



## Newsletter

### Viola da Gamba Society - New England

Winter 2023



#### President's Letter

Welcome to the winter season with all the holiday activities and festivities it brings with it! Look at our list of events and check your favorite websites for area concerts. We had our first monthly Gabbing Gambas Gathering on Zoom on the first Saturday in November, attended by only five of us. It was a good reunion though, for two were people who I hadn't seen in quite a while, and they didn't know each other. It's sweet to stay in touch, whatever the weather. Everyone is welcome, even if it's just for a few minutes, so log on next time, which is Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 1-2pm.

Our chapter has a change in elected officers—Glen Legere is unable to continue in the position of Treasurer, so John Thier is filling in temporarily, and the position is open! If you are interested in volunteering for this valuable duty, please contact me at [president@vdgsne.org](mailto:president@vdgsne.org). On behalf of the Board, I want to thank Glen for his invaluable help these past several years, and we are very grateful to John for his willingness to step in.

We look forward to having Parthenia Consort of Viols guide us in a live workshop Saturday March 23, an event that has been postponed for four years. It will be all the more joyful if absence makes the heart grow fonder. If you don't feel like going out to all the holiday concerts, you can always cuddle up with a viol and some good music, or just make beautiful sounds while exercising your fingers. Here's to a wonderful winter season,  
—Alice Robbins, President, VdGS-NE

#### Spring Workshop

Save the date! On Saturday, March 23, renowned viol consort Parthenia (NYC) will lead our first full-day, in-person workshop since January 2020. Beverly Au, Lawrence Lipnik, Rosamund Morley and Lisa Terry will coach consorts at all levels; a beginners' class may also be offered if interest warrants. The workshop will run 9:30am-4:30pm at a venue TBA in metro Boston. We'll have more details to share in the coming weeks.

#### Gamba Gatherings - this SUNDAY!

You're invited to our new monthly online meetings for those who would love to continue to connect and socialize even if only from a distance. This is a chance to explore our musical activities, advances, or set-backs in practicing our viols, and maybe even play a tune for one another. We won't be practicing together, but we can answer each others' burning questions or just have a cup of tea/coffee/whatever and enjoy keeping in touch. Everyone is welcome—beginners through teachers! We meet for an hour the first weekend of each month, alternating Saturdays and Sundays, mornings and afternoons. The next one is **Sunday, December 3** from 1-2pm EST and will be hosted by John Thier. Feel free to stay for as much or as little as you want. The Zoom link for our sessions is <https://tinyurl.com/j7r5mude>. If you would like to receive regular reminders about the Gathering, email [vdgsnehost@gmail.com](mailto:vdgsnehost@gmail.com) to join the email list and be notified.

#### Classifieds

FOR SALE - Treble Viol built by Clark Gaiennie in 1980. Harry Grabenstein bow included. Treble viol is made of Mediterranean pear with a New England black spruce belly and ornamented peg-box. Grabenstein bow is made of semi-figured snakewood. \$5,600. Contact: [barbara@wannervt.com](mailto:barbara@wannervt.com) or (802) 881-5335.

#### Report from the EMA Summit

Thanks to the support of our chapter, I was happy to attend the Early Music America Summit in Boston in October. It was a good opportunity to share ideas and hear different voices, and an excellent chance to reconnect with friends, some of whom I hadn't seen in many years. I also enjoyed making new acquaintances and hearing portions of the Young Performers' Festival.

In a powerful start to Day One, first up for me was "NAGAMO: A Case Study in Collaboration & Decolonization" presented by the ensemble musica intima from Vancouver. Their recent collaborative project with Cree composer Andrew Balfour combined his original texts in Ojibway and Cree with Renaissance music by Byrd, Gibbons and others. The process brought up many

questions, often difficult ones, around the term “reconciliation” and how it affects present day attempts to bridge Indigenous and settlers’ communities. The presenters Lucy and Jacob shared some of their experience and recommendations, starting with employing the term “decolonize” rather than “reconcile.” Based on their relationship with Andrew and the local Native community, they suggest the following for would-be presenters: take the time to have honest conversations and for the project to evolve; open your mind, connect with your collaborators, and create trust; consider scalability and your ability to repeat and grow the project (“one-and-done” doesn’t cut it); bring your project to the community it’s meant to serve; do the work of finding non-church venues because many Native people are uncomfortable in that setting; acknowledge whose land you’re on; and invite local Native elders and knowledge keepers. (As a first step, go to <https://www.whose.land/en/> and learn about your area.) It is the ultimate horrible irony that while the two white presenters traveled to the US without incident, Andrew was detained for several hours by Customs and Immigration and ultimately refused entry to the US to take part in this presentation about... the treatment of Native peoples.

