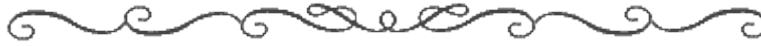




Newsletter

Viola da Gamba Society - New England

Fall 2023



President's Letter

Greetings from your new President of the Board!

This fall it seems that change is in the air, as our chapter has appointed new board officers, and after a fully attended Conclave last summer in New England we feel motivated to begin again to offer in-person workshops and gatherings. We will begin in November with a Play-in at Powers Music School, led by Jane Hershey and James Perretta, welcoming new and diverse players to our fold. Upcoming workshops will fill in the missing projects from the past few years, including possible meetings in Western MA with Loren Ludwig introducing music played on "New England Viols" on which he has been doing research, the music of our own Will Ayton which he planned for several winters ago, and maybe even welcoming Parthenia to do their workshop cancelled in spring of 2020. Stay tuned!

Interest in weekly practice on Zoom has waned with the resumption of outside activities, but we still feel the desire to see each other regularly, especially to get to know those of us not in the central populated areas. With this in mind, we will instead begin monthly Gamba Gatherings on Zoom to keep in touch with each other and discuss issues relating to playing viol.

Throughout the last few years, our membership has suffered losses of longtime leaders, changing the face of our organization. Although I have long been a teaching member, it's now time for me to be a grownup and do my best to lead us on. Thankfully I have wonderful support from Past President Karen Burciaga, who is morphing into recording and corresponding secretary filling the void left by Martha and Hannah Davidson. Past President Carol Lewis will help to guide me as Vice President. Glen Legere is continuing as our valuable treasurer.

Thanks to a hard-working crew, James Williamson, Sarah Mead and others were able to sell music and books left to us by the Davidsons. We hope to utilize some of these funds to enable the underserved and unsuspecting to discover the joys of consort playing by making instruments and scholarships available. A lot of things are in the idea stage now, so please let me know what you would like to see happen. I can be reached at president@vdgsne.org. Please keep in touch!

–Alice Robbins, President, VdGS-NE

Announcement of Officers

We are happy to announce our Board Officers for the 2023-24 year. We welcome Alice Robbins as President and Carol Lewis as Vice-President. Glen Legere continues as Treasurer, and Karen Burciaga is now Clerk (formerly Corresponding and Recording Secretaries).

Statement of Purpose and Inclusion

The Board recently approved an updated statement of purpose for the chapter; it now appears on the website.

The Viola da Gamba Society - New England provides opportunities for people to come together to participate in workshops, listen to concerts, access lessons and attend classes. Our membership is made up of beginning as well as experienced amateur players and professionals.

We warmly invite people of all ages, abilities, races, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, religions, gender identities, sexual orientations and cultural communities to join our membership and participate in in-person and online workshops, classes and lectures suitable for players of all levels.

As a chapter of the Viola da Gamba Society of America, the VdGS-NE is dedicated to developing programs that introduce more beginning players of all ages to the instrument we love. We are particularly interested in developing outreach programs which could include lecture/ demonstrations, instruments and lessons for students in underprivileged communities and schools. We invite schools and institutions interested in collaboration to contact our president Alice Robbins for further information.

The VdGS-NE is here to support everyone's love for the viola da gamba. Please peruse our offerings on this website. We look forward to playing with you soon!

Gamba Gatherings (the new Practice Saturdays)

Our Saturday online practice sessions have been a wonderful place to connect, socialize, and oh yes, practice! As the community has returned to in-person playing, we've seen attendance dwindle over the past year and have decided to discontinue weekly meetings. But never fear—the Board is working on a revamped version to take place once a month on Zoom. What would be the

most enjoyable to you? A chance to ask questions about instruments or music? Play a piece you've been working on for fun or for feedback? A shortened practice session followed by tea? We'd love to hear your ideas. Please email president@vdgsne.org with ideas for an updated online Gamba Gathering, and watch for a schedule soon!

