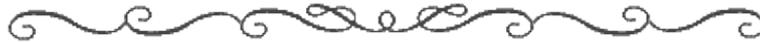




Newsletter

Viola da Gamba Society - New England

Fall 2025



President's Letter

Dear fellow gambists of New England,

As we spring into another fall, I have to say that either the effects of the pandemic are over, or warnings that retirement can be busier than ever before are coming true for me. As I step away from teaching in the Five College Early Music Program in western Massachusetts, I find myself stretching my performing identity and stepping into more viol activist roles. I also am overjoyed to be welcoming younger players into our community and playing with new friends and colleagues. In fact, without them as well as long-standing members of our society, I would not be able to witness the activity that we now see. More workshops are in the works, not quite up to speed with pre-pandemic, but we're getting there. We have new and very able coaches as well. So, keep your viols tuned and enjoy making music with others as well as on your own!

Your president,
Alice Robbins

Notes from BEMF

BEMF took place last June, a biennial treat in our area. There were lots of opportunities to hear viols in concert, and the VdGSA booth at the exhibit, led by Festival Outreach head Erik Andersen was a wonderful opportunity to visit with each other as well as to demonstrate and encourage drop-ins who were interested in trying to play a viol. Our chapter members lent instruments and volunteered at the booth.

It was a very rainy Saturday morning when our New England chapter assisted VdGSA at the Gamba Gamut for a select and excited audience at Roxbury's BPL branch. Funded by the VdGSA Outreach Committee, we rented seven viols from Powers Music School for the petting zoo and community play-in in which both children and adults took part. In addition to the Powers viols, Annette Somers lent her treble. James Perretta and Erik Andersen guided visitors in holding and playing viols to begin the morning. The next segment was a concert in which Anne Legêne performed four pieces by C.F. Abel, Tina Chancey played her bass viol version of a pavan by John Dowland, Jay Michaels on tenor viol played a number of Irish airs, and James Perretta then entertained with his renditions of

video game music. Following the solos, James and Erik were joined by Carol Lewis for consort pieces. The morning ended with everyone there invited to play together.



Erik Andersen and James Perretta assist young players

The late afternoon BEMF concert was "Extravagamba!" New England was well represented in consort with our national and international colleagues gathered together by Christel Thielmann, most of whom are or have been associated with BEMF performances over the years. —Alice Robbins

Notes from Conclave

This year's VdGSA Conclave focused on dance music from the Middle Ages to the 21st century, as well as all the ways that dancing informs our playing, in rhythmic patterns, body movements, and ensemble interaction. The faculty concert featured a wide range of dance music in

both large and intimate forms, from solo treble to concerted music in 24 voices. It was heartening to see so many young players involved at every level of the workshop, from beginning players to those in leadership roles.—Sarah Mead

Since I don't live in New England any more, it's always nice to use Conclave as an excuse to see and play with people from both from our region and from further afield. This year I was a faculty member for the first time, which was a tremendous learning experience for me; hopefully the students in my classes learned half as much as I did! —James Williamson

A lucky 13 New England chapter members attended this year's VdGSA Conclave, and we could add Marie Ridolfo to that number, a member of the Conclave organizing Team FretKnot who has just relocated to Boston's north shore. This was my first time attending while not on faculty, which gave me time to have many mealtime conversations, play with other seasoned colleagues, assist with occasional special "ad hoc" playing sessions, sub for an absent player in class, and listen to the wonderful and versatile faculty concert without stress. Sarah Mead is back in the saddle as Music Director. She organizes the faculty concert and all the coached classes. Emily Walhout, James Perretta, and Graham Christian, who taught a history of dance class. If you have not yet joined the VdGSA in addition to our chapter, I recommend it. In addition to a wider access to players, news, and events, there are many benefits, including access to a Conclave voucher to defray the cost of attending. If you don't need that, please consider donating to the Conclave Endowment which it is hoped will keep Conclave affordable into the future. —Alice Robbins

Early Music Week at Pinewoods

Pinewoods was beautiful, as always, though rather hot, like all of New England this summer. Karen Burciaga did an excellent job leading a multi-talented faculty in a wide range of classes. My own morning viol class proved how well music brings together a wide range of ages; their final performance (of a Gesualdo madrigal) blew us all away. —Sarah Mead

