

THE SOUNDPOST

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

The President's Message

Lee Inman

I was happily and contentedly rehearsing with my new Tahoma Consort homies a couple weeks ago, and had somewhat of a micro-epiphany about this business of playing a viol in a group of people. It came to me that the five of us were keeping company with instruments that, even though they were Next Big Thing in 1500, they were pretty much yesterday's news by the late 18th century.

Considered further: in the viol world, there is nothing even close to the playable \$50 pawn-shop fiddle. Your average new viol is fairly expensive. And obtaining a truly superb instrument can easily require negotiating a second mortgage on the house. Then there is the matter of the bow, the strings (fragile, temperamental, and – natch – expensive), the case, the music library, the lessons. And some folks even get multiples of all of these. Oy gevalt! Are we insane?

Yet, here we are, the five of us, playing some little gem by Gibbons. We've all surmounted the hassle, and the expense, and the struggle to get reasonably competent at this thing, and we're happy – really, really happy – with what's transpiring. Thus, it happened that during the length of a two-and-a-half beat rest I pondered: is it the way the bow greedily grabs the string? The way the fingers cuddle blissfully against the frets? The way the music we play weaves into, around, and through itself, unravelling in a cunning denouement to an almost inevitably glorious conclusion? It's partly all of these things, of course.

But my epiphany? It's the sound. The ravishingly human, expansively expressive and complex sound of these instruments, singly and in groups. Almost every viol player to whom I've inquired how they came to play the viol has responded with some version of, "Well, I went to this concert, and I heard...." Or: "Well, I was listening to this recording, and heard this strange instrument..." That sneaky ol' sound just grabbed those folks' ears, gave 'em a good shaking, and informed their brains that true happiness lies in doing whatever was necessary to get the tools and skills to make that sound.

Play Day Schedule

- 9:30 am - Check in, sign up for consorts, tune
- 10:00 am - Grand Consort Presentation
- 11:30 am - Annual Meeting
- 12:00 pm - Lunch Break
- 1:00 pm - First Consort Session
- 2:30 pm - Second Consort Session
- 4:00 pm - Clean up

\$20 Fee per participant
A = 415

November 21st Play Day Location Queen Anne Christian Church

1316 3rd Ave. W
Seattle, Washington



Almost sounds a bit like a drug addiction, doesn't it? Well, if there's a drug out there that enhances my peace of mind as much as consort playing, that lowers my heart rate, that gets those endorphins a-pumpin', that promotes my love for my fellow man, and makes me hanker for raw broccoli and dip (my favorite post-concert snack!)...show me that drug. I suspect though, that making music in general, more specifically making music on the viol with other people, is the only medicine with these particular side-effects. Best addiction on the planet. Next to broccoli.

Speaking of addictions, I hope you're all planning on attending the November 21 Play Day. Our first event at the very comfortable and accommodating Queen Anne Christian Church went very well, by all accounts. I have the honor to facilitate the next one, and I plan to use the occasion to visit an old friend, one who we all know, and one whose masterpiece is often unjustly ignored or overlooked. I trust it'll be a good morning for everyone, and that everybody's endorphin levels will rise to their customary heights.

It's the sound. See you on the 21st.

Lee Inman leads our second Play Day of the Season on Saturday, November 21st!

Swiped and edited from Early Music America and Seattle Historical Arts for Kids Websites; photo: Dan Bronson, historicalarts.org



Composer, arranger, lecturer, teacher, and ensemble coach, Lee Inman has played baroque cello and viola da gamba for over forty years. During his university years, Lee felt drawn to the viol, and was primarily self-taught, until a posting by the U.S. Air Force to what was then West Berlin brought him under the guidance of Dr. Richard Klemm, of the Berlin Hochschule für Musik. In the mid-1970's, he both taught viola da gamba as a member of the adjunct faculty of the Cornish School, and performed on viol and Baroque cello with Randall McCarty, Steven Stubbs, Stanley Ritchie, and other Seattle early music pioneers, appearing regularly with the Seattle Bach Ensemble, Pracktical Musicke and Fiori Musicali.

