May 14, 3-4:30pm. Lisa Terry: “L’Amorosa Ero” Explore a 16th-c. Brescian collection of madrigals by a Top 20 hit parade of composers. Watch for updates on our Special Topics! <https://vdgsne.org/special-topics-classes/>

### Special Topic - French Music for Everyone

Please join us online Sunday, December 12 from 3-4:30pm for a wonderful session with Carol Lewis. Need some music to play on your viol when you can’t get together with your friends to play consorts? Try French music! The great 17th-century French masters of the viola da gamba wrote an abundance of beautiful, unaccompanied viol music that is there for the taking – you just have to find it and try it out. There’s a very special language in this music. We’ll look at pieces by Hotman, Dubuisson, Ste. Colombe, and even a little bit of Marin

Marais. We’ll play a prelude, a ballet, a minuet, a gigue, and other types of small dances to give us a taste of what’s out there. We will talk about the special characteristics of this music, including some of the typical rhythms, as well as ornaments that are commonly found. And the melodic French music has so many lovely tunes! Bring along whatever viol you’d like to play: there will be parts available in treble, alto, and bass clefs for all sizes of viol.

Pitch A=415. Especially for intermediate-advanced players; auditors of all levels welcome.

\$15 members / \$20 nonmembers, per class. Materials and Zoom link will be sent to registrants.

Register at [vdgsne.org](https://vdgsne.org). Deadline is Dec. 8.

## Silbiger Grant Performance Reviews

### 2020 Silbiger Grant Concert - Music for Voices and Viols

November 12, 2021 at 8pm, First Lutheran Church, Boston, MA

November 14, 2021 at 4pm, St. Joseph Church, Providence, RI

The collaboration between Fred Jodry’s *Schola Cantorum* and four local viol players (Hannah Davidson, Sarah Mead, James Perretta and Emily Walhout)—funded in part by a Silbiger Grant—was originally scheduled to take place in March of 2020. We had just completed our rehearsals and were about to do the first of two performances when the pandemic shut down all public concerts. Worries about the news had prompted us to add “A Sad Pavan for these Distracted Times” to the program at the last minute, but we never got to perform this commentary on the strange times we found ourselves in.

We were grateful that both the Silbiger fund and *Schola* kindly paid the

four viol players for the time we had put into preparing for the pair of concerts, with the understanding that the project would be completed once public gatherings were again under way. We certainly never dreamed that it would be 20 months before we would be able to pick up where we left off.

The program was based on six joint pieces for choir and voices: verse anthems of Gibbons and Byrd as well as two large secular madrigals of Gibbons. Surrounding these were two English motets for the choir alone and two sets of English pieces for the viols, including fantasias of William White and both Ferraboscós, dances by Byrd and Gibbons, and several short motets. Brief sacred songs on viols served to connect the large joint pieces, and the full program with intermission ran to about 90 minutes.

We decided that a masked audience and performers would be more comfortable with a shorter program with no intermission, so when we revisited the program this fall we made some strategic cuts to reduce the whole program to an hour and combined the two viol sets into one shorter group.

The four players used Sarah's matched set of Brescian viols for the program: alto, two basses, and great bass. Though some of the Tudor vocal music is scored for very high sopranos, most of the repertoire fits very well on this low consort. More than one listener likened the sound of the consort to an organ. The acoustic of St. Joseph Church in Providence was particularly well-suited to the combined ensembles, and we were excited to see large and enthusiastic audiences at both performances. *Schola Cantorum's* large following were clearly energized to hear the group after nearly two years of silence. We were grateful to be part of their return to live performance. —*Sarah Mead*

It is always a pleasure to collaborate with viols, and interesting to work with this beautiful set of matched viols at A 460. I was particularly interested in doing some of David Wulstans excellent reconstructions (from an organ part only) of several Gibbons verse anthems.

It was definitely challenging to coordinate editions—most choirs sing this repertoire transposed up a step or minor third, which of course that does not work for viols particularly well. Having the viols at 460 helped us in some cases. It was also surprising that most of the vocal editions easily available use reduced note values, whereas the viol players preferred to play from original notation, generally with the bars of 4/2. This made some complications, but we were able to make everything work out very well. It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to explore this repertoire with such able players.

—*Fred Jodry*

### **2021-22 Silbiger Grant**

The Gian Lyman Silbiger Grant for 2021 has been awarded to Boston-based soprano Elise Groves and viol consort Long & Away (Anne Legêne, viol player/organizer). Their concert "So Trinken Wir Alle" will take place twice next June in Boston and Shirley, MA, and will likely be filmed as well to share with those unable to attend. The program celebrates the many delights (and a few travails) of spring. Splendid 16th-c. works for voices and viols explore age old themes of love, nature, dancing, and drinking. You'll hear the full range of Lassus' incomparable writing in French, German, and Latin, as well as Senfl's humorous take on farmers and Marenzio's divine springtime madrigals. The musicians are Elise Groves, soprano; Sophie Michaux, mezzo-soprano; Corey Dalton Hart, tenor; Stephan Griffin, bass; and Long & Away: Karen Burciaga, Jane Hershey, Anne

Legêne, Carol Lewis, James Perretta, viols. Performances will be Friday, June 10 at 7:30pm at Shirley Meeting House, Shirley, MA and Saturday, June 11 at 7:00pm at Church of the Advent, Boston, MA. [www.longandaway.com](http://www.longandaway.com)

### **Silbiger Grant 2022-2023**

The Gian Lyman Silbiger Grant is back on track! Our pandemic-delayed 2019 double concert was finally performed recently in Boston and Providence, as originally planned. (See accompanying articles). In our 25th year of support for music for viols and voices in church services and concerts around New England, our chapter is pleased to provide this impetus for the programming of the music we love for new audiences. The Grant for 2021-2022 has been awarded to the viol consort Long & Away, and a choral ensemble led by Elise Groves (see accompanying article).

