

# GAMBA NEWS

Volume 16, No. 10

Viola da Gamba Society-Pacifica

June 2003

## Consort etiquette

*Courteous interaction, power sharing, and handling sticky situations*

By Frances Blaker

*Thanks to Alvin Roper, who suggested to Gamba News that etiquette works as well for viols as for recorders, we are reprinting parts of a column by Frances Blaker that appears periodically in American Recorder magazine. Here is a first installment. More will appear in the September issue of Gamba News.*

Observing many music groups in action—from both within and without, on professional and amateur levels—I have become convinced that some discussion of etiquette is strongly needed. By etiquette, I mean some guidelines as to how we are to treat our fellow musicians and how we would ask to be treated by others.

One of the biggest difficulties—the stickiest of situations—occurs when a member of an ensemble has a continually appearing bad habit: playing out of tune, bad tone, poor rhythm. How do you address this problem?

My answer to that is: *kindly*.

**Rule number 1: Please don't say to a person, "You are out of tune," you played a wrong note there," "you are counting wrong," etc.**

That form of address is felt as a personal attack (even if only mildly or nearly subconsciously), and will not help the person correct problems. Try instead saying, "We are out of tune"—because, after all, tuning is an issue involving more than one person; or say, "We are not playing correctly in measure such and such," "We are having rhythmic problems," "Our tone is terrible," and so on. Even if the problem is clearly caused by a certain person, starting the sentence with "we" rather than "you" shows good will and a spirit of trying to improve the entire ensemble.

In dire cases, when the "we" sentence has not worked, one can say, "We are still falling apart in measure 15. Abi-asula, I believe you may have played a B flat." Or say, "I think we are playing at different volumes. Thermuthis, could you come down a bit, and Spottiswood, could you play out a little more?" This can be said by whoever has noticed the problem, whether the group has a leader or not.

**Rule number 2: Do not assume you are in charge unless your ensemble has discussed this issue and made you the boss.**

In other words, do discuss with members how you all would like to run your ensemble. Your decision will depend on the personalities of all the players. Sometimes most of the players feel unconfident about leading, would rather follow, don't have faith in their own musical skills and judgment, and would like to have one person be in charge.

In other cases, all the players feel equally confident about putting forth their ideas and about taking suggestions from others, and the group ends up being led by consensus. Problems arise when an ensemble has more than one person who wants to lead.

Players in ensembles should say plainly what their mode is: leader, follower, equal partner. If there are two or more leaders, they should take turns

## PACIFICA PLAY DAY SCHEDULE, 2003

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.

Sheet music, coffee and tea will be supplied. Please bring a music stand and any music of your own you'd like to play.

**Potluck lunches have been working well this year. Please either bring a sack lunch for yourself or a dish or drink to share. The church kitchen has a microwave we can use.**

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
June 14	ELISABETH REED
Sept. 6	GAIL ANN SCHROEDER

leading different pieces. This is a good way to run an ensemble, no matter what the personalities of the players.

*Frances Blaker is an internationally known recorder player and teacher who lives in Albany.*

*This column will be continued in September's Gamba News and subsequent issues. Thanks to American Recorder and Frances for letting us adapt it for our readers.*

# Elisabeth Reed will coach June 14

By Mary Elliott

This month we look forward to **Elisabeth Reed's** return. In case you have not experienced her excellent coaching, here is some recent evidence and a reminder of her background.

Elisabeth teaches cello, baroque cello, viola da gamba and the Feldenkrais method in her home. On May 30, her cello and viol students presented a recital at the Arts Annex of JFK University in Berkeley. Our own Pacifica regulars **Lyle York**, **PJ Savage**, and **Julie Morrisett** offered pieces: a Jenkins Aire and Saraband duo (Lyle and PJ on bass viols, playing closely imitative lines requiring much position work by PJ), Bovicelli's division on "Ancor che col partire" (Lyle spinning out this

gorgeous melody soulfully on treble viol, accompanied by Sean Smith, lute), and two Hume solos "My Mistress Almaine" and "A Galliard" (Lyle on bass, clearly defining the melody while executing all double stops and chords). Julie Morrisett then provided a rousing conclusion with three bass solos: Ortiz's Recercada Quarta (at warp speed, the chordal ground provided by PJ, Lyle, and Elisabeth), and Julie's own inimitable arrangements of "The Tennessee Waltz" and "Silver Dagger," with Elisabeth accompanying on bass viol. Elisabeth herself completed the program with the virtuosic Simpson Division on a Ground, accompanied by Sally Blaker on cello. (Sally will soon begin learning viol as well.) This was a thoroughly delightful performance by a growing community of Elisabeth's stu-

dents. If you missed this one, catch the next recital in six months.

