



## Newsletter

### Viola da Gamba Society - New England

December 2024

#### President's Letter

Dear community of viol players,

This fall we have continued to expand our playing opportunities, dispelling the habits of isolation and reveling in combining our various voices into a beautiful *mélange*. Creating harmony in this unpredictable age is essential. Our first workshop of this season was held at Mount Holyoke College and attracted 30 players from across eastern New York, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts, eager to play music written by Will Ayton. The following weekend, we held a master class featuring three excellent players taught by Cristiano Contadin in Newton at the welcoming home of Laura Jeppesen. Our 2024 Silbiger Award winners, the Longy Viol Consort, presented a program of Jewish composers at Congregation Kehillath Israel in Brookline. November also brought another play-in at Powers Music School led by James Peretta, Guinevere Fridley, and Job Salazar Fonseca, and I have word of household playing sessions popping up as well. Invite your friends and neighbors and start your own!

There are other activities ahead too, including a workshop in Lincoln, MA on the music of Dowland organized by past president Carol Lewis and Chris Henriksen. That will be on Saturday, April 12, so mark your calendar and keep your eyes peeled for an update.

We are still hoping to find a member willing to sit on the VdGS-NE board as treasurer. This important duty for our society doesn't require a huge amount of expertise or time, but it does help if you have comfort crunching numbers, keeping track of dues, and preparing the tax reports for our non-profit organization in the fall. The busiest times would be keeping track of registrants and payments for organized workshops, but that burden is offset by the feeling of being a part of our community. Read on for more details about activities past and future! —Alice Robbins, President, VdGS-NE

#### Notes from the Fall Workshop

VdGS-NE held a long-anticipated workshop on October 19 honoring Will Ayton, composer, viol player, and Emeritus professor at Roger Williams University, who had originally planned this workshop for January 2021. At that time, Will had written nine fantasias, three each for three different levels of players, specifically for a New England workshop. He prepared a lecture-demo with the example of a fantasia on Greensleeves he had composed. After a few years, Will decided not to present the lecture or teach himself, but we're glad he couldn't stay away.

Bob Eisenstein presented Will's lecture-demo on his composing technique, featuring the process for creating a fantasia on Greensleeves which was performed by Arcadia Viols (Jane Hershey, Doug Kelley, Anne Legêne and Alice Robbins.) They were joined by Laurie Rabut on the faculty coaching Will's fantasias written on lute-song melodies. Will was in attendance and helped out by playing in some of the classes, which was much enjoyed by him and the participants. Our appreciation of Will was highlighted by the presentation of a certificate designating Will Ayton as Composer Laureate of the VdGS-NE.

Afterwards, Will sent VdGS-NE a very kind thank-you note, writing: "It was so much fun to see all of the faces and to see you guys playing. What a wonderful combination of your sensitive and powerful playing and the engagement of the audience." —Alice Robbins



#### Spring Workshop - Save the Date!

"Music of John Dowland" Saturday, April 12 at St. Anne's Episcopal Church, Lincoln, MA. 9:30am-4:30pm. Carol Lewis and Chris Henriksen will lead our spring workshop on the music of revered English composer John Dowland. Additional coaches are Karen Burciaga, Sarah Mead, James Perretta, and lutenist Matthew Wright. Registration opens in February. Mark your calendar and be sure to join us!

#### Workshop Topics for Next Year

It's not too early to be thinking of workshop themes or subjects you'd like to see offered next year! If you have any ideas or requests, however vague, please let Alice know at [president@vdsne.org](mailto:president@vdsne.org) and we'll start planning.

### Seeking a Treasurer to join the Board

We want YOU to be an officer! Our current Treasurer is stepping down in the Spring. Any current member of VdGS-NE can fill this role. Basic requirements are:

–Experience with spreadsheets (e.g. OpenOffice, Excel) and routine personal banking. Double-entry accounting tool experience is *not* required.

--Attendance at 3-4 online Board of Directors meetings and 1 online Members Meeting per year; emails/calls with the smaller executive committee as needed

Duties include:

–Use PayPal and bank account to pay/reimburse chapter receipts, outlays for membership fees, workshop admission fees/payments and miscellaneous expenses

–Prepare fiscal year-end tax and 501(c)(3) non-profit organization reports (with guidance)

–Prepare society finance reports to present at Board meetings and annual Members' Meeting

If you are interested in volunteering for this valuable duty, please contact Alice Robbins at [president@vdgsne.org](mailto:president@vdgsne.org).