The schedule for 2022-2023 is as follows:  
Feb. 1 - Application period opens  
Apr. 15 - Applications due  
June 1 - Decision sent to applicants  
For more information, and to apply, visit [vdgsne.org](http://vdgsne.org).

Our Grant is supported entirely through the generosity of our members. Through it, we remember the life and work of Gian Lyman Silbiger, a fine gambist who performed in Boston, and taught at the Longy School of Music, and McGill and Brandeis Universities until her too-early death in 1974. Contributions to support the Silbiger Grant are gratefully accepted and should be sent to the VdGS-NE Treasurer Glen Legere at 1 Sherman Lane, Bedford MA 01730. Through the awarding of this Grant, we hope to reach musicians in our wider community who would like to explore music for viols in their concert series, church or synagogue. Please spread the word!

Jane Hershey  
Chair, VdGS-NE Silbiger Grant Committee  
**Green Fund**

As you may know, the Board of the VdGS-NE has decided to invest in a special fund aimed at supporting our longterm activities, including continued online classes and, eventually, a return to in-person activities. This fall, an anonymous donor sent a generous gift and expressed a strong desire to invest "green", i.e. in a fund which invests sustainably with a focus on good environmental practices. The Board decided to combine gifts given for this fund with all contributions made so far this year, to get us most of the way to our final goal of \$2500, the minimum needed to invest.

**We're nearly there!** With your help, we hope to raise the final **\$500 by Dec. 31.**

If you haven't made a contribution this year, please consider this unique opportunity with an eye on the future. Your gift of any amount, whether modest or grand, really does make a difference. To give via Paypal, visit <https://vdgsne.org/support-us/> and put "Green" in the box marked Special Fund. To make a contribution via mail, enclose a check with "Green" in the memo and mail to: VdGS-NE, c/o Glen Legere, 1 Sherman Ln. Bedford, MA 01730. My thanks to you all, and for all the contributions you've already made to our endeavors. The Board and I are deeply grateful for your help in reaching this important goal to safeguard the Society's future. --Karen Burciaga



## Concerts and Classes

### **The Holly and the Oak: Nature Images in Medieval and Renaissance Music**

Sunday, December 5 at 1-2:30pm

Instructor Shira Kammen, vielle, looks at Medieval and Renaissance compositions of one to five parts with texts celebrating trees, flowers, stars, and creatures of all kinds, with compositions by Guillaume de Machaut, Guillaume Dufay, Henry VIII, Thomas Ravenscroft, Anonymous, and more!

Geared to: intermediate and up singers and instrumentalists. Pitch: A=440.

1-2:30pm EDT - online course (link sent to registrants)

\$25 per session

[https://www.amherstearlymusic.org/weekend\\_online\\_classes](https://www.amherstearlymusic.org/weekend_online_classes)

### **The Viol that Sings: Playing the Fantasies of Giovanni Coperario**

Sunday, December 5 at 3-4:30pm

Instructor Mary Springfels, viol, leads this session. Giovanni Coperario, aka John Cooper, was an innovative and influential composer, active in the first decades of the 17th Century. Dozens of his five-part fantasies bear evocative Italian titles; this suggests that players should think of them as songs without words. We'll try to find poetic structures buried in his beautiful writing, and to apply bowed nuances apt for the poetry. Geared to: intermediate to advanced viols. Pitch: A=415.

Online course (link sent to registrants)

\$25 per session

[https://www.amherstearlymusic.org/weekend\\_online\\_classes](https://www.amherstearlymusic.org/weekend_online_classes)

### **French Music for Everyone - our December special topic! See above for details.**

Sunday, December 12 at 3-4:30pm online

### **A Medieval Christmas**

December 17 at 8:00pm - Follen Church, 755 Massachusetts Ave, Lexington, MA

December 18 at 8:00pm - Central Congregational Church, 14 Titcomb St, Newburyport, MA

December 19 at 4:00pm - First Church in Cambridge, 11 Garden St, Cambridge, MA  
Transcendent Christmas music, featuring a superb all-female ensemble: Anne Azéma, Camila Parias, Deborah Rentz-Moore, voices, Allison Monroe, vielle, and Christa Patton, harp and winds. A glimpse of Christmas spirituality from Medieval France, Italy, England, and Provence, including music of the church and songs of private devotion around the joyous theme of the Nativity. Included are songs to the Virgin Mary, processions from Saint Martial of Limoges, hymns, lyrics, and miracle ballads sung in Latin, Old French, Old Provençal, and Saxon, interlaced with Medieval English texts of the Nativity.

[www.bostoncamerata.org](http://www.bostoncamerata.org)

### **The Moon Before Yule**

Tuesday, December 21 at 8:00pm - online

**Seven Times Salt:** Ari Nieh, bass; Karen Burciaga, violin, guitar, harp, voice; Dan Meyers, recorders, flutes, bagpipes, percussion, voice; Josh Schreiber, bass viol, voice; Matthew Wright, lute, voice

Enjoy our winter solstice concert at home!

Now a beloved annual tradition, we head online once more to bring you seasonal music of Europe, the British Isles, and the New World. This year's program includes a sampling of French Baroque noels, Spanish villancicos, shapenote hymns, Irish reels, and seasonal readings. Filmed at St. John's Episcopal Church in Beverly Farms, MA.

Online

at [www.youtube.com/c/seventimesalt](http://www.youtube.com/c/seventimesalt)

FREE to watch; donations encouraged

[seventimesalt.com](http://seventimesalt.com)