Before she moved to Oakland, Elisabeth worked in Seattle, where she was the founder and director of the Viols for Youth program in conjunction with the Seattle Early Music Guild and the Viola da Gamba Society-Pacific Northwest.

She is the principal cellist for the California Bach Society, the Benevolent Order for Music of the Baroque, the Dayton Bach Society, the chamber ensemble El Mundo, and the Alard String Quartet. She also performs regularly with other West Coast early music ensembles including Philharmonia Baroque, Musica Angelica, and Camarata Pacifica Baroque in Santa Barbara. She is a Guild-certified practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method of Awareness Through Movement and Functional Integration, with a particular interest in the problems facing musicians and performers.

## VIOLA DA GAMBA SOCIETY-PACIFICA

### GAMBA NEWS

GAMBA NEWS is published 10 times a year by the Pacifica chapter of the Viola da Gamba Society. It vacations in July and August.

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**Contributions welcome:** Send concert listings and reviews, opinions, workshop experiences, CD reviews, drawings, or photos to **Lyle York**, Editor, 1932 Thousand Oaks Boulevard, Berkeley, CA 94707, or via e-mail: lyleyork@earthlink.net. Phone (510) 559-9273.

Associate editors are **Ellen Farwell** and **Mary Elliott**. Designer: **Matthew Wilson**.

**Classified ads:** Short classified advertisements in *Gamba News* are free to VdGS-Pacific members. For non-members, ads are \$5 per issue. Please mail your check to **Lyle York** (address above), made out to VdGS-Pacific.

**Web site:** Our VdGS-Pacific chapter Web site, [www.pacificaviols.org](http://www.pacificaviols.org), 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](http://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](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. For more information, contact **Stephen Morris**, 2615 Tanglewood Road, Decatur, GA 30033-2729; (404) 325-2709; [smorris@mindspring.com](mailto:smorris@mindspring.com).

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

**P**HEBE CRAIG NEEDS US, and Phebe is a hard woman to turn down. She pleads for more viol players to sign up for the SFEMS Baroque Music and Dance Workshop, June 22-28, at Dominican University in San Rafael. The workshop is under-enrolled with viols. Martha McGaughey, of the Mannes College of Music in New York, will coach if enough players register. "If money is an issue, let's talk," Phebe says. Contact her at (510) 540-7415, or phebec@aol.com.

**CAROL HERMAN**, known to us formerly as a gamba performer, teacher and director of the Viols West summer work-



**Carol Herman**

shop, expresses surprise and delight at finding herself on the *Gamba News* mailing list. This came about because **Ellen Farwell**, as winner of our recent limerick contest, was awarded a free

subscription to *GN* for a person of her choice, that choice being Carol.

Carol says in an e-mail to Ellen, "I really appreciate being kept in the loop, and, as a writer of many, many lines of silly verse, it's especially wonderful that my subscription came to be because the muse had struck you!!" Many of us are familiar with Carol's quirky and clever musical poems, both from seeing them in print, and from hearing and seeing them delivered with great panache by Carol herself at one workshop or another.

As for that loop and why she's been out of it, Carol's flair for drama (who couldn't have failed to notice it?) has led her in recent years to a new career in acting. She's just finished performing in "Lend Me a Tenor" with a theater company in Southern California. "I got to wear a lot of glitter and act somewhat ditzzy," she says. "Just my cup of tea." Carol fills time between theater auditions with an improv class, and the occasional commercial or TV audition. A week with four trips to LA is not unusual for her. "Someday I may actually

# VIOL TALK

## ANNOUNCEMENTS, GOSSIP & RUMORS

speak a word on a screen you can watch," she says. "However, it's a tough world out there where anyone over age 35 is thought to be practically dead."

But her former musical life is still part of her. "I still do feel schizo," she says, "and I find that I often dream musical dreams, mostly about not finding where I should be going for a rehearsal or concert or, the other night, that I was directing an enormous bunch of viol players, none of whom had brought music stands or bows — details, details! I guess that long part of my life will always be with me. I do miss my musical friends enormously. However, I am completely wrapped up in all things theatrical, and know in my heart that I've made the right decision."

