

GAMBA NEWS

Volume 16, No. 1

Viola da Gamba Society-Pacifica

September 2002

Renew Your
Membership
Now!
See Page 2

New season, new ideas

NEW is the theme for this playing season.

First of all, please RENEW! your membership, using the form on Page 2.

As you see in the play day schedule at right, our Pacifica coaching liaison, **Mary Elliott**, has lined up several new coaches and some we have enjoyed before. Gamba News will publish profiles of the new coaches in the months they will coach. For our first play day of the season, **September 14**, we look forward to seeing our tried-and-true coach and President, **Julie Jeffrey**, who will get us off to a new early start at 9:15. We haven't had time to organize the public coaching sessions this month, but will begin in October.

New approach to play days

By **Mary Elliott**

Several of the Board members have been thinking of new activities to introduce to Pacifica Chapter play days. We'd appreciate your feedback as we try out these new ideas.

Should we continue? Go back to the old schedule? You be the judge.

The new schedule:

9:15 Gather, chat, drink coffee, etc.

Check out which group you've been assigned to (matched as closely as possible for size combination and playing level). Note that this will give us a slightly earlier start than usual.

9:30 Meet with your assigned groups for coached playing. The coach of the day (see Playing Schedule, Page 1) will spend 20-30 minutes with each group.

11:20 Short break.

(Continued on page 10)

New viols from China

Photos by **Jonathan Manson**
Story by **Markku Luolajan-Mikkola**

Editor's note: At this summer's SFEMS Medieval-Renaissance Workshop, several of us were fortunate to be taught by **Wendy Gillespie** of Bloomington, Indiana, where she is an associate professor at the Early Music Institute of the Indiana University School of Music. Gillespie has participated in

(Continued on page 4)



A 7-string bass viol from Lu-Mi

PACIFICA PLAY DAY SCHEDULE, 2002-03

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 9:15 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 immediately!** Or email 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
Sept. 14	JULIE JEFFREY
Oct. 12	PAT O'SCANNELL
Nov. 9	GAIL-ANN SCHROEDER
Dec. 7	YAYOI ISAACSON
Jan. 11	ELISABETH REED
Feb. 8	(TENTATIVE) JOHN DORNENBURG AT STANFORD
March 8	DAVID MORRIS
April 12	GEORGE HOULE
May 17	STEVE LEHNING
June 14	TBA

