

GAMBA NEWS

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Viola da Gamba Society/Pacifica

June 2001

Viol players needed at SFEMS workshops

Seeking the spirit of Gambo

Frances Blaker, director of the SFEMS Medieval & Renaissance Workshop, July 1-7, at Dominican University, San Rafael, is encouraging viol players to register.

"Viols are an integral part of the music of the Renaissance period – we can't live without them!" says Blaker. "I just came across a new recording of Renaissance music on viols, pointed out to me by Joseph Spencer of The Musical Offering. I think it is a wonderful recording, and perhaps will get you all in the mood to come play at the Medieval & Renaissance Workshop. It is 'Cabezón: Canto a mi caballero,' with Capriccio Stravagante, under the direction of Skip Sempe. The head viol player is Jay Bernfeld, who I understand is somewhat controversial, so this may get some viol players up in arms. Whatever, whoever, I love the music!"

Blaker points out that many classes in this

PACIFICA PLAY DAY SCHEDULE

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

The church is just west of the Park Boulevard 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
June 9, 2001	ROY WHELDEN

Next play day will be in September.

workshop are suitable for viol players – not just those for viols alone. Some examples:

Viol Technique, Viol Consort, Collegium (preparation of a large-scale vocal piece, in which you may either sing or play viol), Italian Grounds, A Dance a Day (a survey of Renaissance dance music), Where Families Meet (Josquin for Renaissance strings and voices), Music of Ludwig Senfl, and Voices and Viols.

Viol classes (held weekday mornings) will be taught by the incomparable **Julie Jeffrey**. Voices and Viols will be taught jointly by Jeffrey and Suzanne Elder Wallace, and will emphasize the vocal qualities of the viol. Other faculty include Cheryl Ann Fulton (medieval and Renaissance harps), Shira Kammen (vielle, violin), Herb Myers (winds and strings), Peter Maund (percussion), and Robert Mealy (violin, vielle).

Jeffrey's Viol Technique class will include technique trouble-shooting, sight reading, some ensemble playing, and perhaps some tablature. In

this class and in Jeffrey's Viol Consort class, the content and choice of music will be adjusted to the desires of registrants.

Tuition is \$380, \$10 less for members of SFEMS, EMA or ARS; \$20 less if one is participating in one or two of SFEMS' other workshops. Registration is technically open up to July 1 – the first day of the workshop – but of course it is better to sign up earlier in order to have more time to choose one's classes.

The Medieval & Renaissance Workshop accepts part-time participants. The best way to do this is to register for a part of each day (such as mornings only), but one can also choose to attend for certain days only. The latter is harder for organizers to coordinate, and can affect other participants, so Blaker suggests attending each day if possible. Tuition for part-time students is prorated. For help calculating your costs in such a

case, for more information or to register, call Frances Blaker, workshop director, at (510) 559-4670, or e-mail: fblaker@mindspring.com.

Registration is also still open for the SFEMS Baroque Workshop, June 24-30. Though the workshop is nearly full, gambists are welcome to register. Viol classes, including master classes focusing on ornamentation of Ortiz and Bassano madrigals, are taught by the mighty **Mary Springfels**. Ensembles coached by Springfels will play music from Italy and Spain, including Trabacchi, Merulo, Castello, Monteverdi and De Selma.

Fees are \$395 for tuition, with the discounts above. For more information or to register, contact Anna Carol Dudley, workshop director, at (510) 527-3748, or acdudley@slip.net.

You will find more details on all three of this summer's SFEMS workshops on the SFEMS web page: www.sfems.org.

Roy Whelden to coach on June 9

Roy Whelden will be our coach (for the first time) at Pacifica's June 9 play day. June 9 will be our last play day until September.

Any group that knows what pieces it plans to work on that day is encouraged to e-mail Roy ahead of time with the info:

rwhelden@aol.com.

Roy studied viol with **John Hsu** in Ithaca, New York, and **Thomas Binkley** in Bloomington, Indiana, and has performed with various ensembles, including Sequentia (of Cologne), Ensemble Alcatraz and American Baroque.

Roy lives in Oakland and teaches viol and vielle.

He has recorded original compositions on the New Albion label.

