

VIOLA DA GAMBA SOCIETY PACIFICA VOLUME 18, NO. 3 NOVEMBER 2004

GAMMA NEWS

Pacifica Chapter News

Lyle York _____

At its meeting September 24 the Pacifica Board discussed some topics of interest to all our members. We welcomed as new board members our newly elected Treasurer, Penni (Pj) Savage, and new members-at-large Alexandra Saur, Ricardo Hofer and Peter Ballinger.

Mary Elliott, the chapter's coaching liaison, has written a questionnaire asking how satisfied members are with our play day structure. This survey follows up on one from nearly

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Clef Heaven? Six students from Julie Jeffrey's (kneeling in front) Tenor Class, Billie Hamilton, Dorothy Orlin, Lee McRae, Pj Savage, Ricardo Hofer, and Robin Easterbrook. See story page 5.

Pacifica Play Day Schedule, 2004-2005

Each month, as soon as you receive your Gamba News (or before), please call or email John Mark, our peerless consort arranger, to tell him you will attend the upcoming play day and what size(s) you will bring. (510) 531-1471; mark_bach8@hotmail.com.

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 9:15am for the coached session.

Sheet music, coffee and tea will be supplied. Please bring either a sack lunch for yourself or a dish or drinks to share at our customary potluck. The church has a microwave we can use. There is also a Mexican Restaurant close by.

Please bring a music stand and any consort music of your own you'd like to play. Consorts are

formed based on the information you provide to John Mark. Newcomers and rank beginners are welcome.

| DATE | COACH |
|-----------------------|---|
| November 6 | Joanna Blendulf |
| December 4 | Yayoi Isaacson |
| January 8, 2005 | Gail Ann Schroeder (includes master class) |
| February 5 or 12, TBA | John Dornenburg at Stanford |
| March 12 | Shira Kammen |
| April 22-24, Fresno | Elisabeth Reed and Shira Kammen |
| May 7 | David Morris |
| June 11 | Amy Brodo |

Chapter News, cont'd

two years ago; it's time to check with members again. Please fill out the enclosed very short survey and mail it to Mary. Your opinions are crucially important to the board!

If you're reading this Gamba News and have not paid your dues for the upcoming season (see Page x), you are on borrowed time! Skating on thin ice! Juggling with chainsaws! You're about to be dropped from the mailing list! Please don't let that happen. Mail in your dues. They are always due in September. Members who haven't paid by November will no longer receive the newsletter.

And while we're lecturing everyone, John Mark needs to know promptly who is coming to each upcoming play day and what size viol you will bring. As all players know, it is a tricky job to put together harmonious consorts. Please let John know in advance whether you are coming or if you need to cancel. And please arrive on time, at 9:15. Mary Elliott will be sending all members who have e-addresses a reminder on the Wednesday preceding each Saturday play day. It may be true that Mary has acquired some serious boots and a leather outfit.

Gail Ann Schroeder, who coached us twice last year while visiting from Brussels, will be here again January 8. She has shown herself to be an extraordinarily sensitive player and coach. That Saturday's play day will include a master class segment. Let Mary Elliott know if you would like to play for Gail Ann – solo, duet or consort. (Mary's contact information is on Page 2.)

Finally, we'd like to encourage all members to come to board meetings. We'll announce the time and place of the next meeting in a future issue.

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; (510) 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.

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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 jmorrisett@sbcglobal.net; (415) 648-1138.

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 made out to VdGS-Pacific to Julie Morrisett, Editor, 412 Arkansas Street, San Francisco, CA 94107.

Website www.pacificaviols.org

Our VdGS-Pacific chapter website 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) website 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 \$15 to \$30 per month. In charge of rentals is John Mark, 10 Holyrood Manor, Oakland, CA 94611; (510) 531-1471; mark_bach8@hotmail.com.



For Sale, cont'd

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 Millennium Recorders, and others in the near future. Competitive prices, instruments sent on approval, personalized service and advice. **Bill Lazar**, (408) 737-8228.

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; **Harry 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; **H.R. Pfretzschner**, 61 cm free hair length, 59 gms., new hair, asking \$700.

Pictures of all are available on my website (www.bill-lazar.com) on the 'used instruments' page. Contact **Bill Lazar**, 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.



“Butt on the chair—feet on the ground!”

Back to Basics with Rebekah Ahrendt 9/4/04

Mary Elliot

When she first suggested this at a play day last year, we assumed that our behinds and feet were more or less where they ought to be. But no, they were often tilted this way or that way and not planted firmly. In her presentation this year, Rebekah provided guidance for our other body parts, as well.

She recommended allowing air between the body of the viol and the body of the player so that the back of the viol can vibrate freely. Holding it slightly away from the body makes looking at the bow's trajectory or the fingerboard impossible, but Rebekah assured us “You don't need

to see what you're doing.” Also, holding the viol straight up helps the left hand to bend less, creating less tension. To address the viol, she suggested we first think of the shoulders and elbows, then drop them and forget them. This led to discussion of another body part we don't need — the thumb. It should remain loose and travel easily with the rest of the hand. Then she asked us to become aware of the stomach muscles and our breathing (it helps to wear tight pants). Since “we are all singers on the viol,” it's important to train ourselves to become aware of breathing.

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Mark Your Calendar

November 3, 17; December 2; January 5, 19; February 2, 16; March 2, 9, 23; April 6, 20; May 4, 18; June 1

Meeting dates of the mid-Peninsula Recorder Orchestra, which welcomes early strings and winds. Please bring a music stand. Music will be provided at the meeting. For information call Fred-eric Palmer, (650) 591-3648, or visit the orchestra website at www.sfems.org/mpro.