Silbiger Concert

This year's Silbiger Grant performances took place September 8 and 9 in New Haven, CT and New York City. Viol organizer Michael Rigsby reports that Elm City Consort and vocal ensemble The New Consort performed "To Ornament Things Divine: Sacred and Devotional Music of William Byrd" with the much-appreciated support of a Gian Lyman Silbiger Grant from the VdGS-NE. Michael says:

"Record heat and humidity, venues without air conditioning, severe thunderstorms at concert time, and a late request from the singers to lower the pitch to 392. Then a singer accidentally locked his music and concert clothes in a room for which no one had a key! Despite feeling at times that the fates were aligned against us, the recent Elm City Consort performances of William Byrd's music with guest singers from The New Consort were a big success. We discovered that many people in our sizable audiences were unfamiliar with any of the music on the program, which we centered around the Mass for Three Voices (one singer per part), with the addition of consort songs, anthem for three to six voices and a few instrumental works. And everyone appreciated that we handed out fans along with the programs!

The Elm City Consort has a long tradition of performing masterpieces of Renaissance polyphony with various combinations of voices and viols. For the Mass, viols doubled the singers in some sections and occasionally substituted for two of the voices with the third as a solo singer. In anthems of five or six parts, viols covered some parts independently, or doubled singers. The topic of performing pitch in English Renaissance choral music is complicated and controversial, but there is good reason to believe that in some cases the intended pitch was as much as a fourth or fifth lower than notated. This practice has yet to be fully explored in modern performances, but in our case, A=392 (at notated pitch) worked well, even if it was a bit of a challenge with regard to instruments and strings.

And, just to top things off, Josh Keller's flight back to Memphis was cancelled just before our NYC performance, resulting in an extra night on my couch and a 3 AM Uber ride to Bradley airport. Maybe the best indication of the success of the project was that despite all the adversity, everyone expressed the fervent wish to do it again." –Michael Rigsby, Elm City Consort director

We hope to be able to share video excerpts of the concerts in October—stay tuned for details.

Davidson Library

This summer marked the conclusion of the Davidson music sale, with the residue from our online store finding good homes among the attendees of both our May open-house at Brandeis and of Conclave where everything that remained was donated to the silent auction. Over a hundred people from all over the world ordered books from the web store and Sarah Mead and Karen Burciaga worked tirelessly to fill orders in their very limited free moments. Additionally, James Williamson put in a substantial amount of work behind the scenes, both in setting up the store and making sure it continued to run during the whole project. All told, net of expenses, we raised just shy of \$10,000 to help support the society's projects into the future. Many thanks to Elizabeth Davidson for donating the library to us and to Jane Hershey and Sarah Mead for developing this idea for distributing the collection to support the next generation of performers and teachers. And thank YOU for giving Martha and Hannah's collection wonderful new homes. –James Williamson, Sarah Mead, Karen Burciaga

Notes from Conclave

VdgSA Conclave 2023 took place in New England for the first time since 2008, and many chapter members who do not attend regularly took advantage of this. Emily Walhout, Jane Hershey, Alice Robbins and James Perretta were members of the faculty, Sarah Mead attended as sabbatical faculty, and James Williamson led the Consort Cooperative (an advanced program for students and early career professionals). Despite some peculiarities of the venue such as having concerts in a chemistry lecture hall, the site was a successful one and there is a good chance Conclave will return. A particular perk of the dorm building we used was its central atrium that served wonderfully both for coffee breaks and the vendor area. As many of our Board members attended, some for the first time, here are some of their observations:

James Williamson: "Every Conclave has several themes and one of this year's was a special emphasis on the Byrd anniversary year along with music for voices and viols. Founding member of Fretwork Bill Hunt joined the faculty and presented an excellent lecture about the English consort anthem, a topic that he has been researching for many years. Bill also directed a piece of the faculty concert focusing on Byrd consort anthems where I had the pleasure of participating as a ripieno singer. The consort cooperative also explored this theme with a Gibbons verse anthem and a pop-up performance of selections from Byrd's five-voice mass at coffee hour. As a regular attendee I can attest that this Conclave was a great success all around. I look forward to what future years will bring."

James Perretta: "Two of my favorite moments were an impromptu reading session of Brady [Lanier]'s Lord of the Rings medley and the video game music reading session that had a dozen people playing arrangements by myself, David Poon, and Robert Bolyard."

