

Cascadia Viols

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Cascadia Viols is the quarterly newsletter of the Viola da Gamba Society ~ Cascadia, a chapter of the Viola da Gamba Society of America.



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Cascadia Viols is grateful to:

- ◆ Knuckleheads for website development and maintenance
- ◆ Trinity Cathedral for hosting our events this year
- ◆ Boulder Early Music Shop for the material in our lending library

Message From the President

Tim Scott



This has been a busy and satisfying start to the new year for Cascadia Viols. Josh Lee's and Lee Inman's workshops went well, and we are busy planning for both a concert and a workshop featuring the music of William Byrd. The May 28th workshop, lead by renowned Byrd scholar Kerry McCarthy, will welcome viol players and singers to explore the music of this great Renaissance composer. On the evening before, Cascadia Viols will present an all-Byrd concert at Trinity

Cathedral with viol players Anthony Allen, Dirk Freymuth, Lee Inman, Tim Scott, and Ann Shaffer, and singers Tim Galloway and Kerry McCarthy. The program will include Byrd's consort songs, "In Nomine" treatments, madrigals, "Browning," and four movements of his five-part mass.

Next season has fallen into place very easily. I am pleased to announce that we will have four workshops in Portland and one in Eugene, with Joanna Blendulf appearing in both locations. Another presenter will be Pat O'Scannell, longtime musician with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, leading a workshop about Shakespeare and music. Pat is a fine singer and viol player who leads several workshops a year in Ashland. Catharina Meints, one of the country's leading viol players and teachers, will join us in January. Finally, we are delighted to present Tina Chancey both in a concert featuring pardessus de viol and a workshop.

The other big news is Conclave! As most of you know, Conclave — the annual week-long workshop sponsored by the Viola da Gamba Society of America — will be held at Pacific University, in Forest Grove. This is an opportunity to attend without having to fly with your instrument. It is one of the most fun weeks you will ever have. Cascadia Viols has offered to help by providing transportation for faculty members from the airport to Pacific University. Please contact Bruce Van Buskirk, bruce_vanbuskirk@yahoo.com, if you can help.

We are in the process of making improvements to our website. It will soon be interactive, so you can join or renew your membership online. Many thanks to the very helpful people at Knuckleheads, who create and host our website.

I urge all of you to look at our Facebook page, where we have some very interesting videos and occasional discussions and questions; find us on Facebook under Cascadia Viols. Please join us with comments and contributions. Members are enjoying our events, so I urge you to attend, renew your membership, donate, and help us attract new members.

Tim Scott

Calendar of Events

Cascadia Viols events (details to come with individual announcements):

- ◆ May 27, Friday, 8 p.m.: **All-Byrd concert.**
- ◆ May 28, Saturday: **Byrd workshop with Byrd scholar Kerry McCarthy.**

For more information about these events, both at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, 147 NW 19th Ave, Portland, see our president's message on p. 1.

More Events of Interest to Our Members:

- ◆ April 9 and 10: **Passaggi: a concert with Mara Winter, Renaissance flute, and Hideki Yamaya, Renaissance lute.** April 9, Saturday, 7:00 p.m.: Chinook Lutheran Church, Chinook, Washington. \$15. April 10, Sunday, 4:00 p.m.: 3832 N Interstate Ave., Portland. \$16 general; \$14 senior; \$10 student
- ◆ May 28 and June 25, Saturdays: **Salon du Viol playdays.** Ashland. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. All levels, lunch included, \$20. For more information and to register, contact Pat O'Scannell, pato@opendoor.com, 541-482-9757.
- ◆ July 24-31: **VdGSA Conclave.** Pacific University, Forest Grove. Information at <https://vdgsa.org>.

Change in Membership Year Results in a Real Deal

Your Cascadia Viols board of directors has decided to change the membership year to July through June, rather than basing it on the calendar year as it has been in the past. This means that current members will gain an extra five months of membership for free and won't have to renew until July 2017. The same special deal applies to new members, too, so if you are not a member and are thinking about joining, or you know someone who is thinking about it, now is the time to join! ◆



Euterpe, our muse

Cascadia Viols Interview: Bruce Van Buskirk, Portland



Cascadia Viols: When and why did you first become interested in the viola da gamba?

I began playing viol during graduate studies at the College of St. Scholastica. I was focusing on Renaissance and Baroque flute, but two classmates who had begun playing the viol the year before

(one of whom I eventually married!) talked me into picking it up. Since they were playing bass and treble, it seemed only natural to take up the tenor.