Chinese viols

Photos by Jonathan Manson

Story by Markku Luolajan-Mikkola

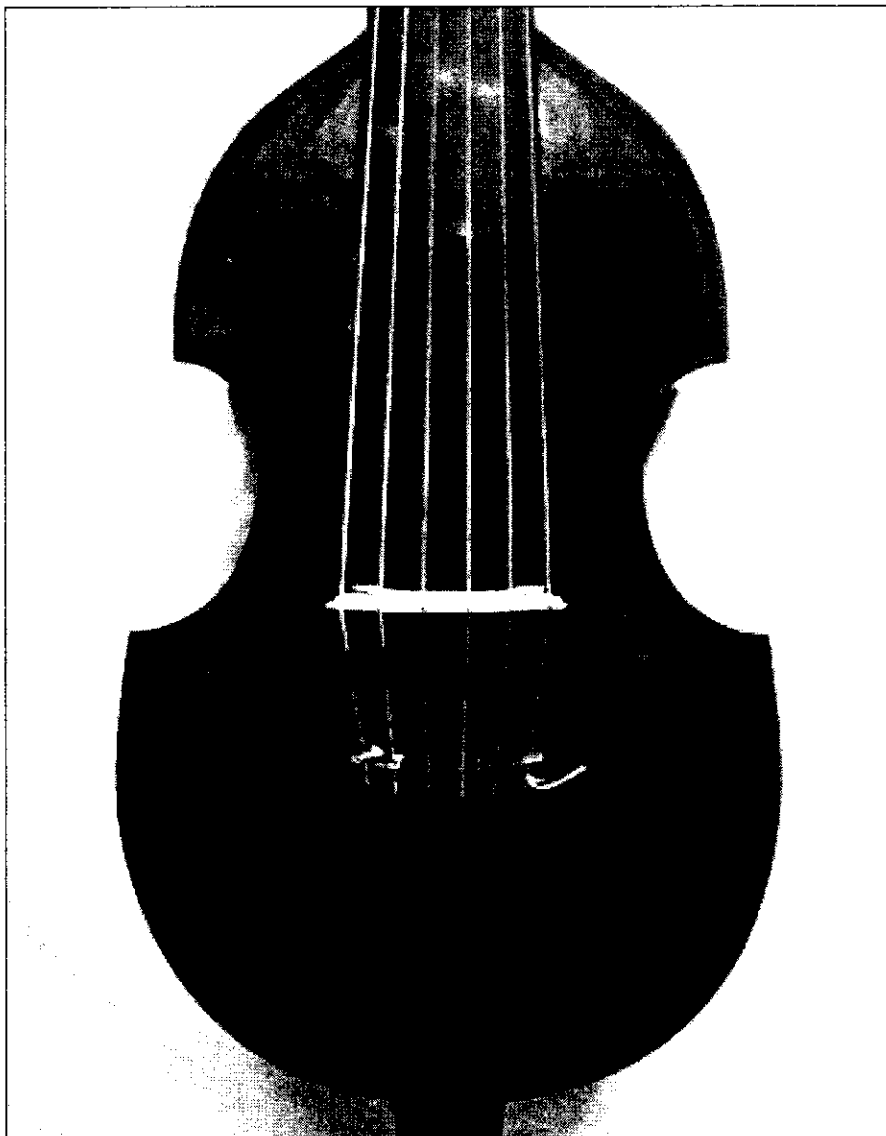
Editor's note: *At this summer's SfEMS Medieval-Renaissance Workshop, several of us were fortunate to be taught by Wendy Gillespie of Bloomington, Indiana, where she is an associate professor at the Early Music Institute of the Indiana University School of Music. Gillespie has participated in more than 60 recordings and most recently plays with Fretwork and Phantasm. And not only that: She revealed that while in London with Fretwork she recorded with Sir Paul McCartney at Abbey Road Studios.*

Gillespie mentioned that a colleague of hers in Phantasm, Markku Luolajan-Mikkola, is overseeing the production of some low-cost viols in China. Until recently, the only mass-produced viols available have been the Ceskes made in Czechoslovakia. Gillespie declares herself no expert in Ceske viols, but these new Chinese-made viols, she says, "seem much better than any Ceske viol I have tried, in terms of both construction and sound."

Luolajan-Mikkola currently teaches viol at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. He studied viola da gamba with Wieland Kuijken at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. His recording of Marais' Suite d'un gout d'Etranger on ALBA Records won a national award for excellence in his native Finland; a solo CD of Antoine Forqueray has also garnered critical acclaim. A special interest of Luolajan-Mikkola's is contemporary music for the bass viol.

Since Luolajan-Mikkola knew the Chinese might have trouble pronouncing his name, he named his company Lu-Mi Instruments. Gamba News asked him to tell how the Chinese-made viols came about.

As a teacher of viol at Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, and when conducting workshops and master classes elsewhere in Europe and in the U.S., I have noticed too often that students don't have a proper viol. And some who would like to play don't have a viol at all. Ten thousand dollars



A treble viol from Lu-Mi Instruments: The viols are made "in the best German tradition" in Beijing.

or more for a custom-made viol is often too much for a beginner, and the viols that have been for sale for \$2000 or \$3000 have been of too low quality. The waiting lists of the best makers are too long—sometimes eight to ten years.

I have always been interested in instrument making, and I have asked numerous makers to build cellos, baroque cellos and all kinds of models of viols for me and my students and friends. I had noticed that Chinese modern makers and workshops produce really good-quality cellos and violins, and I began searching for a workshop that could produce viols and other baroque stringed instruments.

