

# Gamba NEWS

Volume 13, Number 2

October 2000

## Music, lost and found

*A letter from  
Kathryn Derksen*

*Many Pacifica members know, and have been missing, our member **Kathryn Derksen**. It is Gamba News' good fortune to share a letter Kathryn wrote last June to her sister, Elizabeth Brown, who plays lute and guitar. Kathryn's father, Roy Derksen, kindly gave us permission to excerpt the letter here, and relates Kathryn's situation.*

My daughter Kathryn Smith Derksen and her husband Dan are serving a three-year term with the Mennonite Central Committee in Kitgum, northern Uganda, where they are working with the peace and reconciliation ministry of the Church of Uganda in an area devastated by warfare, poverty, and disease. They are living in fairly primitive conditions. Their electricity is from their own solar panels. There are no phone lines into Kitgum. Road travel is generally unsafe because of rebel ambushes and land mines. They occasionally take a small plane to Kampala for supplies and e-mail contact.

When Kathryn left for Africa, she

### PACIFICA PLAY DAY SCHEDULE

All play days except those at Stanford are held at Zion Lutheran Church, 5201 Park Blvd., Oakland.

The church is just west of the Park Blvd. exit off Highway 13. We meet at 9:30 a.m. for the coached session. Lunch break is at 12:30; players can go to nearby restaurants or bring lunch from home. Uncoached afternoon playing goes on till 4:00 p.m.

Sheet music, coffee and tea will be supplied. Please bring a music stand and any music of your own you'd like to play. Consorts are formed based on the information you provide on the enclosed postcard. **Please mail it in immediately!** Or e-mail your data to **John Mark**, mark\_bach8@hotmail.com.

Newcomers and rank beginners are welcome. If you're coming for the first time, please phone ahead: (510) 531-1471.

Date	Coach
September 9, 2000	AMY BRODO
October 14, 2000	JULIE JEFFREY ✓ sent card 10/4/00
November 11, 2000	TBA
December 9, 2000	AMY BRODO
January 13, 2001	LYNN TETENBAUM
February TBA, 2001	JOHN DORNENBURG AT STANFORD
March 10, 2001	DAVID MORRIS
April 27-29, 2001	FRESNO WORKSHOP WEEKEND
May 12, 2001	JULIE JEFFREY
June 9, 2001	TBA



---

insisted on taking her faithful gamba. She and Dan were allowed only two pieces of luggage each; one of Kathryn's was her viol, stuffed with an assortment of small items. It arrived safely with her, but was left in Kampala when they first flew to Kitgum. There they lived with a local family, sleeping in a small mud hut, for several months to experience the local culture and concentrate on learning the local language before starting their assignment. During this time their things were brought to Kitgum; the gamba was locked in a secure room in the bishop's house next to the church. After their own house was finished, Kathryn finally could have her gamba and begin playing it again.

One small problem was tuning, as there are no instruments of known pitch in the area. When the tuning fork her sister sent finally arrived, Kathryn found the viol was about a third low, as she had been cautiously tuning low to avoid breaking a string.

—Roy Derksen

## Kathryn's letter

I wanted to write a letter about music. First, I think of several people frequently, and you, dear Elizabeth, most of all. Every time I've practiced gamba I think of **Meg Cotner**, and **Eric Finley** and **Penny Hanna** and the concert we did. As I struggle with my scales I think of **John Dornenburg**, and as I struggle with Marais, I have thought of **John Mark**, both because he has said Marais isn't really that hard (ha!) and because I'm so thankful he gave me some Bach to bring along.

I've often wondered if any of you could imagine being away from your (any) instrument for nearly four months, but even more than that, not hearing any of the music! The closest I've gotten to "classical" is the couple-of-stanzas ditty that is the BBC news service theme. It's fully orchestrated, and my eyes widen picturing an orchestra, and my ears tingle at the familiar timbre, and I hear echoes of other orchestral pieces, and I probably salivate.

And then I wonder how strange "my" music sounds to ears here. What does a three-octave scale *actually* sound like? They have no such thing, don't know western instruments (have heard of keyboards, maybe violins, and yes, guitars), so the only common ground is some borrowed church music, in the form of hymns. (Here's where I think often of our All Saints Choir in Palo Alto.) Several hymn tunes are familiar, but oh, they're sung at the speed of a funeral dirge! It's maddening. *Acholi* music is rhythmic and usually quite lively, but start a western hymn and poof, slow motion. The one interesting thing is: the call and response is such a tradition that they fill in most cadences or long notes with the upcoming measure, a pre-echo if you will, which makes nice overlapping harmonies. They've basically turned "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" into a round.

The instruments here are the *adungu* family, in at least three sizes. They look vaguely like rope-strung hand harps, although the big one, *minadungu* (literally mother *adungu*),



---

sits on the floor. It's roughly the size and low range of my gamba, so naturally that's the one I want to learn. There are various percussion instruments, and I saw a xylophone-type thing in the village. So, no sustaining-sound instruments. (What *do* my bowing exercises sound like to my neighbors?)