Local duo Lyracle, comprised of gambist and VdGS-NE board member James Perretta and mezzo-soprano Ashley Mulcahy, presented “Beyond the Composer: Curating Concerts that Celebrate Overlooked Music-Makers”. They shared their process of creating a compelling concert program out of the smallest seed of an idea: by delving into sources from the period, researching the people and settings around composers, and using creativity and logic to flesh out a program. Live musical examples illustrated their presentation. I fully support Lyracle’s aim to deviate from a “standard” concert format of sonatas or established works (like Messiah or The Four Seasons). Those are valuable in their own right, but how refreshing to branch out and explore the many fascinating works which lie waiting for us!

“Keynote: A Conversation with Countertenor John Holiday” introduced me to a charismatic performer who I confess I hadn’t heard of before. That has now been remedied! A fellow Texan, John spoke with EMA director David McCormick about experiences and catalysts along his path to becoming a professional performer including the challenges facing a gay countertenor of color from the South. John has a unique perspective bridging the worlds of jazz, gospel, pop and classical music. He said that the single most respectful thing a collaborator can ask of him is, “What do you want to do?” rather than pigeonhole him (or any musician) into one strict category.

The Boston Camerata’s lecture-demo “We’ll Be There! American Spirituals Black and White 1800-1900” was excellent. Students from the Longy School of Music of Bard College performed alongside the Camerata’s core musicians, anchored by the powerful voice and presence of tenor Jordan Weatherston Pitts. The program followed the earliest American spirituals from plantations to revivals to the present day and explored their meaning in African-American communities. It also followed a tiny

melodic fragment, *judicii signum* (sign of judgment) as it appeared in 12th-century North Africa, the American oral tradition, folk tunes, and *The Sacred Harp*. An astute attendee asked Jordan and the several Longy students of color what this music means to them in the present day; their answers about the feeling of belonging were incredibly moving and could have led to a far longer discussion. As the session drew to a close, the entire room sang “Shall We Gather at the River” and I felt a strong sense of kinship and solidarity amongst all the musicians gathered together.

Day 2 included “A Presenter’s Dilemma: Whose Stories are We Telling”. It was moderated by Gus Denhard (IDEA TF/Early Music Seattle) and Monica Rojas, an Afro-Peruvian-American performer whose mission is to educate about the history of slavery and colonialism in Latin America and to highlight the contributions of people of African descent. They asked the central question, “When the dominant culture controls the narrative of history, can the early music we present fully represent the audience we aspire to serve?” Gus shared parts of his journey, both positive and negative, learning as a programmer how to elevate diverse voices in early music in a sensitive, respectful and equitable manner. The best intentions can backfire if not bolstered by trust, understanding, and true partnership. Monica collaborated with Gus and Early Music Seattle on cross-cultural projects in the last couple of years. She spoke with passion about working to center the voices of all those who have been historically silenced.

Then, I attended the Keynote Panel “Making Connections in Early-Music Member Organizations” though I confess I was working as I listened. Representatives from the American Recorder Society, EMA, Lute Society of America, Historic Brass Society, Historical Keyboard Society of North America, and the VdGSA talked about current challenges, membership questions, and their roles in the future of early music. They noted that instruments that tend to play solo, such as lute and keyboard, have had drops in membership, whereas those that tend to play together (like viols) have remained steady or seen an increase. Maybe we are all returning to group events with gusto! Of course, no organization had the perfect answer to the question of how best to reach young players and keep them engaged.

Local favorite Scott Metcalfe, director of Blue Heron, dove in with aplomb to his session “Everything You Need to Know About Performing 15th-Century Vocal Ensemble Music”. I teased him that it was an impossible task for an hour, and he agreed but said we were going to try anyway! He touched on the Gamut, clefs, ficta, voice types, temperament, instrumentation and more, and even had us sightsing several chant excerpts. Everyone was very interested and we would have kept going if it hadn’t been time for...pizza dinner, and Renaissance dance taught by John Tyson.

I was fortunate to hear wonderful rising musicians at the Young Performers Festival, starting with the Old Dominion Madrigal Singers (VA), led by Bianca Hall, who used Original Pronunciation to enliven works by

Dowland and Campion. Then, Case Western Reserve University Historical Performance Ensembles (OH) presented lovely, polished arias and sonatas of Mozart, Handel, and Telemann. The following afternoon, I was delighted to hear junior high and high school students in the Special Music School Baroque Ensemble (NYC) play Handel and Scarlatti on their modern instruments in expert baroque style, led from the violin by Jude Ziliak. A special mention goes to young countertenor Casey Schopflocher, who astounded everyone in the room with his gorgeous renditions of “Ombra mai fu” and “Lascia ch’io pianga” complete with stylish ornamentation. The UConn Collegium Musicum (CT) led by Eric Rice presented part of a reconstructed mass from Vienna ca. 1730, interweaving plainchant with mass movements by Fux and works by Schmelzer, Anerio and Palestrina. All told, hours of wonderful sounds rang in the sanctuary of Emmanuel Church that week.