### Masterclass with Cristiano Contadin

VdGS-NE hosted a masterclass taught by Italian gambist Cristiano Contadin on October 27 at the home of Laura Jeppesen in Newton, MA. In this beautiful surrounding with sunlight and colorful fall leaves visible outside, three excellent students (Judah Coffman, Tommy Conrad, and Brian Gray) benefitted from Cristiano's teaching and his physical example, learning reasons and methods for varying articulation and phrasing. One of our auditors commented happily, "the master class was wonderful, he's an excellent teacher and player, and I'm very glad to have gone!"



### 2024-2025 Gian Silbiger Grant Concert

This year's Silbiger Grant recipients, the Longy Viol Consort, performed their program "Shabbat Across Early Modern Europe" on November 17 at Congregation Kehillath Israel in Brookline, MA. Viol organizer Kevin Lubin says, "It was an absolute honor and pleasure to share music of the Jewish Baroque with a very nicely sized audience in Brookline this past Sunday. Thanks to

the generosity of the VdGS-NE via the Silbiger Grant, we were able to share rarely played pieces by composers we love and hope to continue this work in the future!"

Jane Hershey attended the concert and shares the following: "While most programs supported by the Gian Silbiger Grant, created in 1995, have featured our more standard repertoire for viols and voices by Gibbons, Byrd, Dowland, Hassler, Schütz (and many others\*), this year's Grant offered a special gift to our community: a program called "Shabbat Across Early Modern Europe." Kevin Lubin, viol player/music director, composed several beautiful arrangements for 20th century and Sephardic songs, which were presented along with seven impressive five-voice 'Sinfonies' by Leonora Duarte, and three lovely settings of Hebrew texts by Salamone Rossi. The consort was complemented by singers Cannon McClure and Katja Pennypacker. The program was varied and well-performed for a full house.

This year's Grant recipients received training as an ensemble at the Longy School of Music of Bard College with me and Pamela Dellal. This concert was a special tribute to the memory of Gian Silbiger, who was on the Longy faculty as a viola da gamba teacher and Collegium director in the early 1970's, where I was lucky enough to study with her. An adventurous musician and composer, Gian would have been pleased with the Longy Viol Consort's impressive concert." –Jane Hershey

*\*For a complete listing of the Silbiger-supported programs, plus comments and reviews, see the Grants section at [vdgsne.org](http://vdgsne.org). Please contribute to our chapter to support this important program, which brings our music to an eager wider community.*

### Secret Byrd

Earlier this month I attended a gorgeous candlelit performance of "Secret Byrd" at the cathedral in Boston. The acclaimed British vocal group Gesualdo Six partnered with NYC's Abendmusik (Patricia Ann Neely, Dan McCarthy, Rosamund Morley, John Mark Rozendaal, and local friends Sarah Mead and Emily Walkout) for an atmospheric evening of William Byrd's music. The sanctuary was partially transformed into an Elizabethan-era home, where we were to take part in a clandestine Catholic worship service. Abendmusik played instrumental selections as attendees were invited in to walk around freely, socialize, sample "wine," read informational displays, and immerse themselves in a non-traditional concert experience.

Once the Mass began, the focus was a large central table laden with cups and plates, (real) bread, candles, and beautiful reproductions of music books. Six singers in period costume, including one as a priest, sat or stood around the table, singing towards each other or at times turning out to the listeners. The movements of Byrd's Mass for Five Voices were seamlessly interspersed with a variety of his instrumental works including fantasias in 3 and 6 parts, "Salvator Mundi," the Browning à5, and an In Nomine à5, which the viols played from near the altar.

I was so lulled by the beautiful sounds filling the sanctuary that I was legitimately startled when a loud knocking interrupted the music, and singers raced to put out the candles, plunging us into darkness. (We had been warned this would happen, but I forgot!) Just as covert worshippers must have felt, there was tension in the room as the “priest” silently made his way out a side door, presumably to deal with the “authorities.” Fortunately for us, no arrests were made and he returned a short while later. As the candles were gradually re-lit, we heard the haunting elegy “Ye Sacred Muses” which Byrd wrote on the death of his mentor and fellow Catholic Thomas Tallis. All of the singers and gambists joined forces to perform “Infelix Ego,” a cry for mercy, and the joyous “Haec Dies,” a call to be glad, closing the performance.

