



VIOLE DA GAMBIA SOCIETY PACIFICA

GAMBIA NEWS

Shira Kammen will coach January 10

We are happy to announce that the pan-musical Shira Kammen, an internationally acclaimed performer and past coach for the Pacifica chapter, will coach us once more at our January 10 play day. The interview excerpts below reveal why this play day will be a lot of fun.

Over the years Shira has sung and played the piano, violin, cello, viola, viola da gamba, vielle, medieval harp, rebec, and other instruments too numerous to list.

A member for many years of Ensembles Alcatraz and Project Ars Nova, and Medieval Strings, she has also worked with Sequentia, Hesperion XX, the Boston Camerata, and the King's Noyse, and is the founder of Class V Music, an ensemble dedicated to performance on river rafting trips.

She has performed and taught in the United States, Canada, Europe, Israel, Morocco and Japan, and on the Colorado and Rogue rivers. Shira happily collaborated with the late singer/storyteller John Fleagle for 15

years, and performs now with several new groups: a medieval ensemble, Fortune's Wheel; a new music group, Ephemeros; an eclectic ethnic band, Panacea; and Trouz Bras, a band devoted to the dance music of Celtic Brittany.

Excerpts from an interview by Liz Dobbs in *Early Music America*, 2003



Shira Kammen at Port Townsend Early Music Workshop, July 2003. Photo by William Stickney.

Shira Kammen was born in 1961 and grew up in the Bay Area, the daughter of a professional violinist and a singer who is also a scientist. After receiving her music degree from UC Berkeley, Shira studied vielle with Margriet Tindemans, Shira's greatest musical influence.

Shira's tiny Albany cottage is stuffed with music, instruments, music stands, and photos. During my visit, she played an experimental violin she calls a

violin d'amore, which she commissioned

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PACIFICA PLAY DAY SCHEDULE, 2003-2004

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 to John Mark. Telephone John at (510) 531-1471 or email your data to 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
Jan. 10	Shira Kammen
Feb. 14	John Dornenburg
Mar. 6	Pat O'Scannell
April 10	Rebekah Ahrendt
April 23-25	Yayoi Isaacson and Julie Jeffrey
North/South Viol Meet, Fresno	
May 8	David Morris
June 12	George Houle

Kammen/*continued*

(Continued from page 1)

from instrument builder Jim Wimmer. Beneath the standard four strings of the violin is another set of reverberation strings. As Shira drew her bow across the violin d'amore's playing strings, the reverberation strings took up the sound and sang the notes back in an after-shading. Mozart has described the sound of the viola d'amore as sweet. The experimental violin's voice has that sweetness with a sad, lovelorn inflection.

Shira put the violin d'amore aside and took a vielle from its case. Rather than tucking the instrument under her chin, she rests it lower, just below the collarbone.

Liz: *Why do you hold your vielle low on your chest?*

Shira: There are different ways to hold the vielle. The position will depend on the size and shape of the instrument, and the background of the performer. Margriet Tindemans usually holds hers gamba-style, but being incredibly versatile, will also turn it and play it violin-style as well. I play the vielle most often in a very relaxed violin style. It is easier to hear my own sound with the instrument a bit farther from my ear. There is always surface noise, the sound of the hair on the strings, or the fingers moving on the fingerboard, that an audience does not hear but that can distract the musician.

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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 email: lyleyork@earthlink.net. Phone (510) 559-9273.

Associate editors: Ellen Farwell and Mary Elliott. **Designer:** Helen Tyrrell.

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

Web site: Our VdGS-Pacifica chapter web site, www.pacificaviols.org, is maintained and regularly updated by Helen Tyrrell. It contains the Viol Player's 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. For more information, contact Stephen Morris, 2615 Tanglewood Road, Decatur, GA 30033-2729; (404) 325-2709; smorris@mindspring.com

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

Kammen/*continued*

(Continued from page 2)

Liz: *What is your earliest music memory?*

Shira: Probably listening to chamber music on the record player with my folks. My mom is a professional violinist and my dad sang in choruses, so there was music around all the time. I remember the Schumann piano quintet made a big impression on me. It was so heartfelt and dramatic, and happy and sad all at once.

