

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

I've been spending a lot of time these days rummaging through Gregory Sandow's online blog. His focus is the future of classical music, and he's well qualified to discuss this very important topic. His intended audience consists primarily of performing musicians, and those who support and promote performers.

His thesis, one I agree with, is that the way in which musical classics are presented is increasingly out of sync with contemporary culture in very significant ways – the formality of the concert hall, the reliance on warhorses in programming, the limited view of audience demographics. This issue has very real negative consequences for both the continued viability of some very great works of musical art, and for the livelihoods of highly skilled and talented musicians. Audiences are shrinking. Orchestras are going bankrupt.

In the realm of early music, the trend perhaps doesn't seem to me to be so dreadfully downward. Yet. For one thing, historically-informed performances (HIP) still possess some 'novelty' value. For another, concert programs on early instruments are still, in the main, creative and full of surprising, wonderful new stuff – Vivaldi's "Seasons" and the "Messiah" being notable exceptions. There is also less reliance on super-star performers to draw an audience, though we all have our favorites.

Still, I wonder: once the novelty fades, will HIP still be....uh, hip? Possibly. But I think every one of us – beginner or experienced, amateur or pro – has a role in ensuring the continued appeal of the music we love so much. I can't emphasize the value of sharing our enjoyment for what we do with everyone we encounter. It's more than 'outreach'. It's shared enthusiasm, it's caring, and it's catching.

Case in point: not long ago, I was schlepping my bass from my car to a building downtown, and heard someone behind me ask, "Is that a cello?" I could have brushed them off with a quick 'yes', but (since the 'wait' sign was still lit), I took the opportunity to run through my thirty-second elevator speech on the viol, and the difference between violins and viols. It was sort of half a teaching moment. The light changed, and we parted ways. Of course, not everyone you meet will want to become a viol player. But those thirty-second conversations add up, and may generate enough curiosity to create a new early-music concertgoer.

Speaking of favorites: do plan to attend the March Play Day, where Margriet Tindemans will be our presenter. Always a fine way to spend a morning, eh? And, as you walk to the venue, if someone asks you what you're carrying....tell 'em!

Oh, one final thing: if you haven't yet renewed your PNV membership, please do. We'd miss you.

In honor of Isabella d'Este

Margriet Tindemans



Isabella d'Este by Leonardo Da Vinci, 1500

An important person in the development of the viol and its early repertoire was the Marquesa Isabella d'Este, a great patroness of music and poetry. She was the one who ordered some viols for her court, and when they arrived, hired some players. Besides her interest in instrumental music, her court was famous as the principal centre of the genre of the Frottola, which in a way predates the madrigal.

We will look at several pieces from one of the later collections, this one from Rome, the Libro primo de la croce, published in 1526. Marchetto Cara, Bartolomeo Tromboncino and Sebastian Festa are some of the composers presented. While Frottole were often written for voice and lute or keyboard, it is likely that the instrumentalists at the court, looking for suitable music, would have tried their hand at these gorgeous tunes, maybe embellishing them a bit to their taste! Texts are sonnets by Petrarch, a sacred Lauda to the Virgin Mary, and some Pastorelas, stories of knights riding in the countryside and encountering lovely girls....

The pieces are not difficult in a technical sense, but that means we can concentrate on making a beautiful sound, bow control and blending our viols. Trebles are certainly welcome, but will be playing on their lower strings a bit (down to a below middle c). It would be great if we could have lots of tenors, and of course a few basses. The music is on score, and uses treble, treble down an octave, and bass clefs. I will bring a few tenor parts in alto clef, but I would encourage you to go ahead and practice your treble clef down an octave reading. It will come in handy at workshops this summer!

I am also happy to spend an afternoon session on how to embellish these pieces, if there is interest. **Please let me know if you are interested, so I can prepare packages of music for the afternoon class.** (Email margriett@comcast.net or phone is fine.) Of course I will be happy to coach any music anyone wants to play.

Greetings from a Good Friend

A January 2013 email to PNV Members from Beryl Hardstaff

I live in West Vancouver, B.C. Canada. I have been a member of Pacific Northwest Viols for many years but I am now climbing up through my eighties and you are just TOO far away!!

Just for your records, - I should let you know that I had an address change in January 2012. My phone # is the same ([604-922-8241](tel:604-922-8241)) and so is my e-mail address tibih@shaw.ca.