Later, while living in Minneapolis, he became a founding member of the Lyra Concert as its principal and solo cellist and gambist, and supported a number of the Twin Cities' active early-music chamber groups as a continuo specialist. Lee returned to Seattle in 1990, and continues to participate actively in Seattle's rapidly-expanding early-music scene.

Lee is a popular leader at Pacific Northwest Viols Play Days, and at summer workshops in Arizona and Washington. He has presented in master classes with Anner Bylisma, Jeanne Lamon, and Laurence Dreyfuss. He has also appeared in concert with Jack Ashworth, Julie

Jeffries, Mary Springfels, Craig Trompeter, and Brent Wissick, as well as with Margriet Tindemans, Olga Hauptman and other notable Northwest performers and teachers.

Recap of October 3rd Play Day with Nancy Zylstra

Ellen Seibert; Image of Joanna, sfems.wordpress.com

Nancy Zylstra was our presenter for the first Play Day of our 2015-2016 Season, and helped us inaugurate our new Queen Anne Christian Church location near the top of Queen Anne Hill. Nancy is one of the reigning voice teachers in Seattle, perhaps the best one for interpretation of early music in the baroque period and before. She gave us a splendid comprehensive outlook on why knowing the words matters whenever playing instrumental music and led us in playing our pieces with the best storytelling.

I agreed to write a summary of the events of the day and promptly lost my copious notes in the recycle bin before writing it. Fortunately, Michael King, also an attender to detail, had fantastic notes bringing all of this back to me in time for the Soundpost! Only due to Michael's business trip to Asia was I not able to persuade him to write the article.



Nancy's morning session began with a talk about how words, text, and music are interwoven. The obligation and beauty of performing instrumental music must be based on following the meaning of text. If there is a text then the musical line and phrasing must be a source of interpretation for bringing out the meaning of the words. As Nancy pointed out, in the beginning was the word, *prima la parola*. If you cannot understand the words you might as well be an oboe! She mentioned more than once a book by Judy Tarling called "*The Weapons of Rhetoric: A Guide for Musicians and Audience*" (published by Corda Music, <http://www.cordamusic.co.uk>), as a guide to help musicians learn about the use of rhetoric and how it influenced the work of renaissance and baroque composers. For us to truly understand their works, we also need to understand how these rhetorical tools are used.

The importance of knowing the text leads the musician to be the storyteller, a task easier if it is memorized, allowing viol players, for instance, to determine the best bowings and dynamics. Nancy said that consonants are pronounced differently depending upon the mood and context of the words. She quoted Andrei Gandrilov who said: "Music is our brilliant cipher, the best code ever developed for preserving a person's emotions and psychological and philosophical state. And it is the performer's task to decode those messages encoded in the notes, to enable everyone to hear the feelings that the composer locked up in them." She also told a story attributed to the poet Robert Frost who was asked after he read one of his poems what the poem meant. So Frost read the same poem again.

Madame Z told us of her "dump and stir" method, one emulating Martha Stewart with all the ingredients in front of her preparing a dish for her TV show. Ingredients for us include the subject, whether mythological, biblical, secular, the characters implied or speaking, the time

period and many of these facts can be sought in references such as the Oxford English Dictionary and Florio's 1611 Italian-English dictionary. The composer will have set exciting or tragic words differently as "pictures" are painted. The composer may change the rhythm according to the words, where a meter in 2 will just not do when the words require a meter in 3. Did the composer and poet know each other, work together, collaborate on a drama you need to understand and reveal? Are the words sad, angry or hopeful? Did you know that the key of D- minor was supposed to be "hopeful" in earlier times? These are all part of what you need to know when playing your instrument. As Nancy says, once you know all the ingredients and have assembled them you can simply "dump and stir"!