Due to other obligations that week, I was disappointed to miss “Fostering Access and Inclusion in Student Early Music Ensembles” and “Beyond Tokenism: Anti-racism and Gender Justice in Early Music Programming”. I am trying to locate people who attended and might be willing to share their notes...I’ll have to let you know. Thank you to the VdGS-NE for helping me attend the Summit. It was an enjoyable and thought-provoking several days, and I look forward to the next one.

—Karen Burciaga, Clerk, VdGS-NE

### 📅 Upcoming Events 📅

See [www.neemcalendar.org](http://www.neemcalendar.org) for more early music events.

**Building From The Bottom Up: How To Play Bass Lines On The Viola Da Gamba And Cello** [online class] with John Moran, viol & cello, and Risa Browder, violin. While much has been made of the differences between the French and Italian styles in Baroque music, one thing they had in common was the importance of the bass line and the significant role played by bowed bass players in shaping the sound of the ensemble. This class will explore delightful movements from violin sonatas by Élisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre, acknowledged in her lifetime as one of the greatest composers in France, and Francesco Antonio Bonporti, a highly inventive composer of the Roman school. The class will focus on how to play bass lines supportively to make the treble players’ job as enjoyable as possible and to make the whole sound greater than the sum of the parts. We will explore articulation, phrasing, dynamics, discreet filling in of the harmonies, and ornamentation. This should be as informative to those who play upper parts as it will be to bass players. Participants will hear examples played on violin accompanied by viol in the French repertoire and cello in the Italian, and have the opportunity to play along on the instrument(s) of their choice. Pitch: A= 415 Hz Open to: viola da gambas, cellos, and treble instruments (especially violins), intermediate and up.

**Saturday, December 2 at 3:00pm**

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

### **The Auld Apple Tree: A Winter Solstice Celebration**

This beloved annual concert celebrates the winter solstice and the return of the unconquered sun. The program includes early music from across the British Isles and Europe including familiar carols, wintry consorts, festive wassailing songs, Renaissance dances, Irish tunes, and a surprise or two. Audience participation encouraged and jollity guaranteed! Stay for a cup of cider after the show.

Seven Times Salt: Elise Groves, soprano; Karen Burciaga, violin, guitar, harp, alto; Dan Meyers, recorder, flute, bagpipes, percussion, baritone; Josh Schreiber, bass viol, bass; Matthew Wright, lute, tenor

**Tuesday, December 5 at 7:30pm**

Church of the Good Shepherd, 9 Russell Ave. Watertown, MA. \$20 suggested

**Sunday, December 10 at 3:00pm**

St. John's Episcopal Church, 705 Hale St. Beverly Farms, MA. Free. [www.seventimesalt.com](http://www.seventimesalt.com)

### **Music in the Afternoon**

Please join us in the Library’s Main Entrance Hallway for an hour of music! Judah Coffman is a performer & scholar specializing in Renaissance & Baroque music of the 16th & 17th centuries. He recently completed his Doctorate in Historical Performance Practice, studying voice and baroque cello/viola da gamba.

Judah Coffman, viola da gamba

**Wednesday, December 6 at 2pm**, Waltham Public Library, 735 Main Street, Waltham, MA

Free. <https://waltham.lib.ma.us/programs/>

### **Midwinter Revels: The Feast of Fools, A Medieval Celebration of the Solstice**

The 53rd Midwinter Revels drops us into the colorful medieval Feast of Fools, where everything is topsy-turvy by design. The status quo quickly becomes the status disruptus as the body politic officially lets off steam.

Rulers are temporarily deposed by servants, wit triumphs over power, and a fool finds himself steering the ship of state. This musical feast includes vibrant processions, lively carols, delicate harmonies, vigorous dances, and a full ritual serving of the wild and the holy. On this shortest day of the year, what could possibly go wrong? The Revels Band includes Karen Burciaga, rebec, vielle; David Coffin, recorder; Ben Matus, dulcian, recorder, bagpipes; Hideki Yamaya, lute, guitar.

**December 15-28** at Sanders Theatre, 45 Quincy St, Cambridge, MA. <https://revels.org/event/midwinter/>

### **Christmas in Medieval England**

Our program offers plainchant, carols, and polyphonic antiphons and settings of the Mass that might have been heard in England in the 1440s, when the most modern of the works on the program were composed. The carols, drawn from several manuscripts, are written in a robust popular style with graceful melody and simple harmonies, while the polyphony dazzles with complex cross-rhythms, dashing melodies, and clangorous harmonies, all in

celebration of one of the most glorious seasons of the Christian year.