Liz: *What made you choose music as a career?*

Shira: I think of music as one of the elements, or one of the senses. Though I don't think I ever really chose music—that is, I didn't set out to make something happen. I don't think of myself as particularly ambitious; I was just doing what I enjoyed and was lucky enough to get work doing it. As I like to say, it sure beats working for a living!

Liz: *When you first felt the desire to play music, what instrument did you select, and why?*

Shira: Sometimes I think of myself as a professional dilettante. I like so many things. I played first piano, then cello, violin, viola, viola da gamba, and then found the vielle. My musical preferences kept getting earlier and earlier, and I still like playing lots of different instruments and singing. Some musicians really fall in love with an instrument and want to live in the sound of it, but I am more the kind of musician who loves a type of music and will shamelessly bang away on whatever will get me to that kind of music.

Liz: *What kinds of music projects excite you the most?*

Shira: I love doing music for theater or in collaboration with other kinds of arts. Medieval storytelling and music is a great combination. I'd love to do a series of recordings in national parks. Doing straight concerts is fine, but I feel really excited by projects that dissolve the lines

between performer and audience.

Liz: *You specialize in early music and folk/ethnic music. What do you like about these forms?*

Shira: Of course those terms cover a lot — many hundreds of years of music and styles as varied as North Indian ragas to Irish step-dancing music. The musical language of the medieval style is something I find very poignant. In terms of nuts and bolts, it is a play of consonance and dissonance, always a tension and a resolution. All music is that to some extent, but with medieval and other modal music, it happens in a remarkably clear, and almost physical way.

I think of medieval music as extremely local. I imagine a world where, in order to communicate with the closest ensemble, you couldn't phone, fax, email, or talk in any quick way. You would tailor-make the music work for what you have at hand. It is not prescribed music, like classical music is — the page in classical music tells you all the measurements for the recipe — get louder here, softer here. Medieval music is so much more like cooking without a recipe. It'll be tastier if you use what you happen to have with skill and wit.

Liz: *I love the sound you get from your vielle and fiddle. It's very strong, clear and powerful. How did you go about developing your sound?*

Shira: The tone that a musician makes is so much like the sound a singer makes when singing. I want my sound to be like a voice, with all the nuances and colors of language. It is an ongoing process, trying to discover one's musical voice. I think, with making music, if you can imagine the sound you want, the sound you desire to hear, you have more of a chance of making it. I've never been particularly disciplined at practicing — I love to play, and I think the more one listens to other musicians and other sounds, the sounds of water or birds or car horns, for example, the more of a palette you have in your imagination.

Liz: *What is the most challenging and difficult type of music for you to play, and why? How do you overcome some of the difficulties?*

Shira: Music is challenging in so many different ways. The music I am most technically removed from would be something like the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto. That would take a lot of re-focusing and exercise! But playing a contra-dance tune 20 times really fast is difficult in a very different way — it requires a different kind of stamina, and a complete commitment to rhythm, and a completely relaxed, unstressed technique. Or playing an esoteric troubadour song, starting with no musical notes at all, with a poem that is heady and contextually hard to understand — that poses great difficulty, but more one of making decisions and composing a part. I think playing jazz would be very challenging. Overcoming the difficulties — I'm not sure if one ever does — but the more you immerse yourself in a style the more of it you will understand. It is so much like language. If you go live in the country, you will learn a language more fluently, with its idioms and flavor. You can learn it at home, too, but the context is very different. You can get as far as asking where the central bus station is, or you can make beautiful poetry — depends on your relationship and affinity for the language, your enthusiasm for the culture, and how cheeky you are. You can make poetry with only a few basic words if you dare.

