

GAMBA NEWS

Newsletter of the Pacifica Chapter
of the Viola da Gamba Society of America
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January meeting

Our January 17 meeting will be held at Zion Lutheran Church, 5201 Park Blvd., Oakland, at 9:30 AM. The church is just downhill from Highway 13.

Please bring a music stand; coffee, **John Mark's** 100-percent cruelty-free nondairy creamer, music and consort groupings will be provided, the latter based on the information you supply on the return postcard.

Upcoming concerts

Ensemble Sans Souci (featuring soprano Pamela Sebastian in addition to regulars Bob Andrews, flute and recorders; VdGSA/Pacifica president **Julie Jeffrey** on gamba and VdGSA/Pacifica treasurer **Joseph Kimbel** on harpsichord) will present Boismortier's *Winter*, and works by Dornel and Monteclair, on Jan. 10 at 8:00 PM at San Francisco's Old First Church, Van Ness at Sacramento, and on Jan. 11 at 3:00 PM at St. Alban's Episcopal Church at 1501 Washington St. in Albany. The suggested donation is \$10. For more information, call (415) 621-3085.

Ciaccona (VdGSA/Pacifica member **Douglas Kelley**, gamba, and Katherine Heater, harpsichord) present "Echo of the Danube," an evening of virtuoso music by Biber, Kuhnle, Schenk, Kuhnau, Muffat and Kerll, at Live Oak Berkeley Art Center, 1301 Shattuck, Berkeley, at 7:30 PM on January 18. For more information, call (510) 644-6893.

Music's Re-creation (featuring **John Dornenburg**, gamba; Louise Carslake, baroque flute; Carla Moore, violin; Lorna Peters, harpsichord; with Jennifer Lane, alto) perform works by Rameau, Monteclair, Telemann and Handel, on Jan. 30 at 8:00 PM All Saint's Episcopal Church, Waverly at Hamilton in Palo Alto, and on Jan. 31 at 8:00 PM at St. John's Presbyterian Church, 2727 College Ave., Berkeley. For more information, call (510) 528-1725.

Musica Pacifica (Judith Linsenberg, recorder; Roy Wheldon, gamba; Gonzalo Ruiz, baroque oboe; Elizabeth Blumenstock, violin; Charles

Sherman, harpsichord) perform music of Bach, Vivaldi, Scarlatti, Rameau and Marais on Jan. 9 at 8:00 PM at St. Stephen's Church, Belvedere; on Jan. 10 at 8:00 PM at St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Albany; and on Jan. 11 at 7:00 at Le Petit Trianon in San Jose. Tickets for the first two concerts are \$14 or \$12, and the phone number for information is (510) 444-4113; tickets for the San Jose concert range from \$8-\$22, and the number for information is (408) 286-5111.

Fretwork member **Richard Boothby**, with harpsichordist Shalev Ad-El, will present an all-Bach program at MusicSources, 100 The Alameda, Berkeley, on Jan. 18 at 5:00 PM. Tickets are \$18 (\$15 for discount tickets). For more information, call (510) 528-1685.

Upcoming workshops

Frances Feldon will conduct a SFEMS Collegium evening of "L'Homme armé" settings, in masses by Morales and Dufay and a simple chanson setting by Robert Morton, on Jan. 28, at 7:30 at St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Albany. Collegium evenings are community early-music making events open to all early instrumentalists. The music is available for practice, by telephone request, two weeks prior. For advance reservations, please call (510) 527-9029.

The Mid-Peninsula Recorder Orchestra presents "The Art of Playing Vocal Music Expressively," a workshop exploring the expressive possibilities inherent in the vocal repertoire of the past 600 years, to be led by **Martha Bixler**, to be held at 9:00 AM on Jan. 24 at Palo Alto Unitarian Church, 505 E. Charleston Road, Palo Alto. The fee is \$39 (\$34 discount price before Jan. 17). Singers and players of recorders and early strings are invited. For more information, call (650) 856-7986.