Pinewoods Early Music Week is always the highlight of my summer (and probably my year!) —Guy Pugh

I have been attending Pinewoods Early Music Week most years since 2017. I came as a singer, and now I'm a gamba nut. It's always a wonderful week for me, and the 2025 version was a nice and needed escape from the real world. This year the weather was mostly wonderful except for one day of rain, and the food was terrific as always. It's always nice to see old friends and meet new ones. My classes were enjoyable and challenging, thanks to Michael and Anney Barrett (vocal ensemble), Lisa Terry (French [baroque] Music is Best), and Sarah Mead (Willaert's Musica Nova, a collection of motets and madrigals for voices and viols, in 4-7 parts). Of course,

there's lots of English Country Dancing which I enjoy but some of those heys, especially the 3 person ones, baffle me. The highlight for me is always Midnight Viols, organized by David Hunt. Groups of players and singers, from teenagers to septuagenarians, making music into the wee hours of the morning. There's lots of viol action at Pinewoods Early Music Week; if you haven't been in a while, we welcome you back! My goals before Pinewoods EMW 2026: learn the hey and learn the recorder... —Ron Lacro

Dancing, swimming, music from morning to midnight and beyond, tasty food, lots of silliness—Pinewoods was a delightfully exhausting week. Our theme this year was "Trailblazers & Renegades," and we campers expanded our musical boundaries and made plenty of good trouble during our week in the woods! I felt a bit of trepidation in my first year as program director, but thanks to many helping hands, it all went smoothly. Niccolo Seligmann, Lisa Terry, and Sarah Mead taught an excellent variety of viol classes, and David Hunt facilitated Late Night Consorts (also known as Midnight Viols) which has expanded to welcome singers and players of all instruments—though still with lots of viol consorts represented. Next year's theme remains a secret for now, but I hope you'll join us August 23-29 for a wonderful week of playing and singing. —Karen Burciaga

Viols in Vermont

One for the record books: we had a 7-part viol get-together in NW Vermont over Labor Day weekend. David Zarowin just so happened to bump into Peter Tourin (who lives in Hawaii but is spending the summer in New England) at Warren Ellison's workshop. And it just kinda happened. Even more exciting: the person who took the picture is a new-to-viol beginner who is loving it (yippee!), but not feeling quite ready to play in a large group. And the young one in the picture is a local Vermont woman (Layla Morris) who is off to McGill for a masters in modern cello, but picked up the taste for viols at Oberlin and wants to keep playing (yay!). Also present: Jean Trombley, Barbara Wanner, Ted Winokur, Elizabeth Newman. —Elizabeth Newman



👉 Upcoming Events 👈

See www.neemcalendar.org for more early music events.

Baroque Masters

Ensemble Chaconne makes its debut in the superb Arts on the Green Concert Series in a concert featuring masterworks by J.S. Bach, Handel, Vivaldi, and baroque masters. The program includes: Concerto for Lute in D Major by Vivaldi; Sonata in G major, Opus 1, No. 5 by Handel; Sonata in E Minor BWV 1034 by J.S. Bach; Quatorzieme Concert (Royale) in d minor by François Couperin; and other gems.

Ensemble Chaconne: Peter Bloom, flute, Carol Lewis, viola da gamba, Olav Chris Henriksen, lute

September 21 at 4pm

First Congregational Church of Shrewsbury, 19 Church Rd. Shrewsbury, MA

Free will donations welcome.

<http://www.americasmusicworks.com/ensemble-chaconne.html>

CSEM's Relaunch Celebration

Our fall fundraiser is a late afternoon gathering in cafe style with musical and edible treats, to celebrate Cambridge Society of Early Music's legacy and support its future as a beacon for the Greater Boston early music community. In honor of our late James S. Nicolson, CSEM gathers several of his friends and students to perform favorites from Marais to Mozart and more. The event will include a light coffee hour with pastries, a silent auction, and a preview of our 2025-26 Concert Season. All contributions made will support CSEM in providing accessible, intimate, and engaging early music programming in the 2025-26 Season and beyond.