BOOK REVIEW

The Guitarist's Hands

by John Duarte and Luis Zea

By Don Groves

EARLY MUSIC GUILD OF OREGON

I recently discovered *The Guitarist's Hands* through a chance sighting of a hearty recommendation for it on the Internet. An accomplished player wrote that it was the only book he would recommend to someone wanting to improve the use of his or her hands for playing the guitar. Well, thought I, if it's that good for a guitarist's hands, it should also be good for a gambist's hands, the left at least.

This is a very slim book, only 35 pages, but packed with meat, not an ounce of fat on its bones. The authors begin by defining what they consider the five most important aspects of hand development for guitar playing: Flexibility, Dexterity, Independence, Stability, and Economy. These five apply equally well to the viol and to the lute.

1. **Flexibility**, in the case of the left hand, represents the ability to a) extend along the fingerboard, measured by the number of frets the hand can span, and b) reach across the fingerboard with fingers stopping strings at different distances from the palm.
2. **Dexterity**, as it applies to the left hand, is measured by the speed with which the fingers can move securely from one disposition to another.
3. **Independence** has two aspects: a) the ability of the two hands to work independently and b) the ability of the fingers of (in our case) the left hand to work independently.
4. **Stability** is the feeling that the hand is stable and anchored rather than floating, in close relationship with the instrument, and able to work from a secure base.
5. **Economy** represents the elimination of unproductive effort and reduction of tensions that inhibit the hands from working in a free and

relaxed way.

The authors state that we should think of the exercises in this book as a virtually limitless program of work, which if conscientiously followed will result in very real improvements in the above areas.

The exercises are presented in the general order of Economy, Flexibility, Independence and Dexterity, although as the program progresses, there is considerable overlap among them. Stability is gained gradually throughout the program. The program is divided into 14 phases, each consuming up to four weeks of daily work. The authors don't give an estimate of the time spent each day, but based on my limited experience, 15 minutes a day should do. Depending on your current condition, the left hand may tire more quickly than that at the beginning. The authors' exercises encompass every left-hand position on the fretboard and exhaust every possibility of fingerings within each position.

Duarte and Zea caution the student to avoid overusing the hands, pointing out that "heroic persistence can lead to lasting damage to the hand." This program is meant to gain lifetime improvement in your playing, not end it due to crippling injury. They advise caution particularly on the extension exercises, which involve stretching the tendons that connect the fingers to the hand and to each other, stating that if the hand begins to hurt, as opposed to merely feeling extended, the student should immediately stop to rest the hand or switch to another exercise not involving extensions.

The first exercise the authors present is one of Economy and is designed to minimize pressure on the strings by the left-hand fingers and thereby reduce tension in the hand. This is accomplished though many repetitions of a) playing a single note while slowly relaxing the pressure of the left-hand finger until the note no longer sounds

clearly, and b) playing the same note with the left-hand finger barely touching the string and slowly increasing the pressure until the note sounds clearly. The exercise should be done with each left-hand finger, later extended to double stops and chords, and done at various volumes from pianissimo to fortissimo. The idea is to train your left hand and fingers to know exactly the minimum force needed in each situation to produce a good tone.

Another interesting exercise primarily increases hand strength but also promotes Flexibility and Independence. Lay a double page of newsprint flat on a table or floor. Pick it up at the center with one hand, and, using only the fingers of that hand with no assistance whatsoever from the other hand, or from your body, wad the paper into as small a ball as you can manage. Do this once per day with each hand. Most exercises to develop hand strength use the hand as a single unit, all fingers squeezing at the same time in the same direction. But for this exercise the fingers work independently, and in various directions, as they are

used when playing an instrument.

Unfortunately, *The Guitarist's Hands* does not appear to be available in the U.S. I bought my copy via the Internet from Guitare Diffusion in Belgium, where it costs about 17 Euros (approximately \$15). Unless you don't mind waiting six weeks, it must be shipped air mail, which adds another \$5. It may be possible to arrange a volume discount, and to save on postage, by ordering several copies at once. Anyone interested in this approach may e-mail me at dongroves@emgo.org and I will investigate this possibility. To order a copy immediately, contact Guitare Diffusion by email at mail@guitare-diffusion.com, or by phone at 00 32 71 84 76 94.

