



## VdGS-Pacifica launches a new season/*continued*

---

(Continued from page 1)

was a co-founder of the chapter (with **Lee McRae**) in 1988 and has served on the Board with wisdom and diligence ever since; her latest presidential term lasted four years, but that doesn't count her earlier stints as president. She'll remain on the Board as a member-at-large.

**Helen Tyrrell**, after eight years of handling our complex (even if not listed on the NYSE) finances as Treasurer, is taking a well-deserved break from the Pacifica Board, in favor of working with dogs and elephants. These animals rise early, and so does Helen, so she says it's been hard for her to stay awake

during Board meetings--not, she assures us, because they lack interest.

As noted above, **Julie Morrisett** will be the new editor of *Gamba News* starting next month. **Lyle York** is taking a break from front-lines journalism in the gamba world.

### The next chapter meeting

The Pacifica chapter's next meeting will be Friday, September 24, 7:30 p.m., at **Lyle York's** house, 1932 Thousand Oaks

(Continued on page 6)

---

## 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.

#### PACIFICA CHAPTER BOARD

President **Ellen Farwell** (lbfarwell@earthlink.net)  
Vice President **Lyle York** (lyleyork@earthlink.net)  
Secretary **Marilyn Becker** (becker3049@yahoo.com)  
Treasurer **Penni (Pj) Savage** (psavage205@aol.com)

#### BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE

**John Mark** Rental Coord. (mark\_bach8@hotmail.com)  
**Lee McRae** VdGSA chapter rep. (LmcR@aol.com)  
**Mary Elliott** Coaching liaison (marell3@earthlink.net)  
**Julie Morrisett** Newsletter editor (jmorrisett@sbcglobal.net)  
**John Dornenburg** (jdrnbrg@concentric.net)  
**Alvin Roper** (925-426-0829)  
**Elisabeth Reed** (ereed@eskimo.com)  
**Colin Shipman** (mrshipman@aol.com)  
**Robin Easterbrook** (reasterbrook@mac.com)

**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 Julie Morrisett, Editor, Gamba News, 412 Arkansas Street, San Francisco, CA 94107. Make out the check to VdGS-Pacifica.

**Web site:** Our VdGS-Pacifica chapter web site, [www.pacificaviols.org](http://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](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

**Contributions welcome:** Send concert listings and reviews, opinions, workshop experiences, CD reviews, drawings, or photos to Julie Morrisett, Editor, 412 Arkansas Street, San Francisco, CA 94107, or via email: [jmorrisett@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jmorrisett@sbcglobal.net). Phone (415) 648-1138.

**Associate editor:** Mary Elliott. **Designer:** Helen Tyrrell.

# A master class with Mary Springfels

By Lyle York

Mary Springfels, the revered viol player and teacher based in Chicago, conducted a two-hour master class for the Pacifica Chapter this past June, during the EMA early music conference in Berkeley. She gave us every cent of our money's worth in those two hours. Her coaching, a balanced blend of verbal advice and musical demonstration, produced visible improvement in every student's performance.

Mary never wastes time or emotion. She is always tactful, but she goes straight to the point and to the heart of the student's difficulty, whatever it may be. To each performer who mentioned nervousness, she gave both philosophical and concrete advice: first, playing while nervous is part of the master-class learning experience. Players should accept nervousness and learn to play through it. Second, there are tricks to overcoming anxiety's symptoms, such as loosening the thumb on the bow in order to relax the tensing right biceps and steady the bow on the string; and keeping the body still, using only the parts one needs.

Julie Morrisett played Marais' Chaconne No. 31 from Book V, accompanied by her teacher, Elisabeth Reed. To perfect the first

phrases, which are typical of a chaconne or sarabande—short-long—Mary advised Julie to think constantly about the speed and length of her bows, varying them to avoid a flat effect, and to practice the short-long rhythmic structure first before adding the left hand. Marais tends to give players a challenging left-hand passage and make them forget the right hand. The player shouldn't forget to keep the right-hand fingers flexible for a stable bow. Mary praised Julie for not being afraid of the low end of the bow.

To master an "evil" left-hand passage, Mary suggested figuring out a comfortable approach to the preceding notes, and working gradually forward into the difficult passage. One can use that method to integrate each cluster of bowings/notes, always using the sense of one's own body to move comfortably from point A to point B. For work above the frets, she advised cultivating an awareness of the first finger as an anchor and of where the interval of a third lies in relation to it—e.g., A to C#.

She mentioned John Hsu's thesis that entire phrases in Marais' music involve a series of bow gestures that must be practiced as a series, not individually. The player learns to position the bow for each gesture. Some of these, such as a jeté stroke, require a great amount of bow, and some must be done with short strokes to leave

the bow in position to use its full extent. What Mary described as "phrasing" can also be thought of as an exercise in analysis of the required bowing for the series of gestures making up a phrase.

