

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

Silly garden. The soggy plot behind our house is ignoring the calendar, has apparently said 'oh, piffle' to the weather, and is shyly offering the first few crocus and daffodil sprouts to us for inspection. Seeing those, it's a bit hard to believe that the shag-end of 2015 is upon us, but...well, here we are. I'd be remiss in my responsibilities if I didn't at least attempt a quick review of what the year brought to our local community of ardent viol players. That said:

Our March Play Day found us again welcoming our good friend Ros Morley, whose style is a cheerful mixture of gentle coaxing along with a persistent resolve that we meet her high standards. In May, Joanna Blendulf, on very short notice, came to us to present in Margriet's place. We didn't miss our dear Margriet any less, of course, but Joanna's warm and compassionate presence, and her usual brilliant teaching, gave us some solace.

The summer of 2015 brought some unexpected turmoil, as it gradually became apparent that Saint James Cathedral would no longer be able to host our chapter events. After a search for a replacement, we were and are extremely fortunate to have found a generous sponsor at Queen Anne Christian Church, a venue well-known to Seattle's early-music community. Their facility is ideally-suited to our needs, and we are tremendously grateful to Pastor Rudel that they welcomed us into their midst. Our chapter's obligation to Queen Anne is similar to that we had with Saint James: provide appropriate music for church functions and services – an obligation we are most happy to meet. If you are asked to participate in meeting this obligation, I know you'll all eagerly step up to do so.

In October we convened at Queen Anne Christian for our first Play Day of the new season, and were delighted with Nancy Zylstra's in-depth presentation on playing vocal music on viols. When I presented some Dowland in November, it was clear to me that we were all beginning to feel comfortable in our new home. And I can't leave this recap without offering thanks to both Chris Briden and Olga Hauptman for their performances at the church's services this year, as well.

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

January 23rd: Mary Springfels

Play Day Location
Queen Anne Christian Church
1316 3rd Ave. W
Seattle, Washington



Now, to look ahead. Our first presenter in 2016 is Mary Springfels, a musician and teacher for whom I have an enormous amount of respect. Joanna returns to us in March. And a special treat is in store for the May Play Day when my friend Wendy Gillespie will make (what I believe to be) a first-ever appearance at a PNV Play Day. What a way to launch a year, eh? I hope all of you will make a special effort to attend their presentations.

As a reminder – out-of-area presenters will appreciate local hosts while they are visiting us. If you are able to offer hospitality to Mary, Joanna or Wendy please let me, Vicki Hoffman, or anyone else on the board know so we can work out the details with you.

Finally: we've moved into high gear in making plans for the 2016 PNV summer workshop. Bastyr University can no longer offer adequate facilities to us, so we're moving the event to University of Puget Sound in Tacoma. The faculty this year will, as usual, be stellar. Remember, PNV members get first opportunity to register before we announce to the broader viol community. So please hold July 10-16 open on your calendar. We'll have further details for you in a couple months.

Thanks very much to all of you for your continued support and your participation in the chapter's activities. Happy New Year! I look forward to seeing all of you on January 23.

--Lee

Mary Springfels to lead PNV's first Play day of 2016 on Saturday, January 23rd!

Bio and photo from vdgsa.org



Mary Springfels is a veteran of the American early music movement. She has played with innumerable ensembles, from the New York Pro Musica, Sequentia, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, the Folger Consort, the Chicago Opera Theater, and Houston's Ars Lyrica Baroque Ensemble, with whom she was featured as a soloist in the 2014 Berkeley Early Music Festival. In 1983 Mary was appointed Musician-in-Residence at the Newberry Library of Chicago, where she founded the Newberry Consort, which enjoyed a distinguished 20 years of performing and recording under her direction. In 2007, Mary was awarded the Howard Brown Lifetime Achievement Award from

EMA for her contributions to the life of early music in the US. She currently lives in New Mexico and pursues an active career teaching and performing.

Viol lessons with Mary Springfels the weekend of January 23rd

Vicki Hoffman

There will be opportunities for viol players to take lessons and receive coaching from Mary while she is in town for our Play Day. Please contact Vicki Hoffman (mikeandvicki@q.com) for additional information, or speak with Mary in-person at our next play day to arrange a lesson.

Changing and Storing Strings

Courtesy of Cascadia Viols and Cascadia Viols' Viol Curmudgeon Bill Monical

1. Changing Viol Strings and Creating Emergency Spares

Changing a full set of strings at one time will reward you with renewed clarity, resonance, and response throughout your instrument. The process will take about 20 minutes. The new set will be stretched and stable at pitch after a few days of playing under tension.