I am very fortunate that there are weekly viol plays here and an excellent Early Music Society. I enjoyed my membership with your Society very much... Goodbye to all who remember me -- Beryl

Cornish Early Music Artist Diploma Students Perform

Margriet Tindemans, Liisa Peterson and Chris Briden

Margriet says: I would like to talk a bit about my student Chris Briden. He has received his undergraduate and masters in viol from Indiana University, and is now pursuing an Artist Diploma (AD) at Cornish. This Artist Diploma program is an intensive, one-year program. He gets two hours of lessons every week, and in addition he plays in ensembles, performance studio class, and has theory classes as well. ***His diploma recital will be on May 7, at Trinity Parish Church, Seattle.*** See the Early Music Guild's web page <http://www.earlymusicguild.org/tickets/first-tuesday/>

Liisa says: Check out what is happening with the Artist Diploma program in Early Music at Cornish and you will be thrilled. http://www.cornish.edu/music/concentrations/early_music/. The great part for the rest of us is that AD student recitals are presented in association with the Early Music Guild. As such they are listed on their calendar.

There is a Cornish Recital <http://www.earlymusicguild.org/?s=cornish> featuring Chris and two other AD students, José Luis Muñoz (countertenor), Patrick Morgan (harpsichord) and Cornish faculty member Stephen Stubbs (lute and guitar) on Friday March 29th at 7:30 pm at the Northlake Unitarian Universalist Church, Kirland.

Chris says: Hello, my name is Chris Briden and it will be my pleasure to present you with a program of solo, unaccompanied, viola da gamba music on May 7th. The title of the recital is **Nearly Perfect** and it does not refer to my viol playing, because, let's face it, that could go either way. No, "Nearly Perfect" refers to the renaissance and early baroque method of classifying instruments. To the renaissance mind an instrument that could play all of the parts of a polyphonic piece, like the harpsichord, organ or lute, was a "perfect" instrument that could function on its own or as the core of an ensemble. In opposition to them there were the "imperfect" instruments like the recorder, violin or cornetto. These instruments could only play one melodic line, though very beautifully.

The viola da gamba fits somewhere in between. It is tuned like a lute and has frets, which does allow for a certain amount of polyphonic playing. However, the fact that the bow can only play two adjacent strings simultaneously does hamper those polyphonic capabilities. Any chord of more than two voices must be spread to a greater or lesser degree, which can make any attempt at voice leading very difficult to hear. One solution is to leap between melodic fragments thus suggesting that there is more than one voice. Another is to arpeggiate choral passages so that the concept of voice leading becomes moot and the harmonic texture becomes most important. Composers and players of the viola da gamba were very creative in their solutions to making complete and self-contained music on their instrument and they were highly successful, their music is "Nearly Perfect."

Please join me on May 7th at 7:30 pm for a program of Nearly Perfect music for the viola da gamba at Trinity Parish Church, 609 8th Ave, Seattle, WA 98104.

Julianna K. Emanski, soprano
presents

A CRAZY
LITTLE
THING
CALLED
LOVE

final recital:
Cornish College of
the Arts Artist
Diploma program

May 3, 2013 at
8:00 PM
Trinity Episcopal
Church
Seattle,
Washington

www.juliannaemanski.com

A few days before my program, on May 3rd at 8:00, you can enjoy another AD student, Julianna Emanski for **A Crazy Little Thing Called Love** at Trinity Parish Church.

New Music on the PNV Website

Charlie Nagel

I suspect that many people do as I do, checking out the PNV website (pnviols.org) only on the rare occasion when my memory of a detail concerning a play day needs to be refreshed. As a result, additions to the “sheet music” page of the website may slip by unnoticed.

The two most recently available for download come from two very different time periods. Martha Bishop’s stately “Ceremonial March of the Gambas,” for a quartet consisting of two treble viols, one tenor and one bass viol, was composed for a class the focus of which was on “ceremonial music.” At last summer’s conclave she generously offered to share it with our chapter for posting on our website.

The other addition is six three-part Canzonets by Thomas Morley, newly edited from the original 1583 edition. Although modern editions of these delightful pieces are abundant, there isn’t an available one, with the “right” clefs, completely suitable for performing on viols. On two treble viols and a tenor viol, they are very satisfying to play. With only modest technical demands, the pieces allow the players to have the pleasure of exploring their expressive possibilities.

Port Townsend Workshop is Filling Fast!