Mary then demonstrated how she would establish a specific character for each couplet of the chaconne, thinking of larger units when executing the phrases. She interpreted the first couplet as martial, the next one graceful.

A coach conducting a master class communicates not only verbally but through performance. Both audience and student can learn the most telling details and precise nuances, illuminating the concept as well as the technique of the teacher. Mary's presentation was particularly rich in conveying her meaning through performance. In particular, her jeté stroke in demonstrating how to perform it in the chaconne was striking; no words were necessary to inspire all players present to acquire that particular ability.

Glenna Houle played the first three movements of J. S. Bach's Sonata in D Major for Gamba and Obligato Harpsichord (BWV 1028) with harpsichordist Leta Huang. The first movement is a confident portrait of the bright key of D major.



Mary Springfels, harpsichordist Leta Huang and page turner George Houle listen as Glenna Houle works with Mary

For the fast Allegro movement, Mary advised Glenna to start with the tip of the bow but then move to using the middle-top portion or even the middle-bottom portion. The player does not have to work so hard there as with the tip.

The third movement, Andante, explores the tension between the sadness of loss and the necessity of moving on. This is a technically and emotionally challenging piece. The player must convey melancholy but is not allowed to stop forging ahead through it. Mary suggested that Glenna think of the lines as floating on a column of

air, as for a singer or oboe player, and to maintain steady string contact, enforcing the theme of inevitability.

This piece, Mary remarked, is so emotionally demanding to play that it serves as an antidote to nervousness. At the same time, she cautioned that the player must keep an emotional distance so as to be able to concentrate on the performance. Her demonstration used a faster tempo and emphasized the quality of determination rather than that of melancholy.

(Continued on page 6)



*Jay Elfenbein and class members John Mark and Susan Marchant play jazz at the banquet. John is playing the Ruby Gamba.*

This summer's Conclave in Tacoma, Washington, administered a good dose of learning in a relaxed setting, much the best way. The University of Puget Sound campus was lovely and the walking distances conveniently short. The new dorms in which we stayed are arranged in suites of five or so single rooms with a common room that includes a refrigerator, an arrangement that dispelled the feeling of isolation one can get at a large workshop. The cafeteria food was better than average.

Highlights of the week included the sight of **John Mark** improvising on the Ruby Gamba, the new solid-body electric viol. Jay Elfenbein's class in the Ruby played jazz at the Conclave banquet, and John rip-snorted his

## Snapshots of Conclave

way through this performance, to much applause. He lacked only his trademark shades (see photo).

This year there seemed to be even more opportunities for ad hoc consorts than usual. **Ricardo Hofer** reports that he finally got to play late enough. Ricardo is from Argentina, where they know how to stay up, and is often seen wandering forlornly around at 11:30 begging those still awake to play with him. This time, he says, "Martha Bishop was being picked up by the airport van at 4:30 a.m., and she declared at 1:30 that she might as well not go to bed. Several hardy and courageous souls played six-part Byrd fantasias with her. But only until 3 a.m., when Martha gave up."



*Rae Parlier, Bill Lazar and Ricardo Hofer*

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Conclave/*continued*

*(Continued from page 4)*



*Yukimi Kambe discusses the wrist with Lyle York in a class in bass technique*

It was also uplifting to witness, at the annual fund-raising auction, John Mark Rozendaal's valiant rescue of Ken, Viol Barbie's ex. Ken had been abducted by rogue members of VdGSA's Board, Division of Finance, who thought they could get money out of us by selling raffle tickets and exhorting us to "Save Ken." Well, they extracted money from the membership as expected, but best of all, John Mark (whom we call JMR to differentiate him from Pacifican John Mark) and his new wife, Susan Daily Rozendaal, will now take Ken home and give him some decent clothes. For some reason, Ken was auctioned in only his birthday suit, wrapped in a cloth.

How do we know Ken is now Barbie's ex? Barbie, now a successful career woman (see her interview with Martha Stewart in *Gamba News*, April 2004), is no longer concerned that Ken wouldn't ask her to marry him. Ken was spotted last March standing in line with G.I. Joe, both in natty tuxes, outside San Francisco's City Hall. We wish Ken and Joe the very best, and the same to JMR and Susan!



*Members of Beth McDonald's Lupo class, including Pacificans Julie Morrisett (second from left) and Robin Easterbrook (kneeling)*



*Carol Deihl and Kim Shrier, who have acquired the Boulder Early Music Shop from the retired Ruth Harvey. The shop is now located in Ouray, Colorado. Carol and Kim love playing recorder and viol, and their former trade was computer consulting, so their new business is an excellent fit.*

## Springfels/*continued*

(Continued from page 3)

Mary Prout, Mary Elliott and Colin Shipman executed an unusual Gibbons Fantasia, No. 18 (*Musica Britannica*), for treble, bass and double bass. Because it is an English piece that would not have been played on French 7-string basses, as the players did, Mary Springfels suggested that they understate the bass lines to allow the treble to emerge as the soloist, and to sound more like an English vocal ensemble than a combination of three French baroque viols. The basses could do this by using slower bows.

