



## Newsletter

### Viola da Gamba Society - New England

April 2023



#### President's Letter

Dear members,

Just like that, it's Spring! Although the wind is chilly, I'm delighted to see daffodils in bloom and feel the sunshine growing stronger. After a winter of hibernation, it feels like life has suddenly sprung into action, including events in the calendar (and my bike riding muscles, ouch). This issue contains heaps of updates, application deadlines, instrument loans needed, upcoming concerts, and our just-announced May 21 online class with Carol Lewis.

I'm especially glad to invite you to our Mother's Day Open House on Sunday, May 14 at Brandeis. [see *Upcoming Events*] This informal musical gathering honors several Board members we have lost in recent years: Janet Haas, Joan Boorstein, Martha Davidson, and Hannah Davidson. It is open to everyone and you can come and go as you wish, play music, and enjoy refreshments. Please join us to celebrate these remarkable women and their many contributions.

Speaking of Hannah, we recently learned some interesting history about one of her bass viols which is now in the hands of a dedicated young player. [see *Langhammer Bass*] It's so heartwarming to know that this instrument has gone to such an enthusiastic musician. I think Hannah would approve!

Summer once again means in-person festivals and camps! This year sees the Boston Early Music Festival spring into action June 4-11. Among a chock-full roster of events, the Gamba Gamut will take place at Old South Church on June 9. Then, the VdGSA Conclave returns to New England July 23-30 at the University of RI in Kingston. As the local chapter, we will be asking for volunteers to help with rides for faculty, housing (just one night) for participants arriving early, and instrument loans. Our chapter awards a small voucher to one member to attend—please let us know if you're interested. (I have a secret....I've NEVER BEEN TO CONCLAVE...don't tell anyone.) I hope I'll see many of you there.

Happy playing, happy planning, and please keep in touch!  
—Karen Burciaga, President, VdGS-NE

#### Annual Meeting for All Members

The Annual Meeting will take place on Monday, May 22 at 7:00pm on Zoom. We'll review news of the past year and discuss upcoming items, welcome returning Board members, and answer questions from you! The Zoom link will be emailed to members closer to the date.

#### Davidson Music Collection - Last Chance

The sale of Hannah and Martha Davidson's music library, which was generously donated to the chapter, has been going splendidly. Most of their incredible collection has gone to new homes, but there are still many items for sale. Now's your chance to shop! Prices are very low, and **the store closes on May 31**. All purchases support our chapter's activities and offerings. <https://vdgsne.org/shop/>

#### Call for Silbiger Grant Applicants

We have extended the application deadline for the Gian Lyman Silbiger Grant to Wednesday, **May 15**. The grant supports the performance of music for voices and viols (minimum of three viol players and one vocal soloist) and is open to all! Apply at <https://vdgsne.org/silbiger-grant/>

#### The Gamba Gamut at BEMF

Calling all viol players! Do you want to perform at BEMF? The Gamba Gamut, a VdGSA-sponsored showcase of short performances by soloists and ensembles, will take place at Gordon Chapel at Old South Church on Friday, June 9 from 9:30am-1:30pm. This is a great opportunity to perform during BEMF. Please submit your Gamut proposal by **May 8** and include:

1. The name of the individual or group, including contact information, with a listing of all members
2. Title of the proposed concert program, plus the program itself. Plan for 20 minutes (individuals) to 30 minutes (groups) total performance time.
3. Optional individual or ensemble bio (short please)
4. Electronic sample of the individual or group's playing (YouTube link, Google Drive or Dropbox preferred)

Questions and completed proposals may be emailed by May 8, 2023 to the VdGSA Festival Liaison at [erik.Christian.Andersen@gmail.com](mailto:erik.Christian.Andersen@gmail.com).

### **Call for BEMF Masterclass Performers**

The Viola da Gamba Masterclass at the Boston Early Music Festival needs you! Philippe Pierlot will coach soloists and consorts on Thursday, June 8 from 2-4pm at The Library at the Courtyard Marriott Boston. The masterclass covers accompanied and unaccompanied solo repertoire as well as consort repertoire for the viola da gamba. A harpsichord will be provided, tuned to A-415. An accompanist will not be provided. Applications are due Friday, **April 28**. [Details Here](#)

### **Instrument Loans for Students at BEMF**

As you may already know, after a successful fundraiser, Pedro Funes is bringing a group of middle school and high school gambists from Houston to perform at the Gamba Gamut at BEMF on Friday, June 9. Most of them cannot fly with their instruments, so we are looking for local loaners—can you help? The ensemble needs 3 trebles, 4 tenors and 4 basses (ideally 6-string) for the period June 8-9. Handoffs will be coordinated closer to the date. Please email [president@vdgsne.org](mailto:president@vdgsne.org) to offer a viol and support these young players. Thank you!