Carol is the grandmother of "utterly adorable" 5-month-old twin girls in San Francisco, so she has a compelling reason to visit the Bay Area now. Maybe she could be persuaded to pick up a viol and make music with us for an hour or two for old times' sake.

**SEE [WWW.PACIFICAVIOLS.ORG](http://WWW.PACIFICAVIOLS.ORG):** The Pacifica web site has a new name — much easier to remember — thanks to webmistress **Helen Tyrrell**. It's [www.pacificaviols.org](http://www.pacificaviols.org).

**HOW FLEETING IS FAME:** *Gamba News* recently received a message from **Ellen Farwell**: "You'd be amused to know

that among the junk mail this morning was an invitation to become an associate member of the Academy of American Poets. Must have been my limerick. I didn't know they read *Gamba News*! I think I'll decline the honor until I have a few more verses under my belt."

A short time later, a second message came. "A closer inspection of the invitation reveals that what the Academy of American Poets really wants from me is a contribution of the monetary kind." It looked as if Ellen's 15 minutes of fame were up.

But no! **Mary Elliott**, who also heard about the Academy of American Poets' interest in Ellen, told her to take heart. "*Bark* magazine also welcomes poetry," wrote Mary, "and we have an in with them." This is because Mary and her partner Monika's dog Laroo will be pictured on the cover of the June issue of *Bark*. Dashing Laroo may have a future in show business.

Laroo, call Carol Herman.

**MORE CANINE NEWS:** **PJ Savage** and partner Elaine raised a Guide Dog puppy, Aston, last year and then gave him up for further training, as is the requirement. Aston was deemed a little too rowdy to complete Guide Dog training, but has been deemed eligible for Search and Rescue or Drug Detection program. Now PJ and Elaine have taken on a new Guide Dog in training, Kyla. She goes to concerts with them and rolls over anytime for a belly rub.

**BASS VIOLS WANTED:** The American Recorder Orchestra of the West, directed by Richard Geisler, plans to learn a repertoire of Spanish and medieval music when it resumes rehearsals in the fall. Orchestra members will divide into small ensembles of three to five players to work on the repertoire. Membership in AROW is by invitation. Geisler is looking for (in addition to high-intermediate-level recorder players) players of plucked and strummed instruments — including bass gamba — who, ideally, also play recorders. The orchestra needs high-intermediate to advanced players with performance experience. Contact Richard Geisler: (530) 477-2293; richgeis@jps.net.

# Steve Lehning on articulation

By Lyle York

The Pacifica Chapter was coached for the first time on May 16 by Steve Lehning, a fine musician living in the Bay Area whom we were pleased to get to know.

In our small-consort play, his coaching was friendly and helpful. He offered a gem of advice on practice technique. Whereas most of us start at the beginning and break down every time at a certain measure, it's better to start with the difficult measure. Play it several times until it feels easier. Then play the preceding measure, and the difficult one. Work backward measure by measure, going forward each time through the difficult measure. By this time it will no longer be difficult.

**Robin Easterbrook** reported a few weeks later that she has been trying this process, "and it works!"

Steve has done extensive research in original 17th- and 18th-century sources in his capacity as operations manager and assistant to the music director for the American Bach Soloists. After our small-consort session, he gave a group lecture-demonstration on articulation, drawing on those years of research.

On the viol, as on all instruments, articulation is most successful when it

*The viol and the cornett are the two instruments most like the human voice*

imitates that of a singer. And expressive singing demands attention to word stresses and the color of vowels.

Steve has read in many historic French and Italian treatises that the viol and the cornett are the two instruments most like the human voice. Music for those instruments was (at least in the Renaissance) essentially vocal, composed as phrases and sentences, and with an awareness of the length of the human breath. The same is true of hymns, a form that has remained fairly constant through the centuries—that is, designed for untrained voices to sing comfortably. And the viol fantasia developed from the vocal madrigal. In most forms of viol music, words and phrases—or imagined words and phrases—determine the shape the player gives to a line of music.

The exception is dance music, in

which words must be subordinate to rhythm.

Steve remarked that nearly all this scholarly emphasis on the treatment of words, and especially of vowels, came from speakers of French, Italian and Spanish; there was almost no such discussion in English and German treatises (though Heinrich Schuetz does talk about violone technique). Why?