Jo Baim

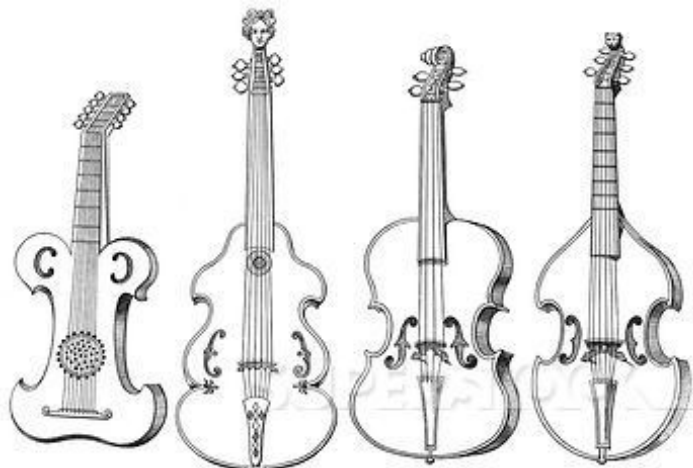
Don't miss your opportunity to sign up for the 2013 Port Townsend Early Music Workshop! A splendid week with outstanding faculty, including Joanna Blendulf, Brent Wissick and Margriet Tindemans, awaits you on the beautiful campus of the University of Puget Sound. The workshop is already 3/4 full, so early sign-up is recommended.

Visit www.seattle-recorder.org/Workshop/index.html for general information, and follow the links to learn more about the faculty and classes. You can register online or via the U.S. Mail. Contact Administrative Director Jo Baim with questions at workshop@seattle-recorder.org.

Reminder – High School Outreach Program Needs Instruments

Text by Ellen Seibert, image swiped off of Google Images by Liisa Peterson

Lee Talner, Chris Briden and Ellen Seibert are asking for loaner viols for the Roosevelt High School beginning viols program this spring. Please get in touch with Ellen at ellen415@comcast.net if you can help. The program begins the second week of March.



January Play Day with Joanna Blendulf

Text by Olga Hauptman; Photos by Lee Talner

Joanna Blendulf gave a very enlightening lesson to 24 players on January 19th in which she taught techniques that lead to good music making, or, you might say, the physical elements of expressive playing.

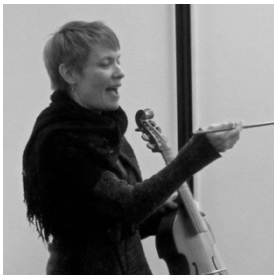
If you look over a piece before you begin to play, you can see a variety of textures: fast and slow notes, stepwise and disjunct motion, rise and fall, a motive and secondary material, entrances and cadences. Making the most of these contrasts is expressive and interesting and gives clarity to the lines of polyphony. Joanna analyzed the technical components involved, drilled us a bit, and then applied the drill to passages in the music she'd handed out, a fantasia by Jerome Bassano (1559-1635).



First we practiced entrances, starting with the bow on the string, not in the air, with fingers, arm and upper body relaxed. In this way we were able to begin with a calmly and confidently with a sound that had core.

Next we spent a long time on the important issue of quick changes of articulation, especially in faster passages. "It's all in the wrist." Legato passages require continuous wrist flow with fingers following through, and simply interrupting the wrist flow, and not following through with the fingers will produce shorter notes. So we practiced the switch on single notes for a while, then a little faster, and then using passages in the Bassano. Joanna advised that this drill would be very useful as part of one's daily warm-up.

We spent some time practicing crescendos and decrescendos, first drilling on repeated notes simply by using more and more bow as we got louder and less and less bow as we got softer. We looked at the Bassano and saw passages of rising pitches commonly calling for a crescendo and we found falling lines where we applied diminuendo. I found that changing bow speed is much more effective than changing pressure—or than raising the shoulders and knitting the brow.



We also learned that the color of the sound is affected by the bow's contact point on the string: playing closer to the bridge brightens the sound, and moving away from it causes the tone color to darken.

We played through the Bassano and tried to incorporate all that we had begun to learn, and we sounded much more interesting than when we had played it at the beginning of the class. I'm now back in my practice room enjoying the effort to ingrain into habit all these ideas!

The Bassano, by the way, was quite beautiful. We played his first 5-part Fantasia. It can be found along with three others at www.imslp.org. Bassano was part of a rather long line of Italian musicians who worked in the English court. He was born when his parents were working for Queen Elizabeth 1, and he worked there and in the courts of the subsequent kings (James I and Charles I) until his death.

The most exciting thing for me about the class was (once again!) realizing how calmly applying simple techniques focuses energy most effectively towards expressing the excitement we feel about what we are doing.

Pacific Northwest Viols
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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 March 9
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

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|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
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*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.*