The way the exercises are arranged, one copy of the book could easily be shared by a group of players. Once you have read and learned an exercise, or phase, you don't need the book again until you've mastered that one and are ready for the next. Though not an inexpensive book, *The Guitarist's Hands* is a valuable addition to any string player's library.

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: lyleyork@earthlink.net. 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 15th 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 lyleyork@earthlink.net. 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.

Another way to join is from the Pacifica web site, <http://home.pacbell.net/hesuome>. Click on "Join the Chapter."

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; **Lee McRae**, VdGSA Chapter Representative; **John Dornenburg**, **Alvin Roper**, and **Ellen Farwell**.

Information, please: Our VdGS/Pacifica chapter Web site, <http://home.pacbell.net/hesuome>, is maintained and regularly updated by **Helen Tyrrell**. It contains the Viol Players' Calendar, which is often more up to date than the *Gamba News* calendar – along with a list of local teachers, sources for music, supplies, inexpensive viols, repairs, and travel tips. The VdGSA (national) Web site is www.vdgsa.org.

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. In charge of rentals is **John Mark**, at 10 Holyrood Manor, Oakland, CA 94611; (510) 531-1471; 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.

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

Classifieds

VIOLS MADE by **Alexandra Saur**. Beautiful copies of Bertrand, Jaye, and Hoskins masterpieces. (510) 558-6927, (510) 559-9563.

TREBLE VIOL by Dominic Shann, 1981, after English models; 38 cm string length. Cooped top, double purfling, inlaid fretboard and tailpiece, open scroll, tiger maple sides and back. Very light construction. Baroque blackwood bow with ivory nut by Ralph Ashmead; hard case by Early Music Shop (UK), extra gut strings by Damien Dlugolecki. Asking \$4,500 for viol, case and bow. Contact **Oliver Iberien**, (510) 834-6062; oliver.iberien@mindspring.com.

SEEKING A GAMBIST: My wife and I and two friends play baroque flutes and recorder. We would like to find a gambist willing to play with us in Pacifica. **John Sayre**, (650) 355-8895.

SEEKING A BOW: I am looking for a good tenor bow. Contact **Bill Lazar**, jblazar@aol.com; (408) 737-8228.

Mark your calendar

June 11-17, 2001

BOSTON EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL & EXHIBITION: The brochure cites performances by gambists Susie Napper, Paolo Pandolfo, David Douglass, Erin Headley, Jane Hershey, Laura Jeppesen, Carol Lewis, Patricia Neely, Alice Robbins, John Mark Rozendaal, Christel Thielmann, Emily Walhout and Brent Wissick. Especially note the Viol Extravaganza, June 16, 2 p.m., featuring viols a4, a6, a7, a12 and *a tout autant de parties* (everybody plays).

Information: (617) 424-7232; bemf@bemf.org; web site www.bemf.org.

JUNE 24-30, JULY 1-7, 2001

SAN FRANCISCO EARLY MUSIC SOCIETY SUMMER

WORKSHOPS: Two of SFEMS' four summer workshops are of special interest to viol players (See story on Page 1). The Baroque Workshop is June 24-30; the Medieval and Renaissance Workshop is July 1-7. Both are held at Dominican University in San Rafael. Among the faculty will be gambists Mary Springfels and Julie Jeffrey.

Information: info@sfems.org; www.sfems.org; (510) 528-1725.

JULY 14 – AUGUST 5, 2001

CARMEL BACH FESTIVAL: Send for a brochure; note that J. S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion (performed on various dates) will include John Dornenburg on viola da gamba; on July 23, Dornenburg, Tina Chancey and Julie Jeffrey, viols, will join soprano Rosa Lamoreaux in a program of music by Gibbons, Byrd, Purcell, and Schutz.

Information: (831) 624-2046 or www.bachfestival.org.

AUGUST 12-18, 2001

VIOLS WEST: THE SOOTHING VIOL: Carol Herman, director; faculty includes Carol, Tina Chancey, John Dornenburg, Julie Jeffrey, Larry Lipkis, Larry Lipnik, Sarah Mead, Ann Marie Morgan, Rosamund Morley, David Morris, Laurie Rabut, and Brent Wissick. CalPoly campus, San Luis Obispo.

Information: e-mail Carol, hgamba@aol.com, or Alice Renken, arenken@sandwich.net.

Gamba NEWS

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