

THE SOUNDPOST

Newsletter of the Pacific Northwest Viols – A chapter of the Viola da Gamba Society of America
On the web: WWW.PNVIOLS.ORG

President's Message

Lee Inman

One of my personal favorite activities at this point in the calendar is to read through the "What Happened Last Year" lists that seem to be abundant: "Ten Best Films of 20xx", "Eight Hottest Trends...", "Fifty Biggest Flops...", and so on. So, I said to myself, I said, "Why not make such a list for PNV?" Said. And done. Herewith, the **Top 10 Accomplishments for PNV in 2012** list.

1. Thanks to Margriet Tindemans' tireless efforts, we hosted a highly-successful one-day workshop in March, with a stellar faculty (Margriet, Marie Dalby, John Dornenburg, and David Morris).
2. We planned and executed yet another in a long series of PNV summer workshops, with rave reviews from our students – once again, with heartfelt thanks to Margriet, Jo Baim and Liisa Peterson for their extraordinary efforts, and to my faculty colleagues for their energy and dedication.
3. For that summer workshop, we received a vote of confidence from the national organization in the form of two grants: one to support the overall budget, and the other to support apprentice teacher training, to the benefit of both the student coach (Chris Briden) and the chapter.
4. We assembled a stellar list of presenters at Play Days, some of whom were on that list either for the first time, or returning to us after a long absence.
5. A surprise afternoon coaching session with Pierre Pierlot at our January Play Day, with gratitude for Lee Talner for making the arrangements with Jordi Savall.
6. We fully met our performance commitments to our Patron organization, Saint James Cathedral, and fully enjoyed doing so!
7. Thanks to Jon Brenner's tireless diligence, we assembled the first-ever *PNV Gig Book*, which provides a broad range of potential repertory for consorts who wish to volunteer to play for Saint James' events.
8. Fresh faces at PNV Play Days became a fairly regular occurrence – I fervently hope I can say the same about 2013 when the time comes!
9. We devised a new policy to accommodate the additional costs of bringing in 'out of area' presenters – a policy which we believe will greatly increase our options for building an appealing Play Day season.
10. We established and enhanced a presence for our chapter on Facebook, a 'fan page' that seems to enjoy increasing popularity.
11. (OK, so there are eleven, not ten....) We had a great deal of fun last year making music together. Perhaps this should be Number 1 on the list.

The best part: 2013 will likely be even better in all respects.

Joanna Blendulf will be our presenter on January 19th. I've had the great pleasure of working with Joanna in the Portland Viol Consort for over two years, and I can personally attest to her fine musical instincts, and excellent teaching talent. I greatly look forward to seeing her next month, and learning a few more of her secrets.

See you on the 19th, everyone.

Joanna Blendulf Leads January 19th Play Day

Text and photo lifted from Baroque Northwest website.



Joanna has performed as soloist and continuo player in leading period instrument ensembles throughout the United States. Ms. Blendulf holds performance degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music and Indiana University, where she studied with Stanley Ritchie, Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi and Alan Harris. In 1998, she was awarded the prestigious Performer's Certificate for her accomplishments on baroque cello from Indiana University. Joanna performs with the Portland, Seattle and Indianapolis Baroque Orchestras, Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra and American Bach Soloists. Ms. Blendulf is also an active chamber musician, performing and touring with the Catacoustic Consort, American Baroque, Ensemble Mirable, the Streicher Trio and Wildcat Viols. Her recording of the complete cello sonatas of Jean Zewalt Triemer with Ensemble Mirable can be found on the Magnatune label. Ms. Blendulf's summer engagements have included performances at the Bloomington, Boston

and Berkeley Early Music Festivals, the Aspen and Ojai Music Festivals as well as the Carmel and Oregon Bach Festivals.

Play Day, November 10, 2012

Janet Loy

On Saturday Nov.10, 2012 Lee Inman took us to the wonderful world of melodic and harmonic patterns. Ignoring clefs and what we know about "Every Good Boy Does Fine" we looked at intervals. We took note that an interval of the second is characterized on the staff by a line and the adjacent space, or a space and the adjacent line. Seconds can be major (a whole step) or minor (a half step). Once one knows the starting point of a piece and the location of the sharps and flats one can identify the whole steps and half steps and those that are altered by any accidentals. When seconds occur between strings some patterns can be used and they will differ between our strings that are a fourth apart and those which are a third apart.

Looking for patterns in larger intervals can also be a tool. Thirds are written on lines one space apart or spaces one line apart. Between strings that are a fourth apart, fingering patterns such as 2 on the lower string and 1 on the next string for a major 3rd, and 2 with an extension or 3 and 1 for a minor third can help keep one grounded.

Intervals of a fourth can be pure, diminished or augmented. Visually they are a line and a space or a space and a line with a line and a space missing in between. Pure fourths are either open or barred between our strings that are a fourth apart. Between the strings that are a third apart there is a 1- 2, or 2-3 type relationship. When diminished fourths occur patterns for thirds might be useful. When augmented fourths occur 1-2 patterns will sometimes be useful. Again finding your starting point, finding where the sharps and flats occur and where they are altered by accidentals is crucial.