Now that I can play my viol again, I practice several times a week. Since I'd had such a time without playing, I needed a plan on how to start again. I decided to review everything I learned with John last year and make sure things feel familiar and good before opening my new technique book. I do some sight-reading, but I'm holding back my hunger for music so that I can discipline technique. It's a scary thought to imagine forming an unnoticed bad habit now, since it won't be caught for three years!

The other thing from Kampala this week was a proper converter for the solar panels, so we have music in our house with our CD player and little speakers! Yay! Actually, last night was the first early music I've heard since leaving California. I chose my Fretwork CD that opens with a Byrd piece. Ah, the strains (an appropriate adjective to describe gamba playing) I heard brought tears to my eyes, and a washing over of my soul.

—Kathryn

*Kathryn's friends can respond to her by e-mail (indirectly, though her parents) at smithderksen@juno.com, or by mail to Kathryn Smith Derksen, Box 10, Kitgum, Uganda. Ordinary mail does get through to her, but usually takes several weeks. She would love to hear from her friends. Anyone who would like to receive Kathryn and Dan's regular e-mail updates, which they send every month or so, describing their situation and work, please contact me at their e-mail address.*

—Roy Derksen

### COMING UP

## Step right up: Continuo master class!

Gambists, cellists and harpsichordists of all levels are welcome to participate in a continuo master class presented by the San Francisco Early Music Society (SFEMS). Leaders will be **Julie Jeffrey**, viola da gamba; **Elisabeth LeGuin**, baroque violoncello; and **Phebe Craig**, harpsichord. The class will be held Saturday, November 25, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 1501 Washington Avenue, Albany (near Santa Fe and Solano avenues). The cost is \$60 for participants and \$30 for auditors. No application is required. For information and reservations, call (510) 549-9799.



---

## Viols welcome at Collegium Evenings

The Early Music Collegium Evenings sponsored by SFEMS are a lot of fun for amateur singers and instrumentalists. Local music specialists (such as **Frances Feldon** and **David Morris**) lead readings of medieval, Renaissance or Baroque works, usually on Wednesday nights. Parts are available, by telephone request, two weeks prior to the event. The first evening of the season will be October 25: A Spanish Renaissance Christmas: Music by Victoria and Guerrero, conducted by **Cynthia Beitmen**.

All events are held at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 1501 Washington Avenue, Albany. The fee is \$12. Please call ahead to reserve a space for yourself by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month for each event, or register for all of them by requesting a registration form. For information and reservations, or a form listing the entire season's dates and events, call (510) 527-9029 or (510) 549-9799.

## Carmel Valley workshop for recorders, viols and harpsichord – still time to register

International Elderhostel presents a week-long workshop for players of recorder, viola da gamba and harpsichord in Carmel Valley, November 5-11. Elderhostel requires registrants to be 55 or older, or to attend with someone 55 or older.

Hidden Valley Music Seminar will host the Elderhostel. Recorder faculty are the members of the California-based Sirena Recorder Quartet: **Letitia Berlin**, **Frances Blaker**, **Louise Carslake** and **Hanneke van Proosdij**. Early strings specialist **Shira Kammen** will lead the strings and singing classes, and harpsichordist **Trevor Stevenson** will coach players in continuo playing and in baroque ensembles.

Classes will include technique warm-ups, repertoire classes for music from the Middle Ages to the 20th century, and mixed baroque ensembles. Players of baroque flute will want to bring their instruments for a special class offered by Louise Carslake. String players may want to bring other early stringed instruments in addition to gambas, to take advantage of Shira Kammen's expertise in early strings. Besides gamba consorts, she will offer a class for those wishing to learn vielle, and a special class in singing rounds for all.

A few spots are available for harpsichordists, pianists and organists who wish to learn how to play continuo. An optional movement/dance class in the morning is a great way to get warmed up for the day.



---

The workshop is characterized by congenial company, a relaxed atmosphere, and as much playing as you can handle. The cost for the week is \$620, which includes room and board. To register for the workshop, visit the International Elderhostel's website ([www.hiddenvalleymusic.org](http://www.hiddenvalleymusic.org)) or call (831) 659-3115.

– **Tish Berlin**

---

## Random Notes

**Contributors wanted:** Send *Gamba News* your concert listings and reviews, opinions, workshop experiences, CD reviews, drawings, photos, poems or out-of-body episodes. Send all contributions to **Lyle York**, Editor, 1932 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Berkeley, CA 94707, or via e-mail: [ly@sfgate.com](mailto:ly@sfgate.com). Phone (510) 559-9273. Short classified advertisements in plain text to be placed in *Gamba News* are free to VdGS/Pacifica members. For non-members, ads are \$5 per issue. Please mail your check for \$5 to **Lyle York** (address above), made out to VdGS/Pacifica. Deadline for calendar submissions, classified ads and all editorial contributions for a given month's newsletter is the 15<sup>th</sup> of the preceding month (e.g., the deadline for the April issue is March 15).

**Newsletters by e-mail:** If you'd like to receive your monthly *Gamba News* on-line, please e-mail **Lyle York** at [ly@sfgate.com](mailto:ly@sfgate.com). Your reply postcard will take e-mail form as well.

