



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

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May 1993

May Meeting — Reno!

Our meeting will begin officially at 9:30 AM on May 22 at Trinity Episcopal Church, Reno, and continue until 5 pm: evening is free for informal consort playing or other activities. From I-80 eastbound exit at Sierra Street, driving south (see map I), crossing the Truckee River: turn right on Island Avenue or Court Street and proceed one block to Rainbow Street. Turn onto Rainbow St. and enter the church parking lot mid-block. If the parking lot is full, use the public lot off Flint Street, or use the lot opposite with a slight risk of a ticket on Saturdays.

Those wishing to drive up on Friday night will be welcomed at a playing session from 7:00 — 10 PM hosted by Pamela Dallas at her apartment, 1540 Carlin Street (Keystone Avenue exit, see map II: go north to W. 7th, turn left at the light onto 7th and go three blocks to the light at Stoker Avenue; turn left onto Stoker and go two blocks to Carlin, then left onto Carlin half a block). She will provide free BYOSB&AM (Bring your own Sleeping Bag and Air Mattress) accommodations for up to four people. If you wish to take advantage of this offer, please call her (702-747-4377 evgs.) before Thursday May 20. About 8 other sleeping-bagged people can be put up elsewhere: in addition, there are numerous motels (Motel 6 and Gateway Inn) near the Keystone exit, as well as others near the church; and the new Keystone R.V. park is south of I-80 off 4th Street. Pamela &/or Natalie Sera will also host Saturday evening &/or Sunday morning playing sessions: details to be arranged.

Please complete and mail your cards promptly, as we need to coordinate accommodation arrangements: there are other matters to be settled using the cards, so please send yours it even if you are not planning to come to Reno.

March Meeting

Our third annual joint meeting with the Mid-Peninsula Recorder Orchestra was very enjoyable and well-attended. There were sessions for viol consorts and recorder consorts alone followed by mixed consorts: as usual, the arrangements for coffee and lunch were excellent. In the afternoon we performed a number of pieces for antiphonal viol/recorder groups, directed by Frederic Palmer and Peter Ballinger. Julie Jeffrey had prepared a group of complete beginners on viols, who played the ground bass (7 notes, 29 repetitions!) of a version of Purcell's *Chaconne* for three flauti, transposed down a fourth for three treble viols and bass. We finished the afternoon with resolutions to continue this annual tradition.

North-South Meet

The weather was perfect at Fresno for this event, now in its 19th year. Although participation by the southern contingents has decreased in recent years, it was felt by a majority that this reflected a temporary decline in membership in Viols West rather than disenchantment with the location or arrangements in Fresno. In fact, at least two people who were participating at Fresno for the first time, expressed their enthusiasm for the weekend. It was decided to continue the tradition, begun by Walter Unterberg, who was our gracious organizer this year. The

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT:	John Mark
VICE-PRESIDENT:	Lee McRae
SECRETARY:	Cecilia Doris
TREASURER:	Mary Prout

coaches, Carol Herman and Hazelle Miloradovitch achieved the almost impossible by putting together musically and socially compatible groups and providing their usual expert counsel twice per group per session. On Saturday evening the entire group descended on a nearby Armenian restaurant for an efficiently catered dinner, then played music for large groups under the direction of the coaches and Walter and Peter Ballinger. Peter performed the recorder 'concerto' by Handel, (assembled from the sonata in F and the organ concerto that uses the same material). This was a memorial for Shirley Marcus, who had performed the work two years ago at Fresno. Next year, the Meet will be held April 22—24 at the Piccadilly Inn as usual, with our chapter responsible for the arrangements. Make a note of the date as soon as you get your new calendars/date books!

Baroque Workshop

There is still time and space for this workshop in your busy schedules! Mary Springfels will be teaching and performing for both of the weeks commencing June 20, at Dominican College in San Rafael. Call Anna Carol Dudley (510-527-3748) for information about late registration.

Conclave Registration Extended

Those who received (or are yet to receive) brochures/application forms for this event (July 25—August 1 in Los Angeles) should disregard the printed deadline (May 10) for early registration. This has been extended to June 1, so you can still save \$25 by getting your registration postmarked by that date. You can also delay sending the remainder of the fee until July 1, if you registered early. There is a \$50 fee for registrations after July 1. If you are not a member of VdGSA, and would like to attend, *get in touch as soon as possible* with John Whisler, 1308 Jackson Ave., Charleston, IL 61920-2242 (217-348-8260). He is in charge of billing, and will send you all necessary paperwork. Students are eligible for scholarship assistance. The Conclave is making one of its infrequent touchdowns on the West Coast, so we should support it in full strength!



Vacancy Looms for Treasurer

Next month, Mary Prout will be leaving for a year in France (*drool, drool!*), so we are calling a special election to replace her as treasurer. Please submit nominations (*after obtaining clearance from the potential nominee*) on your return postcard. An election will be held at the June meeting.