I found Mr. Wang Zi Ming in Beijing. Mr. Wang's father learned violin-

making after the best German tradition, but naturally he had to stop working during the Cultural Revolution. He began again in the late '80s, and is now retired. His son Wang now employs and trains 10 makers in a workshop.

I gave Mr. Wang all the information I could about viol making: I sent numerous drawings and more than 100 emails. Later, as the viols began to take shape, I spent time in Beijing to help solve some problems.

We don't make exact copies of old models, but all our instruments are certainly real viols. The 6-string viols are made after the English makers Jaye, Meares and others, but, for example, the belly is not bent. The 7-string bass is made after Bertrand. The Chinese

Facts about the Lu-Mi viols and bows:

Models available at the moment are treble, tenor (large), 6-string bass and 7-string bass.

An instrument ordered directly from the Beijing workshop arrives without frets, strings, and final polishing, and requires adjustment of the soundpost,

upper nut and bridge height. Wendy Gillespie of Bloomington, Indiana, has agreed to distribute Lu-Mi viols in North America. Her local violinmaker will set up the viols, finish, string and fret them, and provide a case (and a bow if the buyer requests one).

She is consulting with stringmakers for strings commensurately priced with the viols. One makes strings of gut and one of silk. (The latter may be another inno-

vation!)

As for bows, I just mailed a supply of snakewood and some model bows to Beijing. I expect viol bows will be available in a few months. The Chinese makers have not yet cited a price for the bows. I have seen only modern bows made by them, but they are well done.

Gillespie will check the instrument for playability and ship the viol to the purchaser. **The final cost should be between \$2,000 and \$3,000;** until the process actually begins, this price must be an estimate. Of course, there is no obligation to keep the instrument if it does not meet the buyer's expectations.

Gillespie has ordered several instruments of each size that will be going to various places in the U.S. and Canada. She is currently accepting orders for **instruments that can be delivered in six to eight months.**

Gillespie will keep interested readers posted on the locations and status of Lu-Mi viols. Contact either of us with questions (information below). Within a few months we expect to be marketing the Lu-Mi viols on the Internet.