Start with the viol accurately in tune. Place the instrument on a soft cloth or towel on a table large enough to support the whole instrument lying on its back safely, and have a pencil on hand. In changing the whole set, it is easiest to start with the bottom string (treble d-VI, tenor G-VI, bass D-VI or A-VII). Remove the old string, add pencil graphite as a lubricant to the bridge and top-nut grooves, and bring the new string up to pitch with the whole instrument remaining accurately in tune. Graphite will allow the string to slide more easily in its grooves, but you should make sure the bridge is still straight. New strings will stretch and pull the bridge forward toward the fingerboard, especially the covered lower strings.

Next, change the top string (treble d'-I, tenor g'-I, bass d'-I) in the same way with lubricant to the bridge and top-nut. Continue working your way up to the top of the peg-box. After installing each string, be sure the whole instrument is always in tune and that the bridge remains straight.

Save the old strings carefully in the new string envelopes, and mark the date when the new strings were installed. These old, "pre-stretched emergency spares" should be kept in your case for use if a current string breaks. The pre-stretched spares will be stable in pitch almost immediately and make it easy to continue with your playing schedule.

2. Keeping Your Strings as a Stable and Reliable Resource

The most helpful element when buying strings is dating the string packet when purchased. In general, plain gut and covered strings have a shelf-life of about one to two years without loss of musical quality or durability, and with the humid northwestern climate, string life can usually be somewhat extended. However, if you have any new strings that are more than three or four years old, they probably will not stay in tune accurately, and will be best saved for a colleague who doesn't have a spare in an emergency!

The second element is string storage. Keep all strings, new and used, in your instrument case for emergencies. A sealed zipper freezer bag works very well to keep strings stable and can possibly extend both new and used string life. However, the gut core of covered strings shrinks in the dry season. The process of tuning and playing will stretch the gut, loosening the wire covering and causing "buzzing". In an emergency, lightly moistening a piece of paper towel with warm water and rubbing this moisture into the covered string will temporarily swell the gut and stop buzzing. For safety it is best not to moisten the string in the bowing area.

Lastly, for an instrument used frequently, you might renew the complete set of strings at the beginning of a playing season, carefully dating and saving all old strings as emergency spares for breakage while playing; but always keep a new replacement top string on hand. When changing the entire set, do install them at least one week prior to performance for pitch stability and enhanced musical quality.

Soundpost Editor's Note: We are hoping to make Bill Monical's Viol Curmudgeon column a regular feature in The Soundpost. Bill has asked our members to send him questions or suggestions for future articles @ info@cascadiaviols.org

Tenor Viol for Sale



Tenor Viol, in good condition, made by Ian Harwood of Middlesex, England, and delivered in 1978. String length is 52.4 cm. Includes one Dotschkail bow; and one inexpensive bow (unknown manufacturer). Custom-fit hardshell case made by W.H. Davies, UK.

Asking price: \$900. Please contact Chris Gulacsik, christobol@comcast.net, 425-503-2895.

Vielle for Sale



Acco Model Vielle in good condition, made by Lyn Elder, Dominican College, San Rafael, CA, and delivered in 1993. Includes one period-bow, made by Lyn Elder; and one inexpensive bow (unknown manufacturer). Custom-fit hardshell case supplied by Lyn Elder.

Asking price: \$450. Please contact Chris Gulacsik, christobol@comcast.net, 425-503-2895.

Call for Content!

Michael King, SoundPost Editor, miking@microsoft.com

Just a friendly reminder that we're always looking for newsletter content to share with our membership! Please feel free to send me articles or recommendations for articles, tips on content from around the web and suggestions to help make *The Soundpost* better for our membership! Thanks!

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Pacific Northwest Viols - 2015-2016 Season

PNV Play Day Dates:

*\$20 Fee per participant
A = 415*

- ❖ October 3, 2015: Nancy Zylstra
- ❖ November 21, 2015: Lee Inman
- ❖ **January 23, 2016: Mary Springfels**
- ❖ March 5, 2016: Joanna Blendulf
- ❖ May 14, 2016: Wendy Gillespie

***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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|------------------------------------|--|
| ❖ Lee Inman, President | ❖ Chris Briden, Outreach |
| ❖ Jon Brenner, Secretary, Programs | ❖ Michael King, Communications & Member At Large |
| ❖ Bill Warren, Venue Coordinator | ❖ Vicki Hoffman, Programs |
| ❖ Michael LaGaly, Treasurer | ❖ Olga Hauptman, Instrument Rental & Membership Roster Custodian |
| ❖ Janet Slack, Member at Large | |

Find Pacific Northwest Viols on the web at: <http://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