I left the cathedral feeling restored and uplifted. My only regret was being plunged back into the chaos of the real world—a feeling those worshippers of 425 years ago may have shared. Congratulations to all the musicians on this wonderful program. —Karen Burciaga

### Remote Playing through JamKazam

Live in a somewhat out of the way place with few viol players around to play with? Or, just wish there was a super convenient way to participate in a viol consort that requires no travel? If you have internet access, a Windows or Mac PC/Laptop, and can invest a few dollars, this is possible today. Several of us have been successfully playing viol trios from our homes using the program Jamkazam. It's not perfect, but it's a very good product and has allowed us to play together every week for months now, even though we are situated hundreds of miles apart. So much fun! We've added coaching sessions from James Williamson, also via Jamkazam, and have benefitted enormously from that as well. Here is what's required to use Jamkazam while avoiding known pitfalls:

1. A PC or laptop of relatively recent vintage, can be either a Windows or Mac and should be running the latest version of Windows or Mac IOS.
2. Internet access via a wired connection to your home router - not via wifi.
3. A decent microphone; \$100, and up for higher quality.
4. An audio interface of relatively recent vintage. This is a separate device to connect a microphone and headset or amplifier to the computer, usually through a USB port. Cost = \$200 or so. (The built-in audio interfaces in computers aren't very good for this application). Available from Amazon, or from pro audio and instrument dealers like Musician's Friend, Sweetwater, and B&H Photo. Motu and Behringer are two good brands.
5. Jamkazam software; cost = FREE to try it out but ultimately you'll want one of the monthly subscriptions: Silver=4.99/mo, Gold=9.99/mo or Platinum=19.99/mo

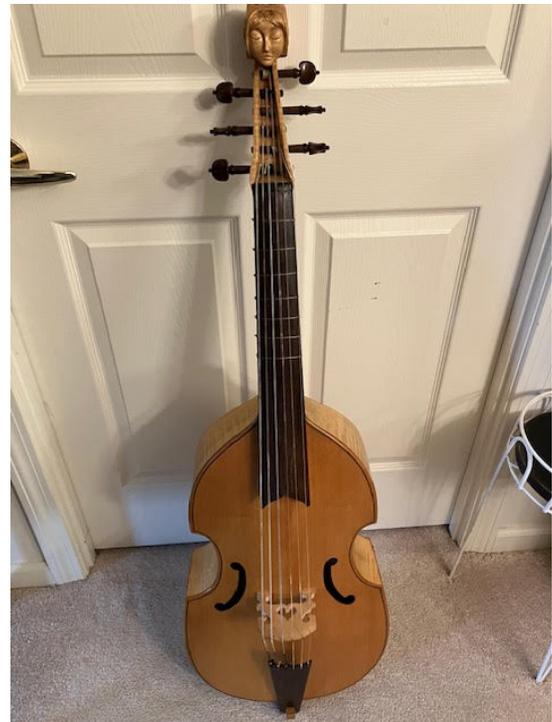
Once you've assembled the above, you start Jamkazam, create an account, and you're ready to participate in sessions with others! So, it's not free, but for a few hundred dollars up front and a relatively modest monthly charge, you can play with others from the comfort and convenience of home.

This experience is similar to Zoom, but far superior in dealing with issues related to making music via the internet. There may be issues of finding other players at a similar skill level or mutual interest in repertoire, but we have to start somewhere. If you'd like to try this, or would like more information, please contact Glen Legere at [galegere@comcast.net](mailto:galegere@comcast.net). —Glen Legere & John Thier

### 📖 Classifieds 📖

#### Bass gamba for sale

We are helping a dear family friend sell this excellent bass gamba. It was made in the 1970's by a maker named Owen Shaw, in Boston I believe. We'd like to get a near-market price for it, but not really sure what that would be. Let me know if you'd like to play it to either buy it, or help us assess a proper sale price. Both would be much appreciated! Contact Ben Torrey at [bentorrey@hotmail.com](mailto:bentorrey@hotmail.com) or 781-454-5225.



### 📖 Upcoming Events 📖

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

#### A Bard & A Mercenary

Thomas Conrad, viol and reader

Musician Tobias Hume and poet William Shakespeare are recognized as innovators of their respective crafts and as uniquely expressive artists. Both express their worlds in striking styles and share a poetic musicality. This program juxtaposes excerpts from *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, and sonnets, with solo pieces from Hume's "The First Part of Ayres, French, Polish, and Others".