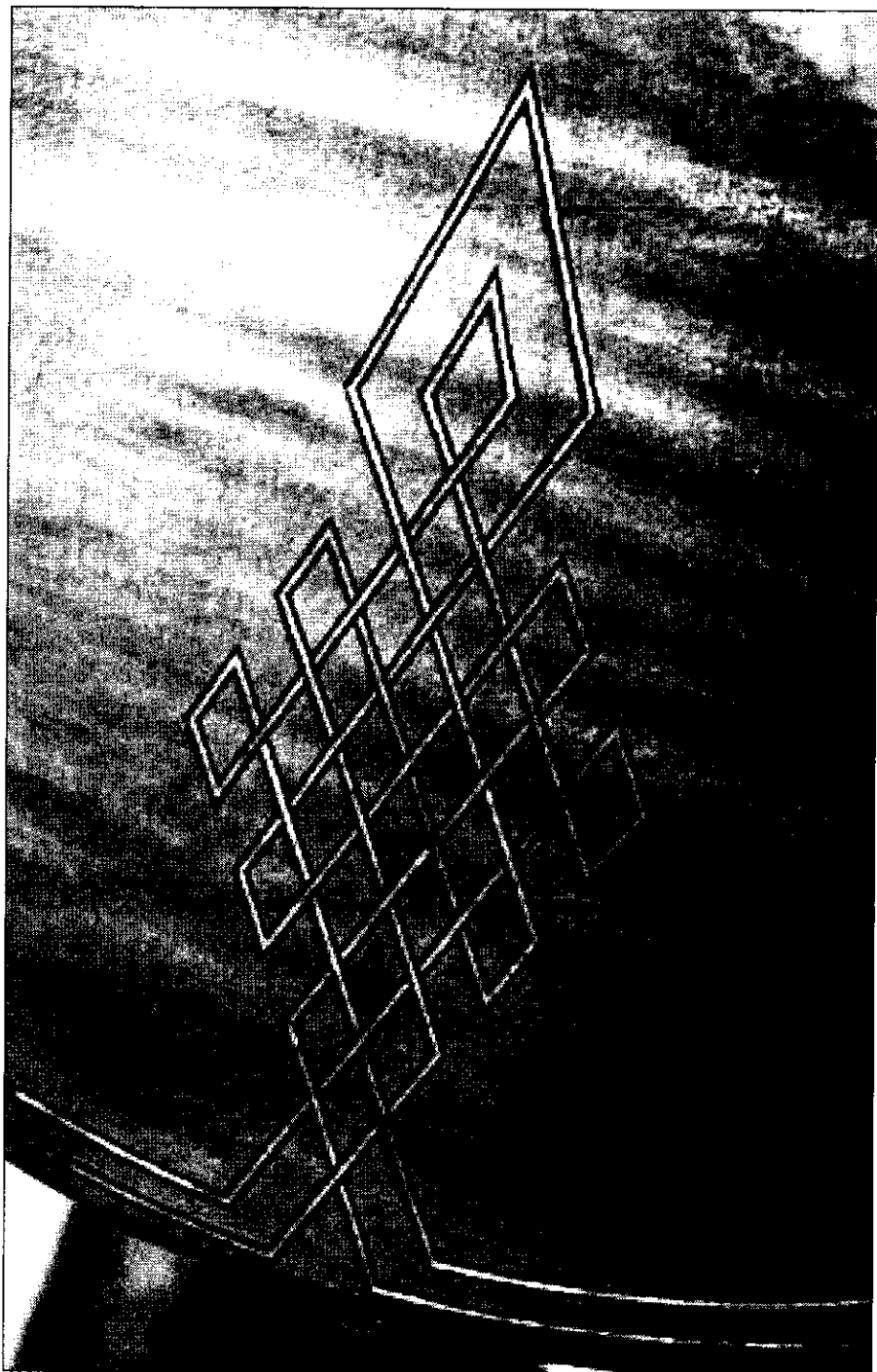
We are even considering offering a chest of viols – two each of three sizes (six instruments) in a piece of furniture that protects the viols – to schools, or to anyone with a music room. We welcome suggestions from viol players everywhere.

Contact information:

Markku Luolajan-Mikkola
mluoloaja@siba.fi
Phone or fax: 011 358-9-4368 2040
Address: Tempelkatu 9 A 4
FI-00100 Helsinki
Finland

North Americans interested in purchasing a viol from Lu-Mi Instruments should contact:

Wendy Gillespie
wendygil@indiana.edu
3702 Tamarron Drive
Bloomington, IN 47408
(812) 336-1810
Fax: (812) 336-7236



Detail of the back of the Chinese 7-string bass viol

Conclave 2002, Franklin Pierce College, Rindge, NH

By Ellen Farwell

I did it again -- put myself through the stress of rising too early, schlepping viols, rushing furiously to meet a too-tight class schedule, enduring performance anxiety -- in order to attend another workshop. This time it was the VdGSA Conclave. Why do I keep doing this to myself? It must be because I love the intensity, the excitement, the chance to make music all day long.

The main attraction at the Conclave, of course, was the presence of Fretwork, that incomparable viol ensemble from Britain. Not only did they put on a magnificent performance one evening, almost entirely from Lawes "Sets" of six-part pieces (with **Jack Ashworth** at the organ), but they spent the whole week with us as faculty and as mealtime companions. The class curriculum was heavy on Lawes this year, the theme being "Olde England in New England." I was in two rotating Lawes consort classes, one on bass and one on treble, and was coached two sessions each by **William Hunt** and **Richard Campbell** of Fretwork. What lovely, gentle people! It could have been intimidating, particularly since we were trying to play the very same pieces they had performed so expertly for us earlier in the week, but it wasn't at all. Mainly they told us in the most tactful way what everybody has been telling us for years and it never seems to sink in: Don't just play all the notes the same, but aim for some kind of contrast.