### **Harvard Play-In**

On February 26, 2023, a group of viola da gamba players from our area's colleges and universities met to play, and to share their enthusiasm for the viol as guests of Kate Van Orden at Harvard's Paine Hall. Students from Kate and Laura Jeppesen's fall class at Harvard renewed their skills; this course combines study of history, culture and hands-on experience learning the viol. Players from Early Music Ensembles from Tufts, directed by Jane Hershey, and Brandeis, directed by Sarah Mead, also attended. In a remarkable overlap from these two groups, one Tufts graduate, after playing bass viol for four years there, now plays treble in the Brandeis group, as a Brandeis staff member. Five students from Longy School of Music of Bard College's 'Introduction to the Viol' played, along with a student from Laura Jeppesen's Collegium at Wellesley College. One high school senior, the recipient of our VdGS-NE Chapter's grant to help him purchase Hannah Davidson's newly refurbished six-string viol (see article below) joined us. The leader for the evening was David H. Miller, currently on the faculty at UC Berkeley, who was in town to perform with Seven Times Salt. David graduated from Harvard, had studied viol at Longy, and went on to Cornell for a PhD in Musicology. He selected some beautiful, accessible, vocally-oriented pieces for all seventeen of us to enjoy together, working on phrasing and sound. After this, we divided for one-on-a- part consort playing lead by David and Sarah. Organized by Jane Hershey, and generously supported by our VdGS-NE chapter, this event was greatly appreciated by everyone. Their warmth and enthusiasm showed that this could be the start of something big! –Jane Hershey

### **The Langhammer Bass**

Hannah's Langhammer bass viol has a happy new home with Sarah Mead's student Eliot Couvreur-Sharif. He wrote the following after purchasing the instrument with assistance from our chapter:

"I have been playing the viola da gamba for about 4 years with Sarah Mead. I have wanted to play the bass viol ever since I was 6 years old. I remember watching this video of a continuo group with these beautiful sounding instruments, and I said to my mother: "What is that instrument with the 7 strings?" and my mother said she did not know! I played the cello for 8 years and was really happy to make the switch.

Recently, I had the opportunity to acquire a bass viol from Hannah's collection. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation for the information Jane Hershey shared with me about my viol. Her knowledge and expertise have been incredibly valuable in helping me understand the instrument and its history. I would also like to thank Sarah for teaching me more about early music, such as tablature and learning how to read from copies of original music notation among many other things.

I am fascinated to learn about the small group of German builders who built these bass viols in the 60's and early 70's, as the market for early instruments began to grow. It is amazing to think that these builders were clustered in the eastern part of West Germany, and some over the border into East Germany. I understand that all the viols they produced were quite similar in dimensions to mine, but with different details, such as decoration or general thickness of the wood. I was also fascinated to learn that their initials were stamped on the outside of the neck block, on the little tab that comes up from the body and is glued to the neck. *[See article below for more info.]*

Once again, thank you for all of the incredible information you have shared with me about my viol and its history. I am very thankful to Jane and Sarah for making this beautiful instrument part of my musical journey. Thank you for your expertise and willingness to share your knowledge with me." –Eliot Couvreur-Sharif

### **Post-War German Viol Makers**

Luthier Peter Tourin gathered some interesting information on German viol makers of the 1960's and 1970's. Friends commented on Peter's Facebook post that included photos of Hannah's viol.

Bernard Hauvette identified the maker's stamp, saying "It's Rudolph Karl-Heintz Langhammer, a pupil of Hans Zolch... Some of his instruments have a carved head with a curious "modern" head of woman, always the same, probably his wife or daughter."

Roland Hutchinson provided some historical context: "...These are not really factory instruments as such, but a pretty well standardized design that existing workshops were directed to produce for export as the postwar German Democratic Republic reorganized the traditional instrument-making centers such as Markneukirchen in Vogtland to suit the needs (sc. for hard currency) of the "Workers' and Farmers' State." As you have alluded to, the standard design changed over the years, especially noticeable as concerns the neck becoming less cello-like."