The day after Tous les matins du monde
or

*What do we know about le sieur de
Sainte-Colombe?*

by George Houle

The film *Tous les matins du monde* presents us with beautiful images and some lovely music, but may leave us puzzled as to whether its depiction of the life and character of Sainte-Colombe corresponds to what is known about him and his music. The same question might be asked about the film character of Marin Marais. Those who know Marais's music might feel that from it they perceive his character; his wit, imagination, and charm, as well as his fiery temperament, melancholy, and sensuousness. He mastered the instrument gambists struggle to play—that alone tells us something of his character—and wrote an enormous amount of music of the highest quality, notated with the greatest care to show its mode of performance. He seems to have been a devoted family man. Of the 19 children born to him and his wife, at least two became important musicians: Vincent succeeded his father at the court, and Roland, who was praised by Quantz, published two books of music for viol. He wrote an eloquent lament for a son who died, the *Tombeau pour Marais le cadet*. The insensitive clod we see in *Tous les matins du monde* is hardly the gambist and composer we know and admire.

Le sieur de Sainte-Colombe resides more in the shadows of history than Marais. We don't know his background, dates of birth and death, place of residence, or even his Christian name; but it is possible to draw some inferences from the few existing historical references. He may have been a pupil of Nicholas Hotman (d. 1663), according to Jean Rousseau, and is reported by the *Mercure galant* to have taken part in a performance of a work of Marc-

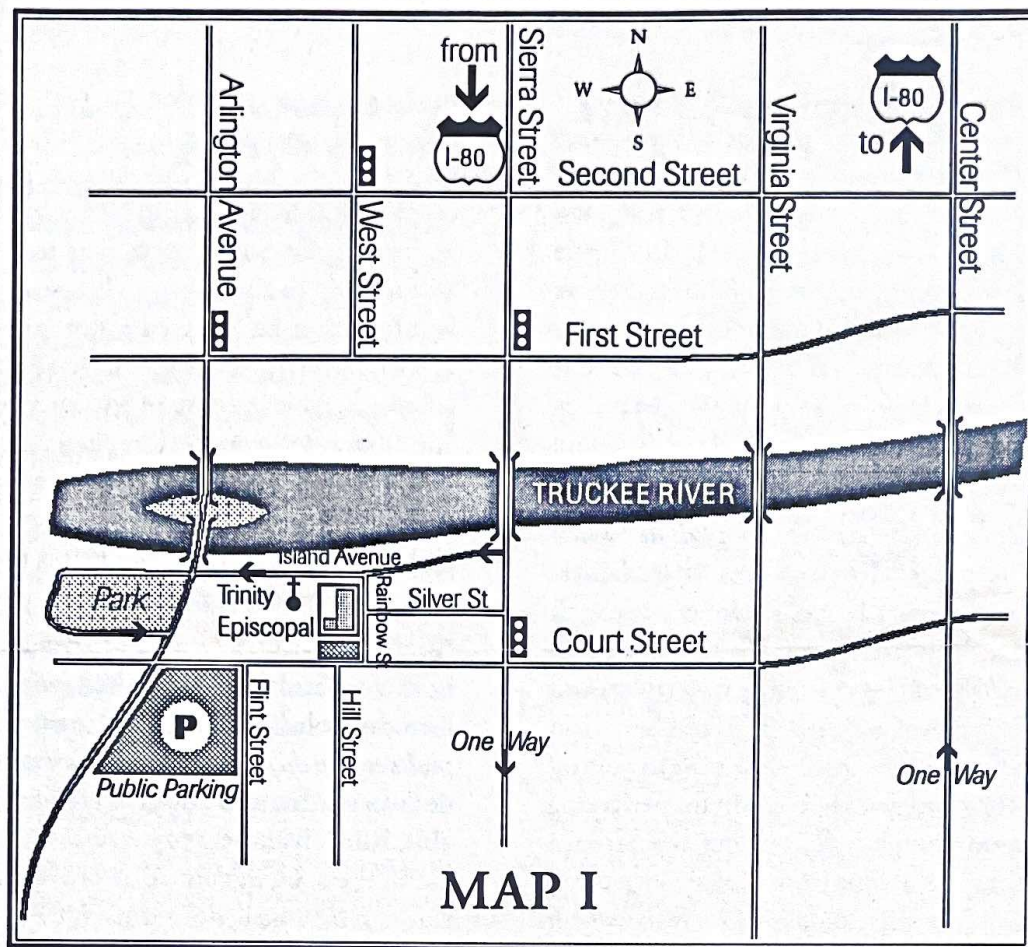
Antoine Charpentier in February 1678 (the work is now lost). Charpentier was a protégé of the powerful and pious Marie de Lorraine, known as 'Mademoiselle de Guise,' who, upon inheriting her family's fortune in 1675, formed one of the largest private musical establishments in France. There seems to have been little interaction between the musicians of Louis XIV and those of Mademoiselle de Guise, so that if he were a member of Marie de Lorraine's establishment, Sainte-Colombe would have been rather isolated from the French Court.