For my other class, I had been invited by some friends from Rochester, New York, to substitute for their missing bass player (she was in Italy) so that they could stay together as a consort and be coached by **Sarah Mead**. Since they are devout converts to mean-tone tuning, I used a lovely resonant bass belonging to one of them that had all its frets appropriately adjusted, including a couple of split frets. I adapted pretty well to the tuning and split frets, but the

viol must have been homesick for Rochester because it wouldn't stay in tune for more than five minutes at a time. Other than that, we had a good time together, and Sarah managed to coax some real music out of us by the end of the week. (Contrasts again.)

I also took part in uncoached concerts almost every afternoon, even though I was tempted to take a nap. When there were a few free minutes, I browsed in **Ruth Harvey's** Early Music Shop, which she had transported from Boulder, or looked over items on sale at the silent auction that seems to have supplanted the un-silent live version of previous years.

It was good to see a few of our Pacifica Chapter people and other West Coasters there, including **John Mark**, **Colin Shipman**, **David Dreyfuss**, **Dalton Cantey**, **Peter Stewart**, and **Bob and Janet Loy**. **Rebecca Gifford**, an old gamba friend from Southern California, has relocated to Newton Center, near Boston. **Alice Renken**, another former gamba buddy from Southern California and VdGSA secretary, did a magnificent job of handling whatever was thrown at her, which was a lot; I don't think I ever saw her without her laptop computer. And our own **David Morris** graced the faculty.

Friday night was the traditional banquet, followed by entertainment, including transfer via lottery of **Violone Barbie** and her consort, **Ken**, to a new guardian for the year. You'll be greatly relieved to know that Barbie and Ken, who disappeared mysteriously last winter, somehow turned up in a warehouse in Salt Lake City. They'd been cohabiting there in a suitcase for several months. As I understand it, Barbie's violone got smashed in transit to her previous guardian, but a brand-new one has been built for her by **Neil Seely**, a retired engineer and Conclave participant. The lucky winner and new guardian of Barbie, Ken, violone, and "chest" of viols (with a couple of falsies glued

to the lid) is **Linda Shortridge**, who I'm sure will welcome them back to the loving Albuquerque home where Barbie first learned to play the viol.

There were a couple of especially notable performances that evening: The "gofers" (scholarship/work-study students) played and acted out **John Mark's** excellent arrangement for viols of Moussorgsky's "Oxcart" from *Pictures at an Exhibition* (appropriate to their labors), and a group of people from Nova Scotia sang sweetly and piously a hilarious rendition of the Conclave Information Sheet in Anglican chant.

The final event of the Conclave was the student performances on Saturday night. It was mercifully short--only about eight groups chose to perform. Our Rochester consort was one of them. I was feeling rather anxious because of the tuning problem and because I had messed up several times during rehearsal of our five-part White fantasy (I'm not at my best first thing in the morning), but at zero hour the borrowed bass decided to behave itself, everybody was focusing just fine, and we brought it off very well. We even remembered most of the bowings, articulations and dynamic contrasts we had worked out with Sarah's help.

Every time I go to a workshop, I come back feeling stretched. Tuning your low D string on the bass down to C isn't so confusing anymore when you've had to do it for a whole week in a Lawes consort. Those high A's and B flats on the treble aren't very scary when you've had to reach even higher for C's and D's. I can find A flat more easily now, after spending a week scrambling for D flats, G flats, and even weirder accidentals in Lawes and Jenkins, which I normally don't play often. And I hope that I won't continue to feel pleased with myself for just finding the notes and not falling apart. A week of intensive coaching makes you want to strive for much more than that.

Viols West Workshop, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo

By Lyle York

This year's Viols West Workshop, held at Cal Poly campus in San Luis Obispo, was the first directed by **Rosamund Morley** and assistant directed by **Alice Renken**. Our beloved directress emerita, **Carol Herman**, came to the faculty concert and shared news of her new life: Besides continuing to pursue her love of the stage, Carol will soon be a grandmother of twin girls—thanks to her son and his companion, an egg donor mother, a surrogate mother, and some mind-bending science.