Fifths are visually characterized by line and line or space and space; with two spaces and a line missing or one line and two spaces missing. They can be pure, diminished or augmented. There are some patterns to look for such as a two-fret difference often between the bottom note and the top note of a pure fifth. Sixths are another line space visual with two spaces and two lines missing between. They can be major or minor. The colorful sevenths can be pure, diminished or augmented and are another line line visual with either two spaces and three lines missing or two lines and three spaces missing.

Being familiar with these various sizes of intervals and which fingerings best suit them can facilitate playing from various clefs, even the clefs one is already comfortable with. We had a chance to study these intervals as they appear on clef-less staves and after being sure of the location of the sharps and flats, our starting note, possible safety points and how the last note of a section to be repeated related to the first note, we played a Gavotte which we transposed up one step. Some of the possible safety points discussed were; which notes were on open strings, which notes were the same as the starting note, where were any landmarks, where the biggest leaps were, and where melodic patterns repeated or became sequences.

To further exercise these ideas we played a Holborne pavan, The Cradle, where G was on the bottom line of a treble clef system, and a Holborne Galliard, each part playing from a different clef. We were also led through transposing a couple of other pieces, and were encouraged to add to our practice routines transposing on our own using familiar tunes to begin with, and practicing intervals being aware of the fingering patterns used.

It was an excellent, fun and thought provoking morning.

The afternoon held a surprise visit from Phillippe Pierlot of Hesperion XXI. After our first afternoon session where two groups separately worked on the same Gibbons Pavan we gathered together. Phillippe coached each group on the Pavan. The importance of phrases and their being of a vocal nature and the importance of the Pavan pulse were among the major insights he shared. Phillippe also effectively got individuals and groups to make better sound. Keeping bows closer to the bridge, and keeping relaxed shoulders and arms worked wonders. His dynamic personality and energetic insistence on a number of details was very exciting and useful. A final play through by the whole group provided a nice closure. ***Thank you, Lee Talner, for inviting him on a whim.***



Photos by Lee Talner

Members of the PNV Community Doing Outreach University Bookstore, December 18, 2012

Photo provided by Ellen Seibert



Out of the Mouths of Babes - Roosevelt High School Students Speak

Lee Talner

Towards the end of the year 5 of the Roosevelt High School Viols class, teacher Anna asked the students to write up their experience.

Some excerpts:

Student 1:

"This year I got to participate in a very unique experience. I got to learn how to play a viol. This instrument may look easy for a cello player to learn, but it is so very different from a cello. I do not regret a single minute in the wonderful program. In fact, with only three weeks left of school, I am starting to realize I will miss it."

"One of my favorite moments was when we had to pick a word...to express using our bows. We all had fun experimenting with speed, tone, push or pull bows, volume, weight and control. This activity made a lasting impression on me. I became very conscious of the bow, and how it was different from my cello bow"

".....We were in small groups...everyone was very close to me, I felt like I had a connection with everyone. ...I could hear other sections and observe their parts. I had to re-teach my muscles how to bow something or find fingerings. This sudden alertness transferred back to my cello, and ultimately I think improved my playing."

"I was amazed of the progress we made in our short time together...I truly hope I have this opportunity again. It has been memorable, meaningful, and enjoyable."

Student 2:

"Learning to play the viol was one of the most fun experiences in my musical learning.I like how playing the viol allowed me to compare and contrast the differences and similarities between the violin and the viol.

"I would always find myself strumming the viol like a guitar. Because of this I'm now considering also learning how to play the guitar."

"There was not one day that I felt the group had not improved from the day before.."

"The way the viols melt together to make one beautiful harmonious sound is amazing and is really something every fan of music history and music in general should hear. People always say that in classical music the different parts are interacting with each other, and it's true especially in viol music. Each part would play and respond dynamically to the other parts as each song went on."

"The fact that Roosevelt is one of very few schools that does this program makes me feel so special fortunate that we have this wonderful program."

Student 3:

"I like it when teacher, leaders, or mentors not only give instructions but are also your friends. They were all very nice to all of us and cracked a joke now and again....they made the class fun."

"..I was always looking for class to start each week. I think one of my favorite parts is the feeling of being unique when I play the viol. It's an instrument not many people have heard about. When someone asks, 'What is that?' about my instrument, I like the feeling of being special in that context."

"Nothing about playing the viol was the same as the viola.....It all took me a long time to learn, but it was totally worth it once I got the hang of it"

"...On the subject of funny, the most interesting part was the way I held the bow, underhand. To this day I don't know why. However, it's part of playing the viol and I enjoyed all of it."

Student 4:

"..it has got six strings instead of four, you hold it up right like a cello or bass, and it has frets like a guitar. What was I supposed to make of this unique instrument?"

"As a teenager it is always tricky to be bright and sunny at eight in the morning when your brain isn't fully on. I think I would have been a little faster to convert fingerings in my head if it had been around 9:00am or 10:00am, also if there had been a chance to practice more outside of the class time I think I might have tried to."