Steve believes this is partly because the romance languages have more words ending in vowels than do English and German, and partly because the French, Spanish and Italians are especially preoccupied with their linguistic history and development. As an obvious example, France has for centuries had its Academie Francaise, which actually legislates proper usage. (Imagine trying that in Great Britain or the United States.)

Steve also demonstrated consonant treatment on the viol in one example: hooking can be a good articulation of the Italian double *t*, as in *tutta* (spoken or played as two soft plosives, *tut-ta*).

Good books in English on the subject of articulation Steve cited are Robert Donnington, *Introduction to Articulation in the Baroque*; Thomas Mace, *Musick's Monument*; and Thomas Morley's *A Guide to Practicall Music*. There is always the excellent Christopher Simpson, Steve added, but one must get through the stilted language.

Steve delivered a lot of information in a short time, and we struggled a bit to keep up with it. On reflection after the lecture, some of us thought we would have liked more hands-on demonstration and the opportunity to try these techniques ourselves. But we were short of time, and this was not Steve's fault. We hope we can learn more from him in a future play day.

Steve will be starting study for his doctorate in musicology this fall at UC Davis and will teach viol in that area.

## Gail Ann Schroeder will coach again September 6

By Mary Elliott

In the Planning Ahead Department: We are delighted to announce, in plenty of time for all to mark their calendars, that our September 6 play day will be coached by Gail Ann Schroeder, teaching assistant to Wieland Kuijken at the Royal Conservatory in Brussels.

The play day will include regular small-consort playing for members and

a master-class segment, which will be open to the public. Gail Ann's coaching for us last November was described by **Ellen Farwell** as "a pleasure and a privilege."

Participants will be charged \$30 for the master class, auditors \$10. Those interested in playing for the September master class should contact Mary Elliott, coaching liaison: (510) 527-6671 or [marell@pacbell.net](mailto:marell@pacbell.net).

# Classifieds

## SEEKING CONSORT

**BASS PLAYER**, intermediate, good at sight-reading, seeks to play in consorts of three or more. Could play in my home (Rockridge) or willing to go to others' homes in the Bay Area. Flexible schedule, days or evenings.  
**Ricardo Hofer**,  
(510) 428-1430; hofermr@earthlink.net

## FOR SALE

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

**TREBLE VIOL** by Higgins; neck replacement by him; viol in excellent condition. Early ratchet bow by Neil Hendricks and hard case "arranged" by Herb Myers. \$1,500 for viol, bow, and case. Contact **Kris Montague**, (650) 969-1668.

**BASS VIOL FOR SALE:** Bass viol, 6 string, German-made in the 1970s. With bow and hard case. \$3500. Contact **Helen Tyrrell**, (925) 253-1782; hesuome@pacbell.net

## HOW TO PLACE A CLASSIFIED AD

Short classified advertisements in **GAMBA NEWS** are free to **VdGS-Pacific** members.

For non-members, ads are \$5 per issue. Please mail your check to:

**Lyle York**

**GAMBA NEWS**

**1932 Thousand Oaks Blvd.  
Berkeley, CA 94707-1638.**

**Make checks out to VdGS-Pacific.**

**BASS VIOL BOW FOR SALE:** Figured snakewood, made by Linda Shortridge. \$495. Contact **Don Groves**, (503) 631-7806, dgroves@ccwebster.net

**BASS VIOL BOW FOR SALE:** I purchased this bow from Ralph Ashmead for \$1650 at the 2002 Berkeley Early Music Festival Exhibition. Asking \$1500, as I am in need of new camera equipment! This snakewood bow sits very firmly on the string and is beautifully made, which is typical of Ralph. Contact **Karen Ande**, (415) 586-5285 or kande@igc.org.

**LAZAR'S EARLY MUSIC:** Moeck (recorders and early winds), Kueng, Mollenhauer, Yamaha, Aesthe, Dolmetsch Millenium Recorders, and others in the near future. Competitive prices, instruments sent on approval, personalized service and advice. **Bill Lazar**: (408) 737-8228; jblazar@aol.com; www.bill-lazar.com.

## WANTED

**RECOVERING GUITARIST** WISHES TO PURCHASE a bass viol or fretted cello or hybrid instrument for playing chamber-fusion-jazz music. Oddities welcome. Will consider building a new instrument if a suitable piece cannot be found. **Jeffrey Luhn**, (831) 335-4711 (Santa Cruz area), or guitarkult@aol.com.