Liz: *What is your absolute favorite music to play, and why?*

Shira: I love playing medieval music; I love singing early Renaissance music in a small ensemble; I love playing Breton folk music for dancers; I love playing Celtic tunes and singing ballads. Oh, and playing Eastern European tunes in weird meters.


Liz: *You've performed all over the world. What is your favorite place to perform?*

(Continued on page 4)

COACHES FOR FRESNO WORKSHOP: Previously we announced that **Yayoi Isaacson** and **Elisabeth Reed** would coach at Fresno next April 23-25. Unfortunately, Elisabeth had a calendar mixup, but we are pleased to announce that she'll be replaced by **Julie Jeffrey**. We are delighted to have these two excellent players and teachers coaching us.

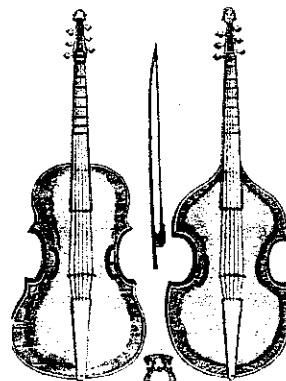
TIME TO VOTE: We have received some votes for Winner and Runners-Up in our Haiku Contest (entries were printed in December's *Gamba News*), but we would like more before declaring a winner. Trying to

VIOL TALK



ANNOUNCEMENTS,
GOSSIP
& RUMORS

choose a "winner" is absurd in an endeavor that does not prize a crass thing like winning? So what. Send in your vote to Lyle York, *Gamba News*, 1932 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Berkeley, 94707, or lileyork@earthlink.net. We'll announce the voting in the February issue.



Kammen/*continued*

(Continued from page 3)

Shira: I've loved playing in Romanesque churches and Gothic cathedrals in Europe, in the stairwell of Kroeber Hall at UC Berkeley, above Granite Rapid on the Colorado River, in the bridge of a ferry at night between Juneau and Haines in Alaska, under some really big boulders up a side creek on the Rogue River, and in the High Sierra and the high desert.

The strangest place I've played is in the elephant enclosure of the Jerusalem zoo. A television news show asked my ensemble to play music to celebrate the birth of a baby elephant. The news announcer was a stylish woman. The mother elephant kept rearranging the news announcer's clothes, while she tried to remove the elephant's trunk from her person. We played a love song with the baby elephant's name in the lyrics. The

little elephant was very cute, though not much interested in the music.

Liz: *What is your ultimate goal as a musician?*

Shira: I don't know if that is clear to me yet. Of course it would be very, very good to feel that any musical contribution made some kind of difference to the good of the world. I would like to be able to inspire a binding together of community. I'd love to inspire some kind of environmental feeling.

Music really can be a language; I guess I'd like to explore that. Also I want to have a really good time — promote bliss and joy and feeling and all that. I'd like to have more confidence about it all.

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Classifieds

SEEKING CONSORT

BASS PLAYER, intermediate, good at sightreading, 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

VISIT YOUR LOCAL VIOL BUILDER! 7-string bass, Bertrand model, rich sound. 6-string bass, Jaye model, bright and delightful to play. Treble, Hoskins model. Tenors and other bass models also available. Soft and hard cases custom-fitted to your instrument. Repairs. Come by to try an instrument, take a shop tour and learn about building viols, or for idle chit-chat. **Alexandra Saur**, 510 558-6927, 559-9563, in Albany.

HOW TO PLACE A CLASSIFIED AD

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

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.

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-Pacificans! Or renew for 2003-2004!

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CITY, STATE AND ZIP

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YOUR PHONE NUMBER, INCLUDING AREA CODE

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\$ _____

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

Helen Tyrrell, Treasurer
 VdGS-Pacificans
 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.

Newsletter-Only Membership (\$10)

Donation to VdGS-Pacificans will help us buy sheet music and rental instruments and fatten our scholarship fund.

TOTAL ENCLOSED

Mark Your Calendar

**January 7, 21; February 4, 18;
March 3, 17, 31; April 14, 28;
May 5, 19; June 2**

Mid-Peninsula Recorder Orchestra meeting: Recorder, early winds and early strings.