The unflappable Ros and Alice carried off an excellent first workshop. The only complaint I heard from Alice was that the second-floor women's bathroom door sounded a first-inversion triad.

They introduced some innovations to the schedule: A new registration form asked many detailed questions about what sizes and clefs the registrant could play, how he or she felt about performing, and whether he or she preferred to study a piece in depth or read through a lot of music (the nearly universal answer was "Both!").

Everyone was placed, according to the questionnaire results, in a first-period generic consort class that would aim to perform if that was the will of the group. These first-period classes came to be called "home rooms."

The faculty concert was moved to Friday night. Now that Carol is gone, clearly there could be no more Broadway evening, but a tiny bit of frivolity crept into the student concert on Saturday morning—the performance of "Beginning Violab: Exploring the Music of Fred Reinagel's Tuners."

The traditional mass playing on Sunday evening was conducted by Ros, a Byrd 6-part Pavan and Galliard. On Tuesday evening **Ray Nurse** gave an absorbing lecture on Renaissance viols, the main point being that there really were no such things. **P.J. Savage's**



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Sarah Mead leading Voices and Viols; Ros Morley directing; faculty members Larry Lipnik and Craig Trompeter taking a break.

partner, Elaine Stanley, offered massage for musicians. Players made enthusiastic use of the faculty-assisted consort offerings on Monday and Wednesday evenings, and there was the usual opportunity to form consorts on your own.

The student concert, held Saturday morning, included the Voices and Viols class performing two verse anthems by William White, ably conducted by **Sarah Mead**.

The faculty concert—an array of 12 viols, four of each size, played by the 11 faculty and Alice Renken—sneaked in an innovation as well: It was all sight-read, as usual, with the exception of an hour's rehearsal for **Joseph Kimball's** recently published *Jalousie*, a challenging fantasy on the immortal '50s tango "Jealousy." Multi-part pieces were by Lawes, Coprario, Le-

grenzi, East and Jenkins, and six basses played a bit of celloistic bravado by Handel. Minor flubs were, as always, coolly handled. ("Students please note," said **David Morris** afterwards, "that we fell apart *counting rests*.")

My favorite memory of this workshop was what happened after the faculty concert, when the players, returning to the dorm triumphant (and one would expect bedraggled) from their efforts, sat down in the TV Lounge to play pieces from Lully's *Armide* (joined by **Richard Glenn** on lute) and Lawes fantasias. They started with Lawes No. 7 and continued. Around 11:30, their exhausted audience started trickling away to bed. "Just one more," someone would say, and they didn't stop till the book was finished, at midnight. How lucky we are to be taught by people with such energy.

New approach to play days

(Continued from page 1)

11:30 Group session in the large room. We'll all return to the large room, where the coach will lead us through a piece or an exercise that introduces some point about phrasing, articulation, bowing, performance practice, etc. that will improve awareness and/or technique. Ideally, we could try out these ideas in our afternoon groups.

11:45 Public coaching in the large room. If any of you wish to perform solo, duet, or consort music that you've been working on independently, outside of the play days, here's your chance to

receive the coach's full attention.

Anyone attending that play day is welcome to listen to the public coaching session.

If you choose, however, you may return to your rooms with your group and continue playing until we break for lunch.

We could accommodate two (possibly three) individuals/groups, who would receive around 20-30 minutes of coaching each.

Of course, this depends upon how many individuals/groups wish to participate that day.

If you do wish to participate, please call Mary Elliott (510/527-6671) to reserve a space.

In some cases, we may have a special guest coach and may ask you to contribute some amount toward the coach's time.

If no one chooses to volunteer for the public coaching, then the group session might last a bit longer or we could all go to lunch sooner.

12:30 Lunch.

1:45 Return to play in uncoached groups, as usual.

Renew Your Membership Now!
Don't miss a single issue of
***Gamba* NEWS!**

See Page 2 for details

Gamba News is printed by Crazy Copy, 1483 Solano Avenue, Albany, CA

***Gamba* NEWS**

c/o York, 1932 Thousand Oaks Boulevard, Berkeley, CA 94707-1638