8:00 pm, *Jane Lathrop Stanford Middle School Music Room 050, 480 East Meadow Drive, Palo Alto*

Saturday, November 6

Distant Oaks: Deborah Shayne, Jared White and Julie Jeffrey. Gaelic, Medieval, and Renaissance Music, featuring cittern, recorders, whistles, bagpipes, harps, and viola da gamba. Presented by Festival Antiqua. \$15/\$12.

8:00 pm, *Parish Hall, St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 1501 Washington Ave, Albany. (510) 486-2803, (510) 524-7952, www.timrayborn.com/Festival.html*

Sunday, November 7

Elderhostel workshop for Recorders and Early Strings. Faculty includes Letitia Berlin, Frances Blaker, Shira Kammen, and Elisabeth Reed. Continues through November 13.

Hidden Valley Music Center, Carmel Valley, CA. (831) 659-3115, www.elderhostel.org

Saturday, November 13

Ensemble Calisto (Vismaya Lhi-Soprano, Sean Smith-Lute, and Julie Morrisett-Viola da Gamba) perform music from 16th century Spain and Italy, including songs and instrumental variations by Juan Vasquez, Phillippe Verdelot(to) and Diego Ortiz. \$15

8:00 pm, *St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 1501 Washington Ave., Albany. (415) 267-3996, ensemblecalisto@earthlink.net*

Saturday, November 20

Ensemble Calisto repeats program of November 13. \$15

8:00 pm, *Presidio Chapel, Presidio, San Francisco. (415) 267-3996, ensemblecalisto@earthlink.net*

Sunday, November 21

Wildcat Viols: Joanna Blendulf, Julie Jeffrey, and Elisabeth Reed, violas da gamba. Madrigals, songs and fantasies from England and Italy: Music of Wilbye, Dowland, Purcell, Marenzio and others. \$18/\$15.

5:00 pm, *MusicSources, 1000 The Alameda, Berkeley. (510) 528-1685*

Clef Heaven with Julie Jeffrey

Pj Savage

Was it clef heaven or clef hell? The answer depended on how easily you could adjust your brain cells to consider those notes all spread out on different lines and spaces. Six of us (see picture on front page) gathered at Ms. Julie's Viol School for a five week intensive course on tenor Viola da Gamba. What a blast! We started out with a Pavane [IV] (Si pr souffrir), a nice four part piece with the first three lines in treble clef and only the bass line in bass clef. "Where's the alto clef line" I wondered. You guessed it, there wasn't one. Nothing like diving into the deep water right away. But we did it. We each mastered every line, including the bass line! OK, we didn't master it, but came darn close. Ms. Julie improved our tenor technique each meeting with scale exercises that we were to do in different patterns. Would you believe more than 14 different patterns? That probably covers most patterns

a tenor will meet in playing early music. As our lessons were coming to an end, we got to play two wonderful Telemann pieces, Canonic Sonata No. 1, Movement 3 and Sonata 1.3, that some of us had played on recorders many years ago. Fortunately, both parts were in alto clef. Peter Ballinger may be publishing these wonderful pieces for viol in the near future. We hope so, as they are stunning played on the tenor viol.

Ms Julie may offer Tenor Intensive II sometime in the Spring. If you are interested, please contact Pj as I will keep a list of dedicated tenor players. You should be comfortable reading alto clef, treble at pitch and treble down (or was it up?) on your tenor. I learned that middle C is a slippery little thing, but given a little practice and some great teaching I could nail down middle C and make it stay put for an entire piece -- well almost.



Join VdGS-Pacifica or renew for 2004-2005

First and last name _____

Mailing address _____

City, State and Zip _____

e-mail address _____

Phone number, including area code _____

_____ *Playing Member (\$25): You can attend monthly consort meetings 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-Pacifica will help us buy sheet music and rental instruments and fatten our scholarship fund.*

_____ **TOTAL ENCLOSED**

Make out check to VdGS-Pacifica. Mail it with this form to:

Penni (Pj) Savage, Treasurer
VdGS-Pacifica
436 Hudson Street
Oakland, CA 94618

Rebekah Ahrendt, cont'd

Next, the left hand assumes a handshake position and then hangs from the top edge of the fingerboard, maintaining the poise of a dancer (especially a French Baroque dancer). Although cellists finger the "top of the note," gambists need to finger the frets at an angle, as this results in the best sound. To test the fingers' relationship to the frets, she suggested that we pluck the strings with the right hand to ensure that the left hand's finger placement is not choking the sound.

Like the left hand, the right hand also starts with a handshake. This sets up the right angle for the wrist, whose role is to steady the bow and create string contact. The real motion, however, starts with the second and third fingers, not the wrist. The first part of the sound comes from the fingers, and the second part of the sound comes from pronation of the wrist counterclockwise.

String changing all happens on one plane, and the right arm should never stretch out all the way. Motion does not begin in the shoulder but in the elbow (we open and close doors with elbow motion, not shoulder motion). When moving the bow from high to low strings, the arm should not drop. Also, when arriving at the lowest string, the body should not rotate backward to the right; rather, the elbow should be brought backward.

Some of the participants asked questions about the different schools of bow handling and left finger technique. Rebekah has seen many different techniques work well for various people. We simply need to try everything and use what works best for us.

Again, we enjoyed Rebekah's delightfully relaxed and irreverent presence and welcome her back next year!



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