These three players had prepared a piece for the class but are not a regular ensemble. Mary said that a good way to quickly attain a tight ensemble effect in such circumstances is to practice matching eighth notes, in typical patterns on open strings. She advised longer bows for augmentations and shorter ones for diminutions—the classical advice that these players had already followed very well—but could follow even more. And she



Mary Prout, Colin Shipman and Mary Elliott play a Gibbons trio for Mary Springfels' master class

expressed a preference for playing through dotted notes, holding onto them “just a titch more.” Although the treble is the chief singer in this Fantasia and uses long, expressive bows, there are times when using less bow creates more energy, such as in a passage that briefly imitates a fiddle band.

Perhaps the best advice of the day, for all of us present, was what Mary called “the secret of consort playing.” That is, unlike a string quartet, which agonizes over every note from every player before performing a piece, a viol consort is supposed to glory in *learning while reading*, responding to

one another on the spot. A viol consort learns to walk a fine line between control and adjustment—matching bow speeds, listening for a change signal from another player, building on what came before and preparing the path for what comes after.

*Editor's note:* Glenna and George Houle contributed a good deal of material for this story.

## New season/*continued*

(Continued from page 2)

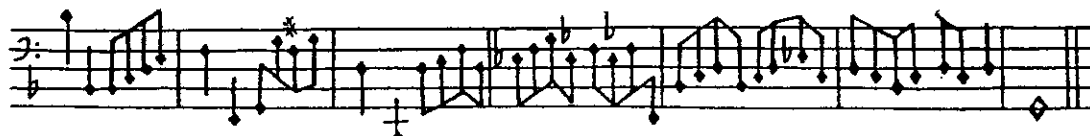
Blvd., Berkeley. All members are welcome. If you are interested in joining the Pacifica Board, or just want to know how we make decisions while eating too many cookies, please come. (For directions to Lyle's, contact her at 510-559-9273 or [lileyork@earthlink.net](mailto:lileyork@earthlink.net).)

### Upcoming workshops

It's never too early to plan for next

summer's Conclave and regional workshops. The Conclave, in particular, has put out the word that early registrants definitely have an advantage in their choice of classes. These dates have been announced for 2005: Viols West, San Luis Obispo, August 7-12; VdGSA Conclave, July 24-31 at Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts; Pacific Northwest Workshop, Seattle, July 10-16, location to be announced in a future issue. And our very own mini-regional workshop with pool and Hawaiian shirts, the Annual North-South

Viol Meet in Fresno, will be coached by Elisabeth Reed and Shira Kammen, April 22-24. This year's Fresno workshop is being organized by Viols West, the Southern California chapter. Your contact person is Stu Elliott, [selliott625@earthlink.net](mailto:selliott625@earthlink.net), (626) 798-2912.



# Undertaking a Youth Project

---

By Lee McRae

Late in the spring of 2003, after months of discussion by members of Pacifica's Youth Project Committee, the Pacifica Board voted to fund the project in the amount of \$500 for the year. **Elisabeth Reed** agreed to be the teacher. The committee now consists of **Elisabeth, John Mark, Robin Easterbrook, Ellen Farwell, Alexandra Saur, and Lee McRae.**

After a demonstration of the gamba for the Longfellow Orchestra of Berkeley's Longfellow School, whose leader is Jan Davis, a group of middle-school-age girls said they would like to learn this new instrument. They were assured the loan of a gamba and a reasonable lesson fee.

John Mark drew up a loan agreement to be signed by the student and a parent. Elisabeth agreed to give lessons twice a month, for \$15 per lesson from each student. The Pacifica Chapter voted to subsidize the monthly payment so that Elisabeth would be fairly recompensed.

Our then-Treasurer, **Helen Tyrrell**, kindly handled these transactions.

During the year some students dropped out and some were added. By this spring, two of the students had been regulars since the fall. Two others joined the group and received introductory "catch-up" lessons from **David Morris**, which the parents paid for. John made sure the instruments we lent the students were in good shape, and also keeps them supplied with strings as needed; "This requires John to climb my apartment stairs multiple times to deliver things," says Elisabeth, who lives on the fifth floor. Lee donated two bows to the project. Elisabeth recommended the Martha Bishop method book to the students, and each bought one. A Violab tuner and several method books were donated to the project this summer by our faithful out-of-state member **Don Groves** of Oregon City, Oregon.