Timothy Smith: “This being my first Conclave, I wasn't quite sure of what to expect. I knew it would most likely be a good experience, if nothing else, a way to meet other viol players. What I didn't expect was just how much fun I would have. On day one I found the check in process to be both welcoming and, more importantly, well organized. After looking over the newcomer packet, I decided to step out of my comfort zone and do the scavenger hunt. First up, find my buddy. So here I am, roaming the halls of URI, in search of a friend. Awkward, yup...but hey why not, right? The truth is, I'm glad I decided to find Ellen. She was friendly and so helpful. In fact the more people I met, the more I found this attitude, especially among the instructors.

The classes were excellent. The instructors were well prepared which created an atmosphere conducive to relaxed learning. I thoroughly enjoyed seeing how each teacher approached the viol in regards to thoughts on overcoming technical challenges. They were all so different. One thing James, Jessica, and Martha did share in common was a passion for the music they taught. This came through not only in their playing but in the language they used. At one time or another during the week each instructor specifically suggested finding them after class if there were any additional questions on a covered topic. Overall, the week spent among other like-minded inclusive musicians was simply inspiring.”

Karen Burciaga: “I've finally been to Conclave!!! Despite an insane week of driving from Boston every day, I had an amazing time reconnecting with friends and making new ones. I challenged myself by playing tenor all week; Brady Lanier's Ars Subtilior class broke my brain (in a good way) and Wendy Gillespie's Lawes consorts a6 (doubled, so really a12) were lots of fun. At one point James W. and I unexpectedly found ourselves playing shapenote music on Loren Ludwig's New England bass viols, and on Friday I thoroughly enjoyed late night sessions of Jenkins and Lawes. I got home at 2am, exhausted and happy, and I can't wait for next time!”

Jane Hershey: “It was a great for me to be back at the VdGSA Conclave again, after a year off, and a couple of years of remote classes. The efforts made by our members, the Board, Conclave organizers, teachers during the pandemic to keep things going “as usual” was heroic and truly inspiring. Being back together this year, after these years of coping, made the event even sweeter. Seeing all the new faces, young players, and old friends excited about viol playing was really touching, and fun. I imagine many of us will take the traditions and values of the VdGSA less for granted now. I enjoyed teaching my three classes (one on line, generously assisted by Mary Ann Ballard) and listening to my colleagues' performances. More time to play for fun and rehearse for the “faculty spotlight” concert would always be appreciated, but it was rewarding to be back again—and within driving distance of home!”

Anne Legêne attended the meeting for Chapter Representatives and says, “At the meeting of the area representatives, VdGSA pointed out the many ways that the national society supports its members, and urged us to spread the word and encourage our members to take advantage of the different [programs and grants](#) available. One of the main topics of the meeting was the issue of diversity, and the VdGSA was very interested in the way that we at VdGS-NE have taken first steps to address this question, and I promised to send them materials.”

Alice Robbins: “So many of us were eager to meet again in the Northeast, that having over 200 in attendance prompted doubling in most classes. While this is common practice in the UK, there were varying reactions here. I was actually pleased myself in teaching consorts of multiple players to find a lot of cooperation and joy in supporting each other.”

John Thier: “The nightly play-in sessions were pure joy. I would happily sit back and listen to the “Big Kids”. But there was also the 9:00 beginner group, where I got to play (and held my own!), helped along by our kindly coaches. Then there were special late-night moments in the Atrium, like listening to a certain viol/cello teacher (who shall remain nameless) play the Bach Suites, and Sarah Poon's ‘Big Band’ (which kept getting bigger as they went along) perform the Lord of the Rings score. No going to bed early those nights.

The best thing that came out of Conclave, for me, were the relationships formed with my fellow students. One hosts a monthly play-in an hour away from my home, which I expect to be joining soon. Another became a playing partner at the nightly 9:00 sessions, who has kindly invited me to throw a gamba in the car and come visit her and her husband in Canada.

Doesn't get better than that, does it?”

👉 Upcoming Events 👈

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

Music from the Age of Rembrandt

Enjoy a performance from Camerata Trajectina as they present a range of Dutch musical offerings from Rembrandt's time, including everything from works by great poets to songs servers would have sung in a bawdy house. Camerata Trajectina's performances combine popular ditties of the 17th century with works by great renaissance and baroque composers—often presented in political, literary, and artistic contexts.