Akiko Sato, harpsichord; Emily Walhout, viola da gamba; Sylvia Berry, fortepiano

September 21 at 5pm

Margaret Jewett Hall, First Church Congregational, 11 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA

\$50-\$250

<https://csem.org/concerts/relaunch/>

Five College Early Music Director Allison Monroe is organizing a free monthly series of "Early Music Explorations" that is open to the public. The first two are of special interest: September 21 and October 19. If you're in the area, please come, and bring a friend!

Of All the Instruments: Voice & Viol in Early Modern England

What does it mean for music to be "for viols" or "for voices"? This lecture-recital and workshop introduces the viol and challenges our modern assumptions about repertoire, exploring a rich tradition where the lines between vocal and instrumental performance were fluid and porous. Drawing on insights from Pepys and others, we'll re-examine familiar works, from English songs and madrigals to In Nomine fantasies. The session will

conclude with a hands-on workshop, inviting participants to rediscover the music's original adaptability. Bring voices and instruments and join us as we uncover a vibrant, flexible sound world where, as Purcell tells us, "of all the instruments, none with the viol can compare" —except, perhaps, a well-matched voice.

Cat Slowik, viola da gamba

September 21 at 2-3:30pm

Music & Dance Building, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA

FREE and open to the public

Anticipation

The Tufts Community Concert Series presents "Anticipation" - music of J.P. Rameau, Johann Schenk and Jacob Kremburg.

Pamela Dellal, voice, Jane Hershey, viola da gamba, Frances Conover Fitch, harpsichord, and Catherine Liddell, Baroque lute and theorbo

September 28 at 3pm

Distler Performance Hall, Granoff Music Center, 24 Talbot Avenue, Medford, MA.

Free, no tickets required. For the livestream go to Tufts Music, Dept. of Music, scroll down to "Upcoming events."

go.tufts.edu/musicevents or 617-627-2253

Making Connections: Bow-strokes, phrasing, speech, and song

Beginning with the teacher modeling a variety of bowing shapes, we will move on to listening to and imitating each other's bowing, experimenting with repeated notes, adjacent notes, and string changes. As a group we will explore the shapes of a variety of texted and non-texted phrases, ending with a group madrigal play-along with the teacher's recording. Open to: viol players, all levels. Pitch: A= 415 Hz.

Sarah Mead, viola da gamba

October 4 from 3-4:30pm

online (Zoom link sent to participants)

<https://www.amherstearlymusic.org/online-classes>

Machaut: Mostly Motets

The Elm City Consort kicks off the season with a concert of music by the 14th century composer and poet, Guillaume de Machaut (1300-1377). The undisputed master of the Ars nova style, Machaut composed in a wide range of musical forms and styles. This performance will feature selections from the twenty-three surviving isorhythmic motets, with additional selections of music from Machaut's epic poem, Le Remede de Fortune.

Elm City Consort: Michael Rigsby, vielle and director, Rosamund Morley, vielle, Sylvia Leith, mezzo-soprano, Clifton Massey, countertenor, Edmund Milly, bass-baritone, Kevin Payne, lute

October 10 at 5pm

First Presbyterian Church, 704 Whitney Ave., New Haven
Free; no tickets required

<https://www.elmcityconsort.org/machaut-mostly-motets>

Grand Tour: Virtuoso Music of the Galant

Celebrated viola da gamba virtuoso Cristiano Contadin and his renowned ensemble Opera Prima return to BEMF with a program of music exploring the Galant style that was in vogue across western Europe during the middle of the 18th century. The complexity and formal structure of the Baroque gives way to a charismatic beauty and captivating elegance that was still grounded by a virtuosic basso continuo. The magnificent soprano Amanda Forsythe—a favorite of BEMF audiences and longtime collaborator with Contadin—is showcased in sparkling arias alongside charming concertos and sinfonias from such Galant masters as Hasse, Tartini, C. P. E. Bach, the brothers Johann Gottlieb and Carl Heinrich Graun, Alessandro Scarlatti, and Abel.