Peter responded, "This is very interesting because it explains why there were all those medium-to-rather-good German instruments over the years, with different neck butt stamps, and why they started out a bit cello-like, with chunky square short necks, but over time the necks improved. Internally, they tended to have "extra" back braces aside from the main brace – these braces were like guitar braces, and were usually mortised into the liners. When they were brought to the US and especially to low humidity areas, these braces sometimes even broke the ribs and poked out as the ribs and backs shrank from the dryness. My first viol was one of these—I found it in pieces in an Ann Arbor guitar shop around 1965—it had come apart from the change in climate. I bought it for \$200 and it was my first viol repair job. I believe it was a Zölch. I removed those extra back braces as part of my repair; I already knew at that point that they weren't typical of historic viols."

### **Practice Saturdays continue through May**

Our weekly Zoom practice sessions continue every Saturday through May 27. Stop by to practice, change your strings, or just to socialize. Enjoy 90 minutes of (muted!) practicing followed by a half-hour for a cup of tea and greeting friends. Stay for as long or as little as you want. We'll take a summer hiatus before deciding whether to continue in the fall—let us know what you think! To receive the schedule and weekly reminders, email [vdgsnehost@gmail.com](mailto:vdgsnehost@gmail.com).

### **Upcoming Events**

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

### **A Masque of Characters**

Duo Maresienne: Carol Lewis, viol, and Olav Chris Henriksen, lute; with Pamela Dellal, mezzo-soprano  
An early 17<sup>th</sup>-century English entertainment, featuring music from the Stuart courts. The program includes music by Dowland, Coperario, Lanier, Hume, Bartlet and Robert Johnson. \$20-25

**Friday, May 5 at 8pm** - Lindsay Chapel, First Church Congregational, 11 Garden St., Cambridge, MA  
<https://duomaresienne.com/music-for-viols-and-friends-2022-23>

**Sunday, May 14 at 3pm** - Somerville Museum, One Westwood Road, Somerville, MA  
<https://www.somervillemuseum.org/concerts>

### **Continental Drifters**

Nota Bene Viol Consort: Sarah Mead, Joanna Blendulf, Wendy Gillespie, Emily Walhout, with Julie Jeffrey  
Music that traveled the world in the 16th century, played on Renaissance viols. Reception follows, celebrating Sarah Mead's retirement after 40 years at Brandeis.

**May 6 at 7pm** - Slosberg Recital Hall, Brandeis University, 415 South St, Waltham, MA  
FREE!

<https://www.brandeis.edu/concerts/series/marquee/index.html>

### **Courtiers & Costermongers**

Seven Times Salt: Karen Burciaga, violin; Olav Chris Henriksen, cittern; Carol Lewis, bass viol; Dan Meyers, flute, recorders, percussion, voice; Emily O'Brien, recorders, voice; Matthew Wright, lute, bandora, voice  
Celebrate 20 years of Salt with a tour of 17th-century London's taverns, markets and well-appointed homes. We'll perform music for the consort-of-six, a favored ensemble during Elizabeth I's reign. This program returns to our roots with settings from Morley's *First Booke of Consort Lessons*, a generous helping of English dance tunes, and broadside ballads about epic battles, lovelorn farmers, and that most perennial of all subjects...beer.

**May 6 at 7:30pm** - Church of the Good Shepherd, 9 Russell Ave. Watertown, MA

**May 7 at 3:00pm** - yard concert in Medford (address sent to ticket buyers)

\$20 suggested.

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

### **A Mother's Day Open House**

The VdGS-NE warmly invites you to a musical open house to celebrate the lives of Janet Haas, Joan Boorstein, Martha Davidson, and Hannah Davidson. All were devoted members of the chapter as well as officers of the Board, and were a positive influence on countless colleagues, students, and friends. We'll offer three rooms of group playing and will provide music for you or you can bring something you've been eager to play with others! Bring your favorite instrument, and please feel free to tap in and out of groups as you wish. A "doubling room" for less-confident players will be available. There will be indoor and outdoor areas for socializing and snacks, and we'll also have the last remaining items from the Davidsons' music collection available to purchase and take home. All are welcome, whether or not you play music! We'd love to see friends from different avenues gather to remember these women and their contributions to our viola da gamba family. Masks strongly encouraged while indoors. Windows will be open, and there is an outdoor area for refreshments and socializing. Pitch is A=415. Please spread the word! Kindly RSVP by May 10 at [this link](#).