The Jane Lathrop Stanford Middle School music room number 2, 480 East Meadow Drive, Palo Alto. Please bring a music stand. Music will be provided at the meeting. 8:00 to 10:00 p.m. (650) 591-3648.

**Saturday, January 10, and
Sunday, January 11**

Mirth and Good Cheer: Medieval, Renaissance and Celtic Music for Midwinter and the Changing of the Seasons. Susan Rode Morris, soprano; Eileen Hadidian,

recorder, flute; Shira Kammen, violin, vielle; Maureen Brennan, Celtic harp; Julie Jeffrey, viola da gamba. Proceeds benefit Healing Muses, an organization that brings healing music to Bay Area hospitals, clinics, convalescent homes and homebound individuals.

*January 10: 8:00 p.m., St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 1501 Washington Street, Albany. \$18/\$15. (510) 524-5661 *3.*

January 11: 4:00 p.m.

Phone reservations are advised for these concerts.

Saturday, January 10

"Auld Lang Syne: The End of the Renaissance; Prima prattica vs. Seconda prattica—the Old and the New," a workshop presented by the Mid-Peninsula Recorder Orchestra, Judith Linsenberg, director. For recorders, soft early double

reeds and early strings. Bring instrument(s) and music stands. Music is included in the workshop fee.

9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Calvert Hall, Union Church of Cupertino, 20900 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino. \$35/\$32. (415) 664-9050, or www.sfems.org/mpro.

Tuesday, January 20

Music at Stanford presents John Dornenburg and Yuko Tanaka in a program of Baroque music for viola da gamba and harpsichord. Program will include Antoine Forqueray's Suite in C Minor, Arcangelo Corelli's Sonata #6 from Opus 5 (arranged for viola da gamba by an anonymous hand in 18th-century France), and J.S. Bach Sonata in G Major BWV 1027.

8:00 p.m., Memorial Church Chapel,

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Letters to Gamba News

Dear Editor:

The October 2003 issue of *Gamba News* reported coach Gail Ann Schroeder's lecture on right-hand technique. Three ways of increasing sound volume by bowing were mentioned: 1. greater pressure on string, 2. higher speed, and 3. bowing closer to bridge.

There is a fourth way: give it more hair! The bow is rotated to place more hair in contact with the string, even all the way until all bow hairs are flat on the string. In this position the weight of the stick alone, without pushing on the stick, provides a healthy amount of sound at a slow bow speed. No need to press, accelerate or move closer to the bridge.

This technique is especially useful when long notes need to be played smoothly. Try it in your next In Nomine when you're "it." Of course, any of the first three ways may be used with more hair, providing more options to the right hand.

I have known (and used) this technique since 1940 when I was a secondary school pupil near Manchester, England, and studied the (modern four-string) contrabass with Tom Hartley, a noted local cellist and bassist. Tom was retired at that time, but had been very active anno 1910, when he performed a cello solo for Queen Alexandra at Sandringham Palace. He recommended "more hair" to facilitate the speaking of the heavy strings of the contrabass. When starting a note, the contrabassist always has to dig in momentarily to set the string in vibration, but then can ease off and play the dynamic indicated. I found that this way smoother starts were available also on other bowed strings, and particularly with the heavier strings on bass viols and (six-string) contrabass viols. I have counted more than 100 individual hairs on a bow—why not put them all into play?

Walter Unterberg
Van Nuys, California

Calendar/continued

(Continued from page 6)

Stanford University campus. \$10/\$5.
Tickets at the door. Wheelchair accessible.

January 23, 24, 25

American Baroque, presented by SFEMS: "Uncommon Grounds."

Stephen Schultz, flute; Gonzalo X. Ruiz, oboes; Elizabeth Blumenstock, violin; Roy Whelden, viola da gamba; Joanna Blendulf, cello; Katherine Shao, harpsichord. From Marais's obsessive "Sonnerie" to the wit and whimsy of Carl Stone and Marc Mellits, the Baroque comes face-to-face with recent American music in an innovative program built upon repeating bass lines. Tickets \$25/\$22/\$10. (510) 528-1725 or www.sfems.org.