BLUE HERON (Scott Metcalfe, director) with Charles Weaver, baritone, lute; Laura Jeppesen, rebec, fiddle  
**Saturday, December 15 at 8:00pm** and  
**Sunday, December 16 at 3:00pm** at First Church  
Congregational, 11 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA  
[www.blueheron.org/concerts/season25/english-xmas/](http://www.blueheron.org/concerts/season25/english-xmas/)

### **Charpentier's Midnight Mass for Christmas**

Marc-Antoine Charpentier was one of the most important composers of the French Baroque. His glorious *Messe de minuit pour Noël* from 1694 is based on traditional French carols and makes for a joyous holiday celebration. Our special guest ensemble is the Amherst Regional High School Chorale (Todd Fruth, conductor) singing seasonal selections.

Arcadia Players and chorus (Andrew Arceci, director)  
**Saturday, December 16 at 7:30pm** at Abbey Chapel,  
Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, MA  
[www.arcadiaplayers.org/concert-season.html](http://www.arcadiaplayers.org/concert-season.html)

**Sunday, December 17 at 7:00pm** at Immaculate Heart of  
Mary Church, 52 Spruce St. Winchendon, MA  
[winchendonmusicfestival@gmail.com](mailto:winchendonmusicfestival@gmail.com)

### **Ballads, Fancies & Courtly Airs**

Songs and instrumental works from 17<sup>th</sup>-century England, with music by Tomkins, Simpson, Robinson, Weelkes, and Lawes, featuring mezzo-soprano Carrie Cheron with El Dorado Ensemble (Carol Lewis, Karen Burciaga, James Perretta, Mai-Lan Broekman, Alice Mroszczyk, viols; Olav Chris Henriksen, Matthew Wright, lutes, bandora, cittern)

**Friday, January 26, 2024 at 8:00pm**

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

**Sunday, January 28, 2024 at 3:00pm**

at the Somerville Museum, Central St. at Westwood Road (entrance on Westwood Road), Somerville, MA.  
(617)666-9810 or [www.somervillemuseum.org](http://www.somervillemuseum.org)

### **Tormento Seicento: Love and torment in the music of Monteverdi, Rossi, Merula, Caccini, and others**

Founded by famed viola da gamba virtuoso Cristiano Contadin, the ensemble Opera Prima is dedicated to exploring the Italian repertoire of the 1600s (the Seicento) with technical mastery and buoyant enthusiasm. They make their BEMF debut alongside a favorite of Boston audiences, superstar soprano Amanda Forsythe, in a program that explores the passions of the human soul. Thrill to stunningly evocative masterpieces from the most brilliant and imaginative 17<sup>th</sup> c. Italian composers. Opera Prima (Cristiano Contadin, Director & viola da gamba) with Amanda Forsythe, soprano.

**Saturday, February 3 at 8:00pm** at First Church  
Congregational, 11 Garden St. Cambridge, MA  
[www.bemf.org](http://www.bemf.org)

### **English Country Dance**

Enjoy splendid live music for the Harvard Square English Country Dance including tunes from 1650 up to the present. Some dances are elegant, some rowdy, some romantic, some playful! A friendly and helpful caller will teach all the dances; no experience is necessary.

Seven Times Salt: Karen Burciaga, fiddle; Dan Meyers, winds, percussion; Josh Schreiber, bass viol; Matthew Wright, lute

**Friday, February 9 at 7:30pm** at Harvard-Epworth  
Church, 1555 Massachusetts Ave. Cambridge, MA  
[www.seventimesalt.com](http://www.seventimesalt.com)

### **Chamber Music by Beethoven, Hummel and Haydn**

An ensemble of some of the region's favorite early music performers presents a program of intimate masterpieces by Beethoven, Hummel and Haydn.

Arcadia Players: Monica Jakuc Leverett, fortepiano, Emlyn Ngai, violin, Alice Robbins, cello.

**Sunday, February 18 at 3:00pm** at Wesley United  
Methodist Church, 98 North Maple St. Hadley, MA  
<http://www.arcadiaplayers.org/concert-season.html>

### **VdGS-NE Board of Directors**

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### **Instruments for Sale**

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

### **Contributions to the Newsletter**

Have an announcement? Want to review a concert, recording, music edition? Is your playing group looking for new members or planning a viol event? Consider writing a brief article for the newsletter, where we are always looking for content. Email submissions to [tarboltonlass@hotmail.com](mailto:tarboltonlass@hotmail.com).