Saturday, October 14 at 2pm

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

\$24.00 Members, \$30.00 Nonmembers

<https://www.mfa.org/event/music/music-from-the-age-of-rembrandt>

Play On! Music of Shakespeare and his Time

Elm City Consort viols; Piffaro—the Renaissance Band; with soprano Sherezade Panthaki

This consort is sponsored by The Elizabethan Club of Yale University as one of their events celebrating the 400th anniversary of the First Folio publication.

Friday, October 27 at 5pm

Beinecke Library, 121 Wall St. New Haven, CT
FREE; donations welcome

<https://www.elmcityconsort.org/>

From Recorder to Lute (and Viol)

Highlights from the German Baroque, with sonatas, concertos, partitas & suites by Weiss, Baron, J.S. Bach, & others, performed by recorder virtuoso Aldo Abreu with Duo Maresienne (Carol Lewis, viola da gamba; Olav Chris Henriksen, baroque lute.) There will be a Telemann Fantasy for solo viola da gamba.

Friday, October 27 at 8pm

Lindsay Chapel, First Church Congregational, 11 Garden St. (entrance on Mason St.), Cambridge, MA.

\$30 general / \$25 students, seniors, low income

(617)776-0692 or www.duomaresienne.com

Sunday, October 29 at 3pm

at the Somerville Museum, Central St. at Westwood Road (entrance on Westwood Road), Somerville, MA.

(617)666-9810 or www.somervillemuseum.org

Early Music Workshop in Lebanon NH

Ensemble Halcyon will present a one-day Early Music workshop and concert at the Upper Valley Music Center in Lebanon, NH. The presenters will be Jane Hershey, Chris Rua, and Sarah Cantor. Classes of interest to viol players include advanced Renaissance mixed consort, beginning viol, viol consort, large ensemble, double choir.

Saturday, October 28 from 9:30am-3pm, concert 5pm

Upper Valley Music Center, 8 S. Park St., Lebanon NH
\$75 for the whole day or \$20 concert only. Scholarships are available, contact Chis Rua for more information.

<https://uvmusic.org/event/early-music-workshop-with-ensemble-halcyon>

Ornamenting Renaissance Music

Instructor James Perretta leads a session during Powers' Fall Workshop Week. This workshop will focus on bringing Renaissance music to life beyond what's on the page. You'll learn strategies for coming up with your own ornaments and practice listening for and responding to the ornaments that your bandmates play. No prior experience with Renaissance music is required. Intermediate sight-reading skills will help you get the most out of this workshop. Best for: High School, Adult. A=440.

Saturday, October 28 from 12:15-1:45pm

Powers Music School, 160 Lexington St. Belmont, MA.
Free for currently registered Powers students / \$10 for non-Powers participants (per person, per workshop)

<https://powersmusic.org/workshop-weeks/>

The Founder of the Feast

On Bonfire Night, enjoy a musical journey through autumn in 17th-c. England. The program features a warming mix of Martinmas and Guy Fawkes songs, autumnal tunes by Baldwin, Peerson, and Byrd, and high-

spirited selections from Henry VIII's music book. You'll enjoy (and sing along with) rousing ballads of hunting, harvest, and beer! Seven Times Salt: Ari Nieh, baritone, Karen Burciaga, violin, guitar, Dan Meyers, recorder, flute, bagpipes, percussion, Josh Schreiber, bass viol, Matthew Wright, lute, bandora

Sunday, November 5 at 3:30pm

St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 399 Hope St, Bristol, RI
\$25 admission

Monday, November 6 at 7:30pm

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

Play-In at Powers

The VdGS-NE will host an afternoon play-in at Powers Music School. At this informal event participants can take part in two playing sessions with a break in between for socializing. Coaches are Jane Hershey, James Perretta, and Carol Lewis; the repertoire remains to be seen but is sure to span the gamut! Open to all viol players. A=415.

Sunday, November 12, afternoon time TBA

Powers Music School, 160 Lexington St. Belmont, MA
Registration information will be announced soon.

SoHIP Virtual Concert Series

SoHIP's online concerts remain on their YouTube channel www.youtube.com/@SoHIPBoston. Of particular interest to viol players is Hesperus' live accompaniment to the silent film "The Three Musketeers" and Mystic River Baroque's program "Canzoni da Sonar". FREE to watch, with donations encouraged. www.sohip.org

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.