Friday, January 23: 8:00 p.m., First Lutheran Church, Homer and Webster streets, Palo Alto

Saturday, January 24: 8:00 p.m., St. John's Presbyterian Church, College Avenue between Garber and Forest, Berkeley

Sunday, January 25: 4:00 p.m., St. Gregory Nyssen Episcopal Church, DeHaro and Mariposa, San Francisco

Sunday, February 8

Lynn Tetenbaum, viola da gamba, and Yuko Tanaka, harpsichord: the complete

sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord by J.S. Bach.

3:00 pm. Presented by the Chattanooga Chamber Series: the home of Kathy and Mark Perl, 152 Chattanooga Street (between Dolores and Church), San Francisco. \$15. Space is limited, so please reserve a seat in advance: (415) 641-0940.

February 13-15

The Dancing Master: a workshop for instrumentalists and dancers. Faculty includes Margriet Tindemans, viol and director; Jack Ashworth, violin, viol and harpsichord, and Emily Walhout, viol and cello. Master classes, consorts, and chamber ensembles in the music and dance of the Renaissance and baroque.

Seattle Pacific University, Seattle. Fee: \$260 by December 15; \$275 after. For further information and a registration brochure, contact the Early Music Guild, (206) 325-7066, or education@earlymusicguild.org.

Sunday, March 21

Bach's Birthday Bash: Elisabeth Reed, viola da gamba and baroque cello, and Corey Jamason, harpsichord. Featuring Bach's gamba sonata in g minor, cello suite in C major and arias from his cantatas with soprano Catherine Webster and violinist Cynthia Miller Freivogel. Tickets \$18/\$15.

5:00 p.m., MusicSources, 1000 The Alameda at Marin Avenue, Berkeley. (510) 528-1685, or msources@lmi.net.

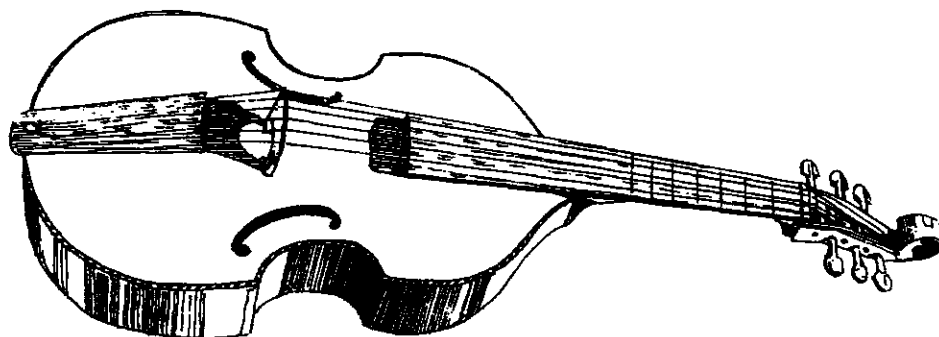
March 26, 27, 28

The Yukimi Kambe Viol Consort, presented by SFEMS: "Renaissance Roots, Global Flowerings." Yukimi Kambe, Eriko Ozawa, Maki Noguchi, and Kaori Hashizume, viols, play interpretations of Renaissance music and groundbreaking new works for viols. Tickets \$25/\$22/\$10. (510) 528-1725 or www.sfems.org.

Friday, March 26: 8:00 p.m., First Lutheran Church, Homer and Webster streets, Palo Alto

Saturday, March 27: 8:00 p.m., St. John's Presbyterian Church, College Avenue between Garber and Forest, Berkeley

Sunday, March 28: 4:00 p.m., St. Gregory Nyssen Episcopal Church, DeHaro and Mariposa, San Francisco



GAMBA NEWS

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Mary Elliott
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PLAY

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