The classes meet at the home of one of the Berkeley students, since she has to use bus or bicycle, and getting around with a viol is difficult for her. The class

continued through the summer except when teacher or students were away on vacation. The students are **Imogen Poropot, Emily Judd, Zuriah Meacham, and Catherine Berner.**

We thank Elisabeth for persevering with this extremely worthwhile project. We are one of the very few chapters in the country that have made this a reality. We hope that in the fall the students will attend our play day sessions—when they are not involved in Scottish dancing, bagpipe lessons, youth orchestras, and the other activities that fill their lives!

One of the students, Imogen Poropot, has attended the August Music Discovery Workshop in Berkeley for at least two years, and first saw the gamba demonstrated there. This summer, **Amy Brodo** coached both gamba and cello, and John Mark supplied the gambas from our rental program. There were three students on the gamba, including Imogen. This "Renaissance day camp," as founder Lee McRae calls it, is a wonderful week of singing, dancing, and instruction in crafts and instruments.

---

## From Mendocino County, early music on the radio

Pacifica member **Jim Denton** of Ukiah hosts a very good radio show, on both airwaves and web—stations KZYX and KZYZ, Mendocino County Public Broadcasting. "Beyond Bach" airs on alternate Mondays from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon (the second, fourth and fifth Mondays of the month). The show reaches listeners in the Mendocino area at 88.3, 90.7 and 91.5 on the FM dial; Bay Area people can listen on computer by following the instructions below.

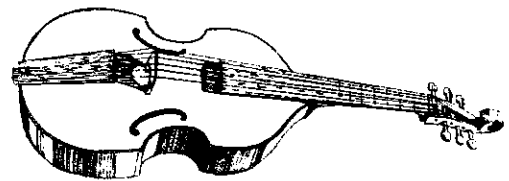
The show presents Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque music, played with authentic performance practice on original or reproductions of original instruments. Jim narrates additional historical and cultural context, something he is qualified to do after 35 years of studying and performing early music in the Bay Area and points north. Pacifica members know him as a fine consort player at play days (and the one who generally travels farthest to get to Oakland).

Past subjects have included Monteverdi's contemporaries, French airs de cour, the cometto, Hildegard, music for the birth of Louis

XIV, music of the Crusades, and the tarantella, the Italian dance that cures the bite of a mythical spider.

On many computers, you can just go to the link below to hear the live audio. If your computer is not so equipped, simply follow the directions on your screen to download a temporary audio connector.

The link is [http://www.kzyx.org/pages/listen\\_now.html](http://www.kzyx.org/pages/listen_now.html). Jim's own email address is [redtail@pacific.net](mailto:redtail@pacific.net).



# Classifieds

## 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.

**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;

## 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:

Julie Morrisett  
GAMBA NEWS  
412 Arkansas Street  
San Francisco, CA 94107  
jmorrisett@sbcglobal.net

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

**Bass viol, Peter Tourin**, Jericho, VT. English division bass after Henry Jaye; No. 49, 1983. With decorated fingerboard and tailpiece, carved rose. 67.3 cm free string length. Very nice condition with a few chips to the finish on the edges. It sold in 1983 for \$3225 for the decorative work. The viol would sell now for about \$9-10,000, according to Peter Tourin. Comes with a nice custom-fitted hard case and bow. Asking \$7000.

**Bass viol, Wolfgang Uebel**, Celle, Germany, 1977. With carved rose on sound board; 64 cm free string length. Very nice condition. Asking \$6000 with unpadded soft case. Bows available separately.

**Treble viol, Neil Hendricks**, Reno, CA, 1973. With gear tuning machines.

Suitable for a beginner. Asking \$450, with Hendricks 'ratchet' bow, no case.

**Bows (4):** **Chris English**, octagonal/round stick, 60 cm free hair length, 74 gms., asking \$1000; **Grabenstein/Tourin** bow (1983), ebony frog/nut, 60 cm free hair length, 68 gms., new hair, asking \$1000; **William Monical**, octagonal stick, ebony frog/nut, 60.5 cm free hair length, 59 gms., new hair, asking \$800; **Pfretzschner**, 61 cm free hair length, 59 gms., new hair, asking \$700.

Pictures of all are available on my web site ([www.bill-lazar.com](http://www.bill-lazar.com)) on the 'used instruments' page. Contact Bill Lazar, [jblazar@aol.com](mailto:jblazar@aol.com), (408) 730-2238 for more information.

**RUBY INSTRUMENTS:** The world's first production model of a 7-string solid body electric viola da gamba! Play traditional and crossover music on one instrument! To hear and play the Ruby, contact Kirby, (510) 317-0834 or (510) 332-0834 (24-hour message); [gambaguy@msn.com](mailto:gambaguy@msn.com).