**November 30 at 2pm**

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 39 East Central St. Natick, MA. \$10 Suggested Donation

[conrad\\_thomas@wheatoncollege.edu](mailto:conrad_thomas@wheatoncollege.edu)

### **Bach's Musical Library**

Arnie Tanimoto, viola da gamba, and Parker Ramsay, harp and harpsichord, will explore the musical world of Bach's youth, showcasing the wonderful variety of styles that influenced the composer in his formative years. The concert features works by Vivaldi and Telemann, alongside those of figures such as Marin Marais and Dietrich Buxtehude.

#### **December 6 at 5pm**

Bethesda Lutheran Church, 450 Whitney Ave., New Haven, CT. FREE.

<https://www.elmcityconsort.org/2024-2025-season>

### **A French Christmas**

Schola Cantorum (Fred Jodry, director) with Karen Burciaga, Carol Lewis, James Perretta, viols, Chris Henriksen, theorbo  
Seasonal music of M. A. Charpentier, the premier French 17th-c. composer of sacred music. The delightful cantata "In Nativitatem Domini" (1675) and his Litanies to the Virgin Mary are the centerpiece, and a cappella motets by Josquin and Mouton help narrate the Christmas story.

#### **December 14 at 7:30pm**

First Lutheran Church, Boston, MA

#### **December 15 at 3:30 pm**

St. Martin's Church, Providence, RI  
\$30 general, \$10 students, low income

<http://www.museumconcerts.org/>

### **The Long Night's Watch**

Seven Times Salt: Karen Burciaga, violin, harp, guitar; Dan Meyers, recorders, flute, bagpipes, percussion; Josh Schreiber, bass viol; Matthew Wright, lute, bandora; with Carrie Cheron, mezzo-soprano

Seven Times Salt's beloved annual concert celebrates the winter solstice and the return of the unconquered sun with music from across Europe and the New World. We'll perform a warming blend of familiar carols, wassailing songs, consort tunes, Renaissance dances, upbeat Irish reels, and more. Audience participation encouraged and jollity guaranteed!

#### **December 21 at 7:30pm**

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

#### **December 22 at 4pm**

St. John's Episcopal Church, 705 Hale St. Beverly Farms, MA. By donation.

<https://www.seventimesalt.com/>

### **Art of the Fugue**

Elm City Consort: Chelsea Bernstein, Cat Slowik, Kenneth Slowik, Arnie Tanimoto, viola da gambas. J. S. Bach's final composition demonstrates his complete mastery of musical counterpoint in all its variety. Here, we will have excerpts from Bach's work arranged for 4-part viol consort by the performers.

#### **January 17 at 5pm**

Venue TBA, New Haven, CT. FREE.

<https://www.elmcityconsort.org/2024-2025-season>

### **Feeling Obligated: Sonatas for Oboe, viola da gamba and Obligato Keyboard**

Newton Baroque: Alison Gangler, oboe, Douglas Kelley, viola da gamba, Andrus Madsen, fortepiano

#### **January 4 at 7:30 pm**

Nathaniel Allen House, 35 Webster St., West Newton

#### **January 5 at 4:00pm**

Goethe-Institut, 170 Beacon St., Boston

<https://www.newtonbaroque.org/concerts.html>

### **English Country Dance**

Seven Times Salt: Karen Burciaga, fiddle; Dan Meyers, winds; Josh Schreiber, bass viol; Matthew Wright, lute  
STS will provide live music for the Harvard Square English Country Dance. You'll hear tunes popular from 1650 to the present; some are elegant, some rowdy, some romantic, some playful. Dance caller Orly Krasner will teach all the dances; no experience or partner necessary.

#### **January 31 from 7:30-9:30pm**

Harvard-Epworth Church, 1555 Massachusetts Ave.

Cambridge, MA. \$4 students, \$6 members, \$7 general

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

### **L'Impromptu**

Très Maresienne: Lisa Brooke, violin; Carol Lewis, viola da gamba; Olav Chris Henriksen, theorbo, baroque guitar  
Musical surprises from the French Baroque including sonatas, dances, character pieces and a symphonia by Clérambault, Dornel, Forqueray, & Jacquet de la Guerre.

#### **February 21 at 8pm**

Lindsay Chapel, First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, 11 Garden St., Cambridge, MA

\$35 general admission; \$25 students, seniors, low income

#### **February 23 at 3pm**

Somerville Museum, One Westwood Rd. Somerville, MA

\$30 general, \$25 students, seniors, Museum members

[www.duomaresienne.com](http://www.duomaresienne.com) or call (617) 776-0692.

### **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 [tarboltonlass@hotmail.com](mailto:tarboltonlass@hotmail.com).

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

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