Opera Prima: Cristiano Contadin, Director & viola da gamba, Amanda Forsythe, soprano

October 17 at 8pm - NEC's Jordan Hall, Boston

VIRTUAL PREMIERE: Friday, October 31, 2025 at 8pm (ET) Available to watch until November 14, 2025

Celebrating Bach

Trios and solos by Johann Sebastian Bach including three flute sonatas, a prelude and fugue for baroque lute, and part of Bach's second cello suite (in d minor) transcribed for bass viol.

Ensemble Chaconne: Peter Bloom, baroque flute; Carol Lewis, viola da gamba; Olav Chris Henriksen, baroque lute

October 17 at 8pm

Lindsay Chapel, First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, 11 Garden St. (entrance on Mason St.), Cambridge, MA. (617)776-0692 or www.duomaresienne.com

October 19 at 3:00 pm

Somerville Museum, Central St. at Westwood Road (entrance on Westwood Road), Somerville, MA. (617)666-9810 or www.somervillemuseum.org

Silbiger Grant weekend in Northampton MA

1. Concert—So Let Our Social Powers Combine: Music for New England Viols and Voices from the Connecticut River Valley

Music was everywhere in New England during the decades following the American Revolution. By 1800, Northampton was a regional hub of music printing and instrument makers in communities up and down the Connecticut river worked to meet the new demand for musical instruments. There were few--if any!--full time professional musicians. Rather, nearly everyone (rich and poor, enslaved and free) learned to sing and many people to play New England viols (stringed instruments similar to modern cellos and violas), fiddles, flutes, 'clarionets,' bassoons and other locally-made wind instruments. European visitors and wealthy sophisticates from Boston thought the music from the Valley sounded wild and unkempt, but locals loved it and the opportunities it afforded to bring people together to sing or dance or

listen. "Then as our hands in Friendship join, So let our social powers combine," as one line of the song "Friendship," published in Northampton in 1798, reads. Historic Northampton presents a concert of music from the Valley from the decades after the Revolution, a forgotten "Golden Age" of New England music for voices and instruments. The music will be performed on newly-restored New England viols built in and around Northampton and will feature five eminent musicians including singer and multi-instrumentalist Tim Eriksen, New England viol virtuoso Loren Ludwig, Alice Robbins (Arcadia Players), Allison Monroe (Trobár, Director of the Five College Early Music Program), and Nate Steele (Museum of Fine Art, Boston). Supported in part by a Silbiger Grant from the Viola da Gamba Society of New England, the performance will feature dances, hymns, fiddle tunes and songs, many of which have waited for centuries in dusty silence.

October 18 at 7pm - Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence, 220 Main Street, Northampton, MA

2. Lecture Demo— So Let Our Social Powers Combine: Music for New England Viols and Voices

Music was everywhere in New England during the decades following the American Revolution. By 1800, Northampton was a regional hub of music printing, and instrument makers in communities up and down the Connecticut river worked to meet the new demand for musical instruments. Nearly everyone (rich and poor, enslaved and free) sang and many played New England viols (stringed instruments similar to modern cellos and violas, fiddles, flutes, 'clarionets,' bassoons and other locally-made wind instruments. In this companion event to the concert presented by Historic Northampton on Oct. 18 at 7pm at the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence, you are invited to learn more about the context behind this repertoire and to lift your own voices and hands in making music. Bring instruments!

Loren Ludwig, Tim Eriksen & Friends

October 19 at 1-3pm

Sweeney Concert Hall, Smith College, Northampton, MA FREE and open to the public

Escape to the Stage

Escape to the stage with Ann Ford (1737-1824)! When British socialite Ann Ford's father demanded that she marry a man 30-years her senior (who had attempted to pay for her hand in marriage), she was desperate to find a way out. With money she borrowed from her well-to-do friends, Ann rented out some of London's most prestigious concert venues and launched a concert series to fund her own independence. Despite her father's attempt to have her arrested for performing in public, Ann's 1760 and 1761 concert series were a huge success. Hear some of the music that Ann sang and played on the viol and plucked instruments, including a few of her own compositions! Actor Julie Nelson joins the musicians of LyraCle to frame musical selections with narrated excerpts

from surviving letters, articles, and books by and about Ann.