The assembled morning group worked on two madrigals, *Do You Not Know?* By Thomas Morley and *Fair Phyllis I Saw Sitting All Alone* by John Farmer as examples for putting our dump and stir model into practice. In later sessions Nancy coached the group on *Weep, O Mine Eyes*, by John Bennet, *Agnus Dei* from the Mass for Four Voices by William Byrd, *Baci soavi e cari* of Monteverdi and *Si, ch'io vorrei morire*, also by Monteverdi. During the last session of the day I was elsewhere playing bass with Helen Van Mater, treble and Lee Inman, with trios from an LPM edition of French Renaissance songs, which had surprisingly beautiful harmonies and lines. We were supposed to be a group with some doubling others who were less experienced but there were just three of us attending. Helen, a less experienced treble player as she is new to the viol, although a fine flutist, kept up incredibly well and we all had a very good time with it.

Where to grab lunch during a Play Day at our new venue!

Michael King

If anything, this is more of shout out to our members to share your thoughts with me on this topic so I can write a proper article for our next newsletter.

Personally, I found by walking two blocks north on 3rd Ave. to Galer (by turning right and heading out of the Church) and turning right and heading towards Queen Anne Ave. N, that I dead-ended into the 5 Spot. Located at 1502 Queen Anne Ave. N, I remember seeing the restaurant years ago on an episode of *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives* on Food Network, with Guy Fieri raving about the corned beef hash. The restaurant's food is inspired by America's cultural roots and features takes on regional specialties from all over the country. I had a tasty Hawaiian kalua pig hash for brunch! Afterwards, I walked up and down the street a bit and found a few more restaurants. There is Le Rêve – a French Bakery and Café at 1805 Queen Ave. N. Their lunch menu includes staples like the Croque Monsieur and Madame, soups and salads. There is Domani Pizzeria at 1515 Queen Anne Ave. N. which serves appetizers, pizzas, salads, and Sushi Samurai, a sushi bar at 1817 Queen Anne Ave. N. Finally, I passed the Queen Bee Café on 223 W. Galer Street, which serves crumpets, crumpwiches (the pork cubano and jerk chicken look yummy!), along with salads, teas and coffees.

Parking at the Queen Anne Christian Church

Michael King

You may have noticed that the Queen Anne Christian Church, while quite spacious, has no dedicated parking. There were a number of nearby, non-residentially zoned spaces, however, that were available for parking. My suggestions would be to simply be to approach the church from the south on 3rd Ave. and to keep your eyes peeled for parking on the street, and to then circle the block if you're unable to find something immediately near the entrance. Please let us know if you are having any issues finding parking and we'll see if we need to provide some additional guidance!

Bass Viol for Sale

For sale, a John Pringle Small Bass (scale length of 62 cm) with hard case, asking \$5,000. Please contact Nancy Wright n319wri@gmail.com, 206-362-6965.

Info on Pringle instruments can be found at: <http://www.pringleviols.com>.

Treble Viol for Sale

For sale, a student-model treble viol (with case and bow) made by John Pringle in 1997. Valued at \$1800, it is offered for sale at \$1600. If sold through this ad, Peggy Monroe will donate 10% of the sale price to PNV! Please call Peggy for further info at (206) 322-2133.

Opportunity for viol lessons with Joanna Blendulf – November 12th and 13th

Ellen Seibert

There will opportunities for viol players to take lessons individually and also as a group on November 12th or 13th. Joanna Blendulf will be teaching at my house on Capitol Hill when not playing with the Portland Baroque, and could also arrange to go to another location for a group. Please let me know if you are interested in a lesson for yourself or in a group and I can make a date and time for you. ellen415@comcast.net or 206-329-2774.

Pacific Northwest Viols
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Pacific Northwest Viols - 2015-2016 Season

PNV Play Day Dates

- ❖ October 3, 2015: Nancy Zylstra
- ❖ **November 21, 2015: Lee Inman**
- ❖ January 23, 2016: TBD
- ❖ March 5, 2016: TBD
- ❖ May 14, 2016: TBD

*\$20 Fee per participant
A = 415*

Play Day location is at our NEW venue:

***Queen Anne Christian Church
1316 3rd Ave. W
Seattle, Washington***

Pacific Northwest Viols, Board Members (2015-2016)

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|------------------------------------|--|
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Find Pacific Northwest Viols on the web at: www.pnviols.org and on Facebook

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

Email: miking@microsoft.com