Early strings are invited to the East Bay Recorder Society's Twelfth-Night Party, which will begin at 2:30 on Jan. 11 at Skyline Community Church, 12540 Skyline Drive in Oakland. **David Morris** will conduct the EBRs's monthly tootfest, which will be followed by a potluck dinner and a Musical Jumble Sale, the proceeds of which go to the EBRs's Junior Recorder Society. There is a \$5 playing fee for non-members. For more information, call Gerry Miller at (415) 221-2659.

Features

I'm sure most of us have tuned the laziest and quickest way while playing at home alone: by intervals—matching unisons and octaves and checking fifths, without regard to whether the A string is exactly at 415 or 440. Consort tuning is another matter.

Matching three to four pitches on another's viol has become customary although this dates back only a dozen years

or so, when Mary Springfels began popularizing the method.

FRETTING By John Mark

An ensemble can be tuned rapidly in this way provided the strings are wound properly on non-slipping or -sticking pegs, but accuracy depends on well-placed frets on the reference viol. Unlike a first violinist, the nominal consort leader on treble viol may not be the best member to offer pitches because on the treble correct fret placement is the most critical, and finding the pitch is too easy especially downward.

On the other hand, being able to lower the pitch while playing a piece is very useful for all sizes of viols on arriving at a cadence or any sustained chord in which one is playing the major third. I never tire of playing pavans because the modest pace and the repeats allow for the identification and adjustment of those thirds (and to try for a few ornaments, too). The possibilities of pitch alteration will vary

from viol to viol depending on string height from the fingerboard, fret thickness, etc.; the degree should be gauged by experimentation.

Why adjust pitches? Didn't we take up this fretted instrument to avoid worrying about placing that finger just right? More about pitch next month.

At the request of VdGSA/Pacifica chapter representative Lee McRae, Gamba News here reprints a section of an article from the December, 1997 Newsletter of the Viola da Gamba Society—New England. The author is "a gambist after dark and a physician by day. I was a cellist in my youth and have recently taken up the viol again after several years of hiatus. I am currently am a student of Alice Robbins in Amherst. I enjoy playing consorts, and continuo in baroque groups, and occasionally take both bow and heart in hand to play solos in master classes such as this one," with Weiland Kuijken at Brandeis University on Nov. 15, 1997.

**Master Class with
Weiland Kuijken
By Mai-Lan Broekman**

isolating what does need to move from what doesn't. He commented that teaching is a good way to reinforce this, because of the need to learn to talk while playing.

On the other hand, he pointed out that it might certainly be necessary to play fast, noisily and violently in order to express a musical idea. "Live on the edge" was a comment he made to me. ["Incidentally," Ms. Broekman adds, "the piece he told me to 'live more on the edge' on was Charivari from Book III. What he actually said was, 'You are playing it 'isn't-it-lovely-we-are-all-here-playing-the-viol.' You need to live more on the EDGE!'"]

The majority of the class provided a study of Marais, focussed on Books III and IV and ranging from preludes through dance movements to character pieces... Mr. Kuijken's observations ranged across the spectrum of musical practice. He demonstrated technical issues such as how he holds the bow (controlling the hair, not the stick) and the viol (relatively flat, so that he does not push it away from himself much, if at all, to play the bottom strings. He commented that tilting makes it easier to play the top strings and is "necessary for short-armed people"). ... He talked quite a bit about relaxing while playing (with minimal movement of the upper arms, the viol and the torso), not expending more energy than necessary, and

He also talked a lot about the viol as a singing instrument, with the bow as the breath and articulation and the left hand as the words. His discussions of phrasing were often put in singer's terms ("they [the audience] need to breathe—and you need to breathe;" "Don't take a breath there—you just took one;" or, "Play it like a singer—make that long line go somewhere")... One of his comments was, "Have patience. Play what you want in the music, make the sounds you want to make, take the time to do what you need. The listener will go along with you."

We happily print all member submissions, and we welcome your suggestions! Our thanks to Mai-Lan Broekman and Tracy Hoover of VdGSA/New England for permission to reprint.



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