Lyracle: Julie Nelson, actor, Ashley Mulcahy, mezzo, James Perretta, viol, and Nathaniel Cox, plucked instruments

November 14 at 7:30pm - Lyman Hall at First Churches
129 Main St, Northampton, MA

November 15 at 3pm - United First Parish Church 1306
Hancock St, Quincy
\$10 – \$20

<https://www.lyraclmusic.com/events/>

Vicente Lusitano and his Circle

Motets for 4, 5 and 6 male voices by Lusitano, Gombert, Willaert, and Clemens non Papa. Lusitano, a 16th-century Portuguese cleric, is considered the first classical composer of African ancestry ever to be published. His beautiful vocal music has only recently become known to modern performers and audiences. The sacred polyphony from this era is extraordinarily rich but is seldom performed. In addition to Lusitano's own works, this program offers music by three of the most influential composers of the day, masters whose music Lusitano certainly knew.

Arcadia Players

November 15 at 2pm Music Room, Wistariahurst
Museum, Holyoke
\$10-40

<https://www.arcadiaplayers.org/concert-season.html>

Pombalino: Lisbon after the great earthquake of 1755

Presented by instrumental chamber ensemble As the Crow Flies, “Pombalino” draws inspiration from the remarkable reconstruction of Lisbon following the devastating 1755 earthquake. Like Paris, Vienna, London, and Dresden, Lisbon was a thriving hub of music during the 17th and 18th centuries. This showcase takes its name from Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, the Marquês de Pombal, who oversaw the reconstruction. Works by Costa, Leite, Almeida, Avondano, and Nogueira encapsulate the musical richness of Portugal before and after the earthquake.

As the Crow Flies: Annemarie Schubert, violin and director, Ryan Cheng, violin, Eliana Estrada, violin, Ela Kodžas, violin, Nathan Mondry, harpsichord, Luka Stefanović, cello and gamba, Dani Zanuttini-Frank, lute and theorbo

November 18 at 5pm - Bethesda Lutheran Church, 450
Whitney Ave., New Haven

Free; no tickets required

<https://www.elmcityconsort.org/pombalino-lisbon-earthquake>

Francesco Provenzale: Stellidaura's Revenge

A courtly love triangle is torn apart by violent passions in this sultry romp! When her beloved Armidoro is shot by the jealous Orismondo, beautiful Stellidaura is out for revenge! Provenzale was a hugely influential figure in Neapolitan opera and he wrote his zany tragicomedy to be performed at a prince's summer palazzo in 1674.

Breathtaking laments combine with lively tarantellas to produce a wildly entertaining cavalcade of romance, murder, and intrigue. Follow our star-crossed lovers as they navigate mistaken identities, bumbling servants, and attempted assassinations to find out whether they are destined for a happy ending or an early grave. Enjoy this earthy Shakespearean drama full of twists and turns and set to one of the most beautiful musical scores of the 17th century.

Hannah De Priest, Stellidaura, Aaron Sheehan, Orismondo, Richard Pittsinger, Armidoro, Giuseppe Naviglio, Giampetro, Mara Riley, Armillo, and the BEMF Chamber Ensemble: Robert Mealy, concertmaster, Sarah Darling, violin, Kathryn Montoya & Gaia Saetermoe-Howard, recorder, David Morris, viola da gamba, Maxine Eilander, Baroque harp, Michael Sponseller, harpsichord, Paul O'Dette, theorbo, Stephen Stubbs, theorbo & Baroque guitar

November 29 at 8pm

November 30 at 3pm

New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, Boston, MA
VIRTUAL PREMIERE: Sunday, December 14, 2025 at
8pm (ET), Available to watch until December 28, 2025

<https://bemf.org/>

Contributions to the Newsletter

Have an announcement? Want to review a music edition, concert, or recording? Is your playing group looking for new members or planning a viol event? Consider writing a brief article for the newsletter; we are always looking for content. Email secretary@vdgsne.org.

Instruments for Sale

Did you know the VdGS-NE website has a Classifieds section? Check out <https://vdgsne.org/classifieds/> and let us know if you want to post an instrument for sale.

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