



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

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### Last Newsletter?

In case you have had difficulty balancing your monthly checkbook summaries, you'll be relieved to know that the dues checks you sent to me have been forwarded, at last, to our treasurer for deposit. Although this has taken a long time, because of computer problems, there were still a few dues remittances in the last week or so. However, if you have not paid your dues by now, this will be your last newsletter, as indicated by the ominous red dot. If you wish to rectify the situation, please send \$5 (newsletter only), \$15 (playing member) or \$20 (two playing members at same address) to the return address on this newsletter, together with your address, evening phone number, fax number and e-mail number (if appropriate), instrument(s) played and level.

### Communications

Devotees of e-mail, internet etc. will be pleased to learn that the VdGSA is in the process of setting up a Web location. In addition, those of you who reported an e-mail address can have the option of receiving Chapter Newsletters by e-mail, and of notifying Julie and me of your plans to come to the next meeting by e-mail. My e-mail address is PRBPrdns@aol.com Please give your name(s), instrument(s) that you will bring, playing level (B,L,U,A) and any other relevant information (part of day only, etc.). Also, please state if you would prefer to receive future newsletters by e-mail. This may mean the loss of the fancy letterhead, unless I can find a way of transmitting the letter as a facsimile.

### November Meeting

Our November meeting will be held November 11 at Zion Lutheran Church, 5201 Park Blvd., Oakland. From Warren Freeway (13) take the Park Bl. exit. The entrance to the parking lot of the Church is on the right about 0.25 mi from the exit. From MacArthur Freeway (580), proceed east on Park Bl. to the second church after the traffic light at Leimert; turn left into the parking lot. The meeting will start at 9:30 AM with coffee and assignment to groups. Please mail, e-mail, or fax your reply card as soon as possible.

### Lawes Festival

This workshop, held at Hertford College, Oxford was administered by the six members of Fretwork; Richard Boothby, Richard Campbell, Wendy Gillespie, Julia Hodgson, William Hunt, and Susanna Pell. One of them

coached each of six of the seven consorts for an entire session. As there were three or even four 75 or 90 minute sessions each day, the level of instruction was intense and valuable. Meals were provided in the enormous hall, reached by a helical staircase recalling certain Loire valley chateaux. One pre-formed group from the U.S. worked and performed the entire g-minor sett a6 for the student conference: they were extremely dedicated, even to wearing t-shirts of their own design! Only one other group, all from the U.K., performed, apart from the group I was in. The latter was composed of three members from the U.S., two from England and one, the German-born wife of a Greek, from Athens. We tackled two of the airs (c minor and the second f major a6) and managed to avoid catastrophe in the student concert. After the concert, Fretwork played three of the fantasias: the message, for me, was that in every measure of a Lawes consort movement, one or occasionally two voices predominate, so that a melodic thread travels from part to part through the entire piece. Most groups are so involved with the intricacies of each part that the essential voice at any given time is overwhelmed with detail, much of it so harmonically spicy as to be distracting unless played on a different terrace, so to speak. But as the limelight travels in the course of a movement, from one Fretworker to the next, his/her viol really gets played to the fullest! Although I have always admired Lawes for his themes and harmonic daring, for the first time I experienced the wholeness of each movement, as the scope of Lawes's grasp of tonality and thematic metamorphosis, 150 years ahead of its time, was revealed.

Those who came two days early had the additional benefit of three superb concerts: two by Fretwork and Red Byrd, during which all of the 5 and 6 part setts were played and a good selection of Lawes's music for voice, and one by the Purcell Quartet, featuring his music for one or two violins, viols and organ. These were given in the nearby Holywell Music Room, a rectangular building, with seating on three

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sides, in which the instruments played in the round, with the singers and special instruments (theorboes, harp etc.) played on the nearby dais. Unpromising acoustically, the building proved to have excellent acoustics and was an ideal venue for consort music.

At a memorial concert held in the Hertford College chapel, Lawes was remembered by quotations from his contemporaries. An unexpected, and sad moment was the remembrance of Robert Mottingdorfer of New York, known to most of us who have attended Conclaves during the past several decades, who had planned to attend the festival, but had passed away suddenly only a few days before.

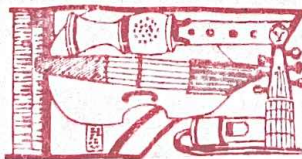
The ad hoc group in which I played was assigned an unsuitable room by the College (street noises and auto

exhaust entering the ground floor window), so we were quickly moved to the Chapel for the remainder of the week. Reputedly the coldest chapel in Oxford, it could be heated slowly by calrod type heaters installed beneath each of the choir benches, and two electric radiators gave gradual comfort to the tenors and basses. But the acoustics were kind and the setting unmatched for consort playing.

## Advertisement

Viols for sale: Hoskins treble, 42 cm. Jaye bass, 69 cm. Norman bass, 72 cm. Bertrand 7-string, 72 cm. Reasonable: cases available. Do you have a viol or bow you're not playing or want to upgrade? If suitable for rental, I'll give you credit towards purchase of a new viol. Alexandra Tantranon-Saur (510) 568-5452.

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