# Yes! I want to join VdGS-Pacific! Or renew!

*Just fill out the form below, write a check and mail them both in.*

YOUR FIRST AND LAST NAME

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Make out checks to *VdGS-Pacific*. Mail them with this form to:

*Helen Tyrrell, Treasurer  
VdGS-Pacific  
P.O. Box 188  
Orinda, CA 94563*

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Playing Member (\$25):** You can attend monthly consort meetings for free, you get a free subscription to *Gamba News*, and you get a discount on consort-coaching sessions.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Two-Person Membership (\$35):** Two playing members in the same household. You share all the rights and privileges of a Playing Member.

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\$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Donation to VdGS-Pacific** will help us buy sheet music and rental instruments and fatten our scholarship fund.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ **TOTAL ENCLOSED**

# Mark your calendar

## JUNE 13

**AMERICAN BAROQUE:** Stephen Schultz, baroque flute; Gonzalo X. Ruiz, baroque oboe; Elizabeth Blumenstock, baroque violin; Roy Whelden, viola da gamba; Katherine Shao, harpsichord, performing engaging new works by composers Melissa Hui, Belinda Reynolds, and Elizabeth Blumenstock, as well as works of Georg Philipp Telemann. All the composers except Telemann will be in attendance. Tickets: \$12/\$9/\$6. Children under 12 free. 8:00 p.m., Old First Church, 1751 Sacramento Street, San Francisco. Information: (415) 474-1608.

## JUNE 14, 15

**MUSICAL OFFERING:** Elizabeth Blumenstock, violin; Byton Rakitzis, flute; Lynn Tetenbaum, viola da gamba; Katherine Heater, harpsichord; performing works by J. S. Bach, Telemann, Marais and Leclair. June 14: 8:00 p.m., St. Albans Episcopal Church, 1501 Washington St., Albany. June 15: 4:00 p.m., St. Gregory's Episcopal Church, 500 DeHaro, San Francisco. Information: (510) 271-8041.

## JUNE 22-29

**SFEMS BAROQUE WORKSHOP:** Martha McGaughey, viol (among others). Domini-

can University, San Rafael. For information contact: Phebe Craig, (510) 540-7415, or phebec@aol.com.

## JULY 13-19

**SFEMS MEDIEVAL-RENAISSANCE WORKSHOP:** John Dornenburg, Julie Jeffrey and Elisabeth Reed, viols (among others). Dominican University, San Rafael.

Contact: Hanneke van Proosdij, (510) 236-9808, or medren@lanset.com.

## JULY 20 - 26

**CANTO ANTIGUO PRESENTS AN EARLY MUSIC AND RECORDER WORKSHOP:** At Chapman University, Orange, CA. Recorder, voice, cornetts, reeds, sackbuts, viola da gamba, Baroque technique and ensemble, wind band, original notation, collegium. Viola da gamba taught by Julie Jeffrey.

For information: (909) 626-4322, (800) 358-6567, or www.cantoantiguo.com.

## JULY 27 - AUGUST 3

**VDGSA CONCLAVE:** St. Olaf College,

Northfield, MN. Details at www.vdgsa.org. Contact: Alice Renken, (760) 729-6679, fax (760) 729-6680; arenken@sandwich.net.

## JULY 27 - AUGUST 17

**VANCOUVER EARLY MUSIC PROGRAMME AND FESTIVAL:** School of Music, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C.: Includes three programmes (courses), a workshop and a festival of concerts. Medieval Programme: July 27 - August 8. Baroque Instrumental Programme: August 3 - 8. Lute Workshop: August 3 - 8. Early Music Workshop: July 27 - August 2. Vancouver Early Music Festival: July 27 - August 17. Information: Vancouver Early Music Programme and Festival, 1254 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6H1B6, (604) 732-1610, workshops@earlymusic.bc.ca, www.earlymusic.bc.ca.

## AUGUST 10-16

**VIOLS WEST WORKSHOP,** CalPoly campus, San Luis Obispo. Directed by Rosamund Morley. Details at www.vdgsa.org. **Early-bird deadline to register is June 15.**

Contact: Alice Renken, (760) 729-6679, fax (760) 729-6680; arenken@sandwich.net.

## Gamba NEWS

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