**Join VdGS/Pacifica!** The annual membership rates are: Playing Members, \$25 (can attend regular coached consort meetings free, receive *Gamba News*, and get a discount on special consort-coaching sessions); Two-Person Memberships, \$35 (two playing members in the same household); Newsletter-Only Members, \$10. For a membership form, contact **Annette Barnett**, 2502 Hearst Avenue, Oakland, CA 94602; (510) 482-8649; [annette.barnett@esis.com](mailto:annette.barnett@esis.com).

### Pacifica chapter officers are:

President, **Julie Jeffrey**; Vice-President, **Lyle York**; Secretary, **Annette Barnett**; Treasurer, **Helen Tyrrell**; Members at Large: **Cindy Share**, Coaching Liaison; **John Mark**, Rental Program Coordinator; **John Dornenburg**, **Alvin Roper**, and **Lee McRae**,

VdGSA Chapter Representative.

**Information, please:** Our VdGS/Pacifica chapter Web site, [home.pacbell.net/hesuome](http://home.pacbell.net/hesuome), is regularly updated by the able **Helen Tyrrell**. The VdGSA (national) Web site is [www.vdgsa.org](http://www.vdgsa.org). Need a list of local teachers? Sources for sheet music, supplies, inexpensive viols, repairs? Travel tips? We have extra copies of a back issue full of information. We also welcome contributions and corrections to our store of knowledge. Contact **Lyle York**, Editor, *Gamba News*, 1932 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Berkeley, CA 94707, (510) 559-9273; or via e-mail: [ly@sfgate.com](mailto:ly@sfgate.com).

**Rent a viol:** Pacifica has trebles, tenors and basses to rent. Donations of viols and bows to our rental program are extremely welcome—we'll accept them in any condition. Rental fees range from \$10 to \$25 per month. At the moment we have two trebles and a bass available. In charge of rentals is **John Mark**, at 10 Holyrood Manor, Oakland, CA 94611; (510) 531-1471; [mark\\_bach8@hotmail.com](mailto:mark_bach8@hotmail.com).

The VdGSA, Pacifica's parent organization, also rents viols. For VdGSA members, rates are \$250 per year for trebles and tenors, \$300 for basses, and \$750 for a complete consort of viols. For more information, contact **Stephen Morris**, 2615 Tanglewood Road, Decatur, GA 30033-2729; (404) 325-2709; [smmorris@mindspring.com](mailto:smmorris@mindspring.com).

The VdGSA recently instituted a Rent-To-Own program. If interested, contact **John Mark**, address above.

**Classifieds:** FOR SALE: M. Plant tenor with hard case, \$3,200; R. Ashmead light bass (tenor) bow, \$750; P. Stewart tenor-sized viol stand with carrycase, \$50. All in excellent condition. Package deal available: **Joseph Kimbel**, (415) 552-3227.



# Mark your calendar

**OCTOBER 25, 2000**

**COLLEGIUM EVENING WITH CYNTHIA BEITMEN:**

A Spanish Renaissance Christmas.

*Parish Hall, St. Albans Episcopal Church, 1501 Washington Avenue, Albany. See Page 4 for details. Cost is \$12. To register or for further information, call Frances Feldon, (510) 527-9029, or [franfel@aol.com](mailto:franfel@aol.com).*

**OCTOBER 27-29, 2000**

**SEX CHORDAE CONSORT OF VIOLS AND WHOLE NOYSE RENAISSANCE BAND: VENETIAN MUSIC FOR A NEW CENTURY.** Works by Giovanni Gabrieli and His Contemporaries (A SFEMS series concert).

*8:00 p.m., October 27, First Lutheran Church, Palo Alto.*

*8:00 p.m., October 28, St. John's Presbyterian Church, Berkeley.*

*5:30 p.m., October 29, St. Gregory Nyssen Church, San Francisco.*

*Tickets are \$22/\$19. Information: (510) 528-1725.*

**NOVEMBER 5-11, 2000**

**WORKSHOP FOR RECORDERS, VIOLS AND HARPSICHORD:** sponsored by Elderhostel, in Carmel Valley, CA.

*See Page 4 for details.*

**NOVEMBER 25, 2000**

**CONTINUO WORKSHOP:** Phebe Craig, harpsichord; Elizabeth Le Guin, Violoncello; Julie Jeffrey, viola da gamba.

*Parish Hall, St. Albans Episcopal Church, 1501 Washington Avenue, Albany. See Page 3 for details. To register or for information, call (510) 549-9799.*

**DECEMBER 1-3, 2000**

**MUSIC OF MONTEVERDI, FROM ST. MARKS IN VENICE:** California Bach Society and the Sex Chordae of Viols.

*8:00 p.m., December 1, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Berkeley.*

*8:00 p.m., December 2, St. Patrick's Seminary, Menlo Park.*

*4:00 p.m., December 3, St. Gregory Nyssen Episcopal Church, San Francisco.*

*Information: (650) 299-8616, or [www.calbach.org](http://www.calbach.org).*

## Gamba NEWS

c/o Barnett, 2502 Hearst Avenue, Oakland, CA 94602

Mary Elliott  
920 Ventura Avenue  
Albany, CA 94707

