

VIOLA DA GAMBA SOCIETY PACIFICA VOLUME 18, NO. 4 DECEMBER 2004

GAMBA NEWS

It's All in the Bow *Play day with Joanna Blendulf*

Mary Elliott

Joanna Blendulf gave an informative lecture/demonstration on bow speed for the November play day. Attention to bow speed and length, she said, creates a cohesive consort sound. She illustrated the point with the well-known Browning phrase, "The leaves bee green," using the pattern pull/push, pull/push. "The" is a short pull bow beginning near the tip; "leaves" is a long, swelling push stroke; and "bee green" is two relaxed and soft short pull and push strokes made near the frog.

The player then has to manage a long, very light, nearly inaudible, airy pull-bow in order to arrive at the same starting place for the next phrase, "The nut-tes bee brown."

For a second example, Joanna demonstrated the same bowing pattern using a common bass line



Joanna Blendulf, holding a very unusual treble viol

phrase: low G on a pull bow/octave G on a push bow/the adjacent F# on a pull bow/G on a push bow. Her third example introduced

a push/pull/push/pull pattern, beginning with a low G half note/ an F# quarter note in the next octave/a G half note/an F# quarter note. If practiced as an ensemble, these three patterns can teach the group to use the same amounts of bow, unifying their sound.

Swells are usually performed with the push bow, but, Joanna added, we must be able to do the opposite just as well: a quick, light push bow and a fast, swelling pull bow. This is because musical sequences often require alternating "forward" and "backward" bowing patterns. Summing up, she recommended we "develop a great bow vocabulary."

One of the morning consort groups played a six-part fantasia by

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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 9:15 am 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
December 4	Yayoi Isaacson
January 8, 2005	Gail Ann Schroeder (includes master class)
February 12, Stanford	John Dornenburg
March 12	Shira Kammen
April 22-24, Fresno	Elisabeth Reed and Shira Kammen
May 7	David Morris
June 11	Amy Brodo

For Sale

Bass Viola da Gamba bow by Ralph Ashmead; \$1,500 or best offer. Contact **Elisabeth Reed**, (510) 482-1684.

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.

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.

Bass viol, Peter Tourin, Jericho, VT. English division bass after Henry Jaye; no. 49, 1983. With decorated fingerboard and tail-piece, 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 unpadding 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.

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GAMMA NEWS

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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.



Viol Rhetoric with George Houle

Mary Elliott

In the October 2 play day, George Houle used the five-part Wilbye madrigal "Sweet Hony Sucking Bees" ("apt both for Voyals and Voyces" to illustrate how "voyals" must indeed become "voices." He marked articulations and stresses into each part, emphasizing the relationship between the sound of the words and their meanings and how those elements must be mimicked by the viols. The first note of the piece begins with "Sweet," a quarter note followed by a dotted quarter and eighth on "honey." George marked a separation between "Sweet" and "honey" that shortens the first word and emphasizes the "t" of "sweet." The enunciation of the word makes it even sweeter and also distinguishes it from the more mellifluous second word "honey." The note values usually determine the emphasis any given word receives. When the lover asks of the bees "Why do you still surfet on Roses, Pinks and Violets" (when his lover is so much more desirable than flowers), Wilbye provides eighth notes for "why do you" and then a half note for "still," emphasizing the length of time that the bees have been wasting their time on mere flowers. Similarly, when he counsels the bees to fly instead

to his lover's lips, he emphasizes time ("There may you revel") with longer note values.

Wilbye's word painting techniques are not limited to rhythmic figures or illustrative note values. In the second part of the piece, "Yet Sweet Take Heed," Wilbye cautions the bees not to sting the lover, lest a "flaming dart come from her eye." In the phrase "was never dart so sharp," the word "sharp" is graced with an F#.

As we played through these carefully-marked parts, it was clear that we, as viols, must always be saying something and moving dynamically at all times, as dictated by the text. Although we may know that as viols we must become voices, it is seldom that we are shown so clearly exactly what we must do to create the illusion of a singing voice. George was an excellent and spirited guide!

For Sale, cont'd

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.

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_____ 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.*

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_____ 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:

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Viol Talk

A grateful farewell to **Alvin Roper**, who is going off the board after years of loyal service to the Society. Alvin will continue to hold down the bass line at play days.

John Mark has a new spring in his step after trading in his old right hip for a new one on October 25. The surgery went well and John can be seen once again demonstrating his galliard skills.

The **Wildcat Viols** (Joanna Blendulf, Julie Jeffrey, Elisabeth Reed) played a wonderful concert on November 21 to a sold-out house at MusicSources. The program featured music of John Wilbye, John Dowland, and Henry Purcell. Soprano Moira Smiley lent her heavenly voice to the Wildcats for many of the pieces. Highlights of the concert included Lady Laiton's *Almain* by John Dowland which featured intensive chordal work from the bass supporting a demanding treble line, and **Julie Jeffrey's** arrangement of Henry Purcell's "If love's a sweet passion," featuring the tenor viol as soloist. The Wildcats concluded with a sweet and soaring rendition of *Wild Mountain Thyme*, arranged by **Julie Morrisett**, and again featuring Moira Smiley.

The December play day will feature a performance of two Renaissance dances by the **Youth Viols** (Imogen Poropat, treble; Emily Judd, tenor; Catherine Berner and Zuriyah Meacham, bass.) They have been studying

between 6 months and one year with **Elisabeth Reed**, assisted by **David Morris**. This will be their first public performance.

January 8, 2005 Play Day

We will once again welcome Gail Ann Schroeder as our coach for the January 8 play day. Please inform Mary Elliott if you who would like to participate in the master class portion of this day. Solos, duets, or consorts are welcome—this is an opportunity to get focused instruction from a wonderful teacher.

Schroeder studied with Wieland Kuijken at the Royal Conservatory in Brussels, where she served for 14 years as his teaching assistant and earned the First Prize and Higher Diploma. Her solo CD, *Pièces de viole du troisième livre* by Marin Marais, was released in 1998 on the TMD label.

Schroeder is skillful at helping players to identify various musical affects and to use the bow to achieve the maximum from those moments. If you do not choose to participate in the master class, which we will hold in the afternoon, please come and observe. She is an extraordinarily intuitive teacher who knows how to focus on playing issues in an inspirational and encouraging way. Some established teachers in our local gamba community have observed her master classes and expressed their respect for the skillful way in which she communicated complex technical and musical ideas to the participants.

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