"...I think this class was beneficial and a fun experience. I'd enjoy participating next year and I'm sure others would be inspired too....the little recital we did for the parents was cool because it set a goal for our playing and sound quality."

Student 5:

"The viols program is amazing. I mean, 'It's new! It's different! It's exciting!' OK, too many exclamation points. But what can I say? It really deserves it."

"...our teachers were so patient with us as our bows flopped around like dead carp and our fingers slid up and down the neck, fumbling with the frets."

' I never felt that I was floundering, but I was certainly challenged. It really is amazing how far we've come as a group. You're side by side with your friends, struggling....you laugh at your mistakes, high five your successes, and help each other figure out the music and the instrument in your lap.you all teach each other, correcting or just figuring it out with a stand partner."

" I had an especially hard time with the bowing hand....it felt like any moment the bow was going to shoot out of my hand into empty space or that I would poke someone. I don't know, it was just really weird."

" It would be nice if the violin had frets...."

" The sound of the viol is absolutely unique; it's kind of like a violin, but also a little like my ukulele. I never really thought combining the two would sound good, but, surprise, surprise, it really does."

" The whole thing is just so different from anything I've done before."

" I loved learning about the music we were playing..what it was used for, when it was written, a little about who wrote it, that viols were at their peak..."

" I would definitely recommend the program to anyone who wants to learn more about music, is curious about European history, or just wants to try something new. It's a pity more people can't try it, but I'm not sure there are enough viols on the West Coast to fit even our chamber orchestra much less the other orchestras."

" It's just so cool...you feel like you've almost stepped back in time. You play this music and wonder who else has heard it in the last few hundred years. You think ' this is the kind of music that people would dance to in big poofy dresses; this is the kind of music played in the courts of Europe hundreds of years ago'."

" Thank you to our teachers, who shared with us the love and respect they have for these instruments, for showing us the small society of people who work to keep this music alive and these instruments still playing, for giving us the chance to try a piece of history ourselves, to pick it up and run the bow across the strings and hear them ring. I have enjoyed myself thoroughly."

Student 6:

"...teaching teenagers at 8 o'clock in the morning is a serious risk for teachers. Ours were comfortable with themselves, passionate about viols, and focused but not strict. When they wanted you to understand something, they went to great lengths to make sure you eventually understood, and they always seemed calm and collected."

"Most of the time I played the bass viol, but some of the time I played the treble. I really enjoyed playing the treble because, being a bass player, you never really

get to play the melody throughout a whole piece. It was nice to get a change from what I usually play. I loved the feeling of reading new notes and hearing the melody come from my instrument and not another!"

"Playing the viols introduced me to a whole separate world of music. It made me realize that it's really amazing how many ways music can be produced and how many cool people are involved in the production."

"Being a musician is not only just having the ability to play the right notes in tune at a fast tempo. It is not just about being able to count correctly, perform the right bowings or being able to follow the conductor and listen to other people. It is about how the music you play reflects onto your everyday life. Ever since I moved to Seattle, so many musical experiences have been offered to me. I have definitely been practicing more because I want to be better...at listening, at hearing, at seeing. I want to be better in all the aspects of music, not just better at one measure that I have to play because I am in an orchestra. "

"I have a feeling that music will never cease to be heavily involved in my life. It will always be there, just like Homer, Alaska, my home. Playing viols helped me to think about my life and how it has changed, and what else it has in store for me. I couldn't be more grateful to have the experience. I feel too lucky."



HAPPY
NEW
YEAR!

MAKE MUSIC

Pacific Northwest Viols
10056 NE Knight Rd
Bainbridge Island WA 98110

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Pacific Northwest Viols 2012-2013 Season

PNV Play Day Dates

- ❖ September 8, 2012—Pastoral Outreach Center led by Ronnee Fullerton
- ❖ November 10, 2012—Cathedral Place led by Lee Inman
- ❖ **January 19, 2013--Cathedral Place; Led by Joanna Blendulf**
- ❖ March 9, 2013--Cathedral Place led by Margriet Tindemans
- ❖ May 11, 2013—Cathedral Place led by Josh Lee

*\$20 Fee per participant
A = 415*

Play Day Location for January 19
Cathedral Place at St. James (PNV Customary Venue)
803 Terry Avenue
Seattle, Washington

Parking available in O'Dea High School lot (free) and in the Parkade at Boren and Marion Streets (\$)

Pacific Northwest Viols, Board Members 2012 – 2013

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ❖ Lee Inman, President | ❖ Chris Briden, Member at Large |
| ❖ Jon Brenner, Secretary, Programs | ❖ Noreen Jacky, Programs |
| ❖ Bill Warren, St. James Coordinator | ❖ Vicki Hoffman, Programs |
| ❖ Michael LaGaly, Treasurer | ❖ Olga Hauptman, Instrument Rental |
| ❖ Lee Talner, Outreach | ❖ Liisa Peterson, Communications |

*The **Soundpost** welcomes reader contributions of any kind: articles, commentary, personal stories, event reportage. E-Mail is preferred, but postal mail or napkin scribbings are all gladly received, as well. **Email:** liisapeterson@gmail.com.*