

Gamba News



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

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May Meeting

Our May meeting will be held at Zion Lutheran Church, Park Blvd. (near Highway 13) on Saturday, May 11 at 9:30 AM. Please inform Peter Ballinger as soon as possible, by fax (510/ 527-4763), phone (510/526-0722, answering machine present) or e-mail (PRBPrdns@aol.com), of your intention to come to this meeting. Because of my trip to Frankfurt (*v. infra*), this newsletter will arrive late. In addition, Julie Jeffrey will be out of town that weekend, and we shall have to arrange the groups by phone on Friday evening. If I do not hear from you before then, we shall assume that you are *not* coming to the meeting; subsequent unexpected arrival(s) on Saturday may result in difficulty rearranging the groups.

North-South Meet

As those who attended this annual event will, I believe, testify, this was one of the most successful and enjoyable reunions in many years. Carol Herman and Hazelle Miloradovitch were the intrepid coaches; 27 gambists showed up for the event, including an unexpectedly large and welcome number from the Viols West Chapter. A number of Pacifica Chapter stalwarts could not attend for various, completely defensible, reasons, otherwise we would have exceeded 30. Among those attending was our scholarship student, Judi Rought, from Reno. Thanks to all those who contributed to her scholarship fund. Apart from the actual consort playing, which, as usual, was highly enjoyable, the two evenings of large group playing were better than usual, maintaining the interest of all of the participants for the entire evening. Among those conducting music for large ensembles were the coaches, assisted by Walter Unterberg and Peter Ballinger. The weekend was crowned by a splendid Saturday dinner at the Brahma Bull Indian restaurant: attendance was almost 100%, and all were delighted with the quality, variety and quantity of the food.

Telemann Festival

Your editor drew upon some accumulated airplane mileage to attend the last day of the 4-day Telemann-Tage in Frankfurt am Main on April 28. The first two

days had been devoted to a symposium on the composer and his activities in Frankfurt, given by a number of distinguished musicologists from Frankfurt, Magdeburg (Telemann's birthplace), and other German cities. The proceedings will be published by Schott. A wide range of compositions was presented, including liturgical and secular works, with some compositions by other composers including Paul Hindemith, whose birthplace was Frankfurt. I managed to hear the last three programs, including excellent performances of a cantata for three voices, chorus, concertizing recorder, 2 oboes, strings and continuo, and a second cantata for three voices, chorus, two flutes, strings, calcedon (large lute, playing the melody of the continuo part, i.e., without harmonization, typical of Telemann's Frankfurt church performance practice), and continuo. This, and the evening concert, were given in the Old Church of St. Nicolai, a beautiful church faithfully reconstructed after it had been destroyed in WWII, and which contained a fine new baroque organ, used to excellent effect in the last concert, which included works by Telemann, J.S., and C.P.E. Bach for baroque violin and organ, very well played by Thomas Pietsche and Dagmar Lübking. The afternoon concert, given in a "castle" (actually a 5-storey rectangular stucco structure situated in a moat and surrounded by a variety of tall trees with occasionally competing bird song) was less satisfactory, as it was played using modern oboe and bassoon, with a modern harpsichord. The playing of the performers (Christian Hommel, Wolfgang Rüdiger and Robert Hill) was of very high quality, however. Music included a partita, a sonata, and an overture by Telemann, and a sonata for oboe and continuo by J.S. Bach (BWV 1030b).

I expressed the view to Dr. Ann Kersting, Secretary of the Frankfurt Telemann Society, who had been responsible for the excellent programming of the Festival, that the translation of scholarly Telemann studies into English

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| ACTING PRESIDENT: | Julie Jeffrey |
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might help in the renaissance of this composer, unjustly undervalued since the worldwide growth in the appreciation of J.S. Bach had demoted him from the preeminence he had enjoyed in the 18th Century. For example, not a single book on Telemann in English is available; the only biography in English, a translation, is long out of print. I hope to be able to arrange for an English translation of the proceedings of this festival, and possibly of his autobiographies, to appear next year.

Vibrato

Every gambist would agree, I think, that the performance of English consort music by modern string instruments (quartet through sextet) would, because of the greater richness of overtones of the violin family, tend to obscure the complex counterpoint of Jenkins, Lawes and their contemporaries. Even more deleterious to comprehension and enjoyment, would be the routine use of vibrato that is the hallmark of modern string playing. I had the pleasure of hearing a confirmation, by default, of the latter observation when I attended a performance of Beethoven's quartet Op. 132 by the Lindsay Quartet in Hertz Hall on March 24. The Lydian chorale in the third movement was performed totally without vibrato by all four players; a small amount of vibrato was added by each player when playing the quicker note values of the countersubjects, but whenever the chorale theme was played, even in its last, *sf* manifestation, it was *senza vib.* The result was, for me, a revelation. Most quartets try to "sell" the severe, half-note against half-note chorale sections by adding even more vibrato than usual, making them sound as if performed on a harmonium with the vox humana stop fully engaged. Without vibrato, the timeless theme shone through as if played on cornetti. On each appear-

ance it soared easily above the gently shimmering countersubjects, in which judicious vibrato had its true place, as an ornament rather than a syndrome. The end result was a tremendous gain in breadth and intensity of this astonishing movement.

Gambist(s) wanted

Justin Renquist (415/863-8525) lives on Fell Street in San Francisco, has a 17th Century Flemish Double Manual harpsichord tuned to A=415, and would like to hear from gamba players interested in playing music for gamba and harpsichord.

Election

At our final meeting of the season on June 1 (note the early date), an election for President and other officers will be held.

Activities

Sunday, June 2: Mid-Peninsula Recorder Orchestra, together with the Wykeham Singers, present a concert of works for recorders and voices at the Senior Center of Palo Alto, 450 Bryant St at 1:30 PM. Admission free. Info: 510/885-3115 (day) or 415/591-3648 (eves.)

Don't forget the Headlands Workshop, May 17—19; and the Berkeley Festival of Early Music, June 2—9! Please send me information on your concert activities by the first of the month for the Newsletter which precedes the month of the concert. Next Newsletters: June, September.

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For sale: 7-string left-handed Bass. Nicolas Bertrand 1704 model, made in 1994. Excellent condition. Case and bow included: \$4500. Sylvan: 510/655-3956.