**Sunday, May 14 from 1:30-5pm**

Slosberg Music Center, Brandeis University, 415 South St. Waltham MA.

FREE and open to all.

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

### **Special Topic: "Viols and Shakespeare—Why Not?"**

Carol Lewis, instructor

We know that William Shakespeare was a wonderful playwright and poet, and that there was music associated with his works. However, no actual sheet music is included in the Folios or with the Sonnets, so we must go to 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century musical sources to figure out what actors and audiences might have been expecting to hear. When we start to investigate, we find that Shakespeare refers to quite a few pieces of music that were well known to his public: there are art songs, ballads (bawdy as well as serious), and even rounds, as well as dances such as would have been performed in masques. Remember that Sir Andrew Aguecheek in Twelfth Night "plays o' th' viol-de-gamboys", so we know that viols were part of the mix. Try out tunes on any size of viol you'd like – there will be music in treble, alto, and bass clefs (maybe even a tiny bit of tablature!) You'll hear about where the music came from, and you'll get some ideas about where you might like to take it, whether it be solo pieces or music that you can play with your friends. For beginning, intermediate, and advanced players and listeners. A=415. Link and materials will be emailed.

**May 21 at 2pm** on Zoom. Deadline to register: May 17. \$15-\$20

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

### **Songs of Time: 700 Years of Delights for the Muses**

Long & Away: Karen Burciaga, Anne Legêne, James Perretta, violas da gamba

This eclectic new program travels with the Muses from the 1400s to the present day. Inspired by the time hopping "Song of Time" from The Legend of Zelda, our program includes a treasure trove of 15<sup>th</sup>-c. music by Dufay, Josquin and their contemporaries, then highlights the great 16-17<sup>th</sup>-c. English consort composers Byrd, Gibbons, Jenkins and Purcell. Moving forward in time, we'll visit Crathes Castle in Scotland and journey through Ireland and the British Isles, performing traditional folk tunes and Celtic inspired contemporary compositions by William Ayton and Larry Wallach. We bid farewell to the Muses and conclude with James Perretta's Consort Fantasy on The Song of Time.

**Thursday, May 25, 7:30 PM** - St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 29 Main Street, Stockbridge, MA

**Thursday, June 1, 7:30 PM** - Church of the Good Shepherd, 9 Russell Ave, Watertown, MA

\$20 suggested donation

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

### **BEMF - "A Celebration of Women"**

The Festival will honor the work of women musicians both living and departed, as well as poets, painters, librettists, actors, scholars, publishers, dedicatees, and patrons, in addition to administrators, directors, and theater technicians. A feast of concerts, opera, masterclasses, Exhibition, fringe concerts, dance, lectures and more. Of particular interest to viol players are Les Délices, La Donna Musicale & Rumbarroco, The

Newberry Consort, Sollazzo Ensemble, Douce Mémoire, Hamburger Ratsmusik, Ricercar Consort, ACRONYM, and fringe concert ensembles.

**June 4-11** at venues in downtown Boston, MA

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

### **SoHIP Summer Concert Series**

SoHIP offers its 36<sup>th</sup> season of early music concerts. In-person concerts are held in Lincoln, Andover, and Boston from June 20-August 10. The virtual series on YouTube airs Fridays from July 7-August 25. Of particular interest to viol players is Hesperus ("The Three Musketeers" on July 4-6) and Mystic River Baroque ("Canzoni da Sonar" on July 11-13). \$20-25

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

### **VdGSA Conclave - In Person and Online**

Conclave returns to New England this year, and registration is open! At the in-person Conclave you can choose from Regular Curriculum, Consort Co-op, Seasoned Players/Advanced Projects, or Introduction to the Viol (free to locals). VdGSA also welcomes non-playing attendees. The Work Study program offers scholarships to cover tuition, and there is a limited number of housing subsidies as well. *\*\*Our chapter offers a small voucher to one member each year to assist with Conclave tuition; email [president@vdgsne.org](mailto:president@vdgsne.org) if you plan to attend and have financial need.*

**July 23-30** at University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI

<https://www.vdgsa.org/conclave-2023>

### **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.

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

Karen Burciaga, President

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### **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 [president@vdgsne.org](mailto:president@vdgsne.org).