

GAMBA NEWS

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

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December meeting

Our Dec. 6 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** environmentally nonreactive nondairy creamer, music and consort groupings will be provided, the latter based on the information you supply on the return postcard.

Upcoming concerts

Julie Jeffrey, treble viol, **John Dornenburg**, treble viol, and **Steve Lehning**, bass viol, will perform in "A Parisian Christmas," Magnificat's reconstruction of a Christmas celebration at the home of the 17th-century Duchesse de Guise, with music by Marc-Antoine Charpentier (including noëls and "Pastorale for the Nativity"), held on Dec. 12 at 8:00 PM at the First United Methodist Church, Palo Alto; on Dec. 13 at 8:00 PM at the First Congregational Church, Berkeley; and on Dec. 14 at 4:00 PM at St. Gregory Nyssen Episcopal Church, San Francisco. Tickets are \$20 (\$17 for SFEMS members). For information call (510) 528-1725.

Julie Jeffrey will appear in "Jubilate! Medieval and Renaissance Christmas Music from the British Isles and the Americas," along with Elizabeth Rau, Eileen Hadidian, Shira Kammen, Natalie Cox and a surprising number of harps, at Saint Alban's Church, 1501 Washington St., Albany, on Dec. 20 at 8:00 PM. Tickets are \$16 (\$13 for discount tickets). For information and reservations, call (510) 524-5661.

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

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, and 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.

A new feature of this newsletter

FRETTING

By John Mark

I chose the title of this column not only so that I could include what can be written about viol neckties, but also as a synonym for FUSSING. Any Pacifica member is welcome to contribute or respond. -J.M.*

Why is it that orchestral strings can tune *en masse* after a lone wail on the oboe, taking less time than our relatively small viol ensembles? Orchestra members can tune all their strings rapidly while the reference note is being passed around and while everyone around them is noisily doing the same. In quieter situations, modern chamber-music players seldom check with each other beyond a single open string.

Can we amateur viol players ever be as efficient? Viols are comparatively softer-sounding instruments with more strings, and additional time will be always be needed between pieces to retune those inherently unstable slack strings, but should interval tuning by fourths and a third really be more difficult than the tempered fifths used by the violin family?

I contend that we should strive to be more proficient, and suggest that the following experiments, each of which takes only a minute or so, may be worthwhile for ear training:

1) Tuning all strings against a single reference pitch, $a=415$ or $A=207.5$...easy if one has a sounding electronic tuner or a fellow player willing to play prolonged A's. There should be some degree of concordance with all open strings except for G on every size viol.

2) Purposely tuning against a noisy background: Simply put on a low-pitch CD while tuning all strings, choosing a piece in one of the open string keys, or, what is more challenging, one that is not.

To be continued....

*I am assured by the author that this is a pun, the specifics of which I leave to the reader's imagination —Ed