A *Lettre de M. Le Gallois à Mlle. Regnault de Solliers touchant la musique* (1680) states that Sainte-Colombe "excelle dans la viole" along with Marais and Du Buisson. Danoville praises him in his *Art de toucher le dessus et basse de viole* (1687) and acknowledges Sainte-Colombe as his teacher. Jean Rousseau dedicated his *Traité de la viole* to Sainte-Colombe in 1687 and gives him credit for perfecting performance on the viol, for adding the seventh string on the bass, and for introducing silver-wound strings. Abraham du Pradel in *Livre commode contenant les addresses de la ville de Paris* (1691) names Sainte-Colombe among the first rank of "maîtres pour la viole." Sainte-Colombe's students included Desfontaines, Mélon, and probably Louis de Caix d'Hervelois as well as Danoville and Jean Rousseau. Marin Marais's masterful *Tombeau de M. de Sainte-Colombe* is included in his *Second livre de pieces de viole* (1701). The sole fact known about his family life is that there was a son, perhaps a *filz naturel*, a musician for whom a benefit concert was given in London in 1718.

["Tous les matins" is probably based on] Titon du Tillet's [...] remarks about Sainte-Colombe in his biographical article on Marais in the *Parnasse françois* (1732, four years after the death of Marais and at least 30 years after that of Sainte-Colombe). Sainte-Colombe is described as giving concerts in his home where "deux de ses filles," two of his daughters, one playing the treble the other the bass viol, made a trio with their father. [No mention is made concerning the early death of his wife, depicted in the film]. Marais is said to have been Sainte-Colombe's student until, after six months of instruction, Sainte-Colombe told him that there was nothing more he could teach him. Sainte-Colombe secluded himself in a "petit cabinet de planches" that he built in a

mulberry tree in order to play the viol more delightfully and tranquilly. Marais, who still wanted to learn from Sainte-Colombe, slipped under this cabin to hear his teacher and learned several passages and particular bow strokes that teachers of the art like to keep to themselves. He was found out and Sainte-Colombe took care not to be thus heard again. Titon du Tillet added that Sainte-Colombe, when asked his opinion of Marais's performance by "personnes de distinction" replied, "there are students that surpass their teacher, but young Marais will never find one to surpass him." These stories may or may not be apocryphal, but this is the sum of what we know about Monsieur de Sainte-Colombe.

All, that is, except his music which has been published in a modern edition, edited with an extensive introduction by Paul Hooreman: *Concerts à deux violes esgales du sieur de Sainte-Colombe* (publications de la société française de musicologie, Heugel et Cie. 2bis, Rue Vivienne, 1973). As with Marais, Sainte-Colombe's character is more reliably depicted through his music than through *Tous les matins du monde*. The table of contents dedicates several pieces to friends and students, who were praised as playing a certain piece perfectly from their master's instruction. He seems to be a man with many aristocratic music-loving friends and excellent students. Sainte-Colombe wrote many dances: sarabandes, gavottes, gigues, menuets, allemandes, and "balets," not all of which are regular enough in their meter to accompany dancing. There are a considerable number of "character" pieces, with names such as *le badin* (gossip), *la boutade* (caprice), *l'aureille* (to be played without measure, as if by ear), *l'infidelle* (unfaithful), *l'heureux* (happy), *le réjouy* (rejoicing), all of a highly distinct character. One of the pieces used almost excessively in *Tous les matins*, "les pleurs," tears, is part of a suite, the *Tombeau Les Regrets*, a title gloomy enough for the film. But if the suite were played completely, "les pleurs" would be followed by "Joye des Elizées" and "Les Elizées," two light-hearted, dance-like pieces. Sainte-Colombe's music is full of fantasy, sometimes unorthodox in its harmonies, and occasionally written with uncertain metrical values, as if the music were originally improvised. It is music of an amateur composer but master player, and testifies to Sainte-Colombe's high technical achievement and expressive abilities.

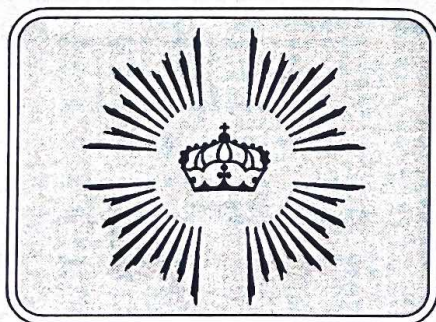


MAP I

George Houle (concl.):

The picture that emerges is of an inspiring, much appreciated teacher, virtuosic Parisian chamber musician and composer—not a relentlessly depressed; self-absorbed, self-righteous, and-social martinet. We know that Marin Marais is not the irresponsible flash artist of the film, beating heavy time for an out-of-tune band of sweating courtiers, and it seems that the depiction of Sainte-Colombe is equally fanciful, farcical, and forgettable.

(modifications in [...] by John Mark)



MAP II