CV: Why do you love and play the viol?

I think the viol, almost more than any other instrument, benefits from social interaction; in other words, even if my playing doesn't sound very good on its own, somehow playing with other viols seems to make everyone's instrument sound better.

CV: What size(s) of viol do you play? Do you prefer one over the other(s), and if so, why?

I play only the tenor. I love its mid to upper register, and I like that I can play the bass line of a lot of music in a pinch.

CV: Tell us about your earliest musical experiences.

I started playing modern flute in grade school, and all through college, I was pretty smug about having one small case to carry around. Once I got into early music, and had to schlepp around a virtual lumber yard, I wasn't so smug anymore....

CV: Tell us about a teacher who is memorable for you.

Shelley Gruskin was my teacher at St. Scholastica, and working with him was such a joy. He had me read from facsimile scores, introduced me to repertory that was completely unexpected, and taught me concepts and techniques that I still use all the time and that hold validity for any instrument or type of music. I learned flexibility from him — which has helped me to adapt to new situations and pick up new instruments.

CV: Who are your favorite composers (either to listen to, or to play)?

I love to play Gibbons, Byrd, Holborne, Dowland, Brade, Weelkes, etc. I also love the Ars Subtilior repertoire, which is both beautiful and unsettling in equal measures.

CV: Do you have a favorite piece/pieces for viol, either to listen to or play?

The Gibbons trios for treble, tenor and bass are so great—challenging while still accessible, and fun to play and to listen to (either while playing or from afar).

CV: Tell us about your viols.

My tenor is an Italian Renaissance-style viol after Gasparo by Ray Nurse. They were kind of a thing in the early '90s but he doesn't make them any more, so I'm really pleased to own one. It's hourglass shaped, with f-holes rather than c-holes, and the top and back overlap the sides, similar to violin construction. In fact, Ray was of the opinion that the Italians were not adverse to having violins and viols play together, so the tone of this viol I think might blend pretty well with violins. It does have a tone that's not typical for the English-style viols that most folks play, almost wiry in some ways, with a set of overtones different from other viols.

CV: What other instruments do you play?

Renaissance and Baroque flute, recorders, crumhorns, bagpipes (I have a big beautiful bagpipe after Breughel's paintings, and a sweet little hümmelchen or "little bee"), and Renaissance guitar. I also play ukulele, and I'm just learning to play steel string guitar (which I want to learn well enough to be able to play along in bluegrass jams, and maybe learn some Piedmont blues).

CV: What other kinds of music do you like to listen to or play?

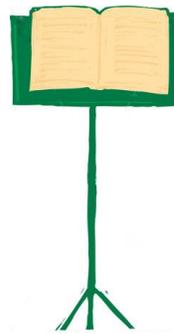
I like playing a lot of different types of music on ukulele—I was particularly delighted to find out that you can play clawhammer style (an old-time banjo technique) on the ukulele. I often take my uke to the bluegrass jam up at the Audubon Center, sponsored by the Oregon Bluegrass Association.

CV: What kinds of work have you done over your career?

I was a company musician for the Utah Shakespeare Festival, played baroque flute on a few Portland Baroque Orchestra concerts, was a founding member of Oregon Renaissance Band, and achieved my 15 minutes of fame playing a couple of recorder duets for the film soundtrack of Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho*. I had a long career as a classical music host in public radio, and I currently manage library reserves and copyright at the Reed College library. ♦

Practice Pointers

Karen Bartlett



The following tips—basic but worthy reminders—are gleaned from our January 9, 2016 workshop, mainly from Josh Lee. More to come next time!

- ♦ For warm-up, choose a scale such as G major, which is in the middle range of the instrument, and therefore a little easier.
- ♦ Much of the early music we play is all about the contrast between strong and weak, so during your scale warm-up, concentrate on making the push bow strong, the pull bow weak. Exaggerate. Make yourself seasick!
- ♦ On a strong (push) bow, keep the bow hand engaged, with fingers into the hair.
- ♦ On a weak (pull) bow, release the tension in your hand, so your fingers are not working; use the weight of your arm, especially your upper arm, to pull the bow; at the very end of your pull bow, engage your fingers again in preparation for the push.
- ♦ Think of each string as being a different instrument: each string requires a different bow speed, placement, and weight. On basses especially, the lower, thicker strings require more energy, more weight, a slower bow, and a sounding point closer to the frog.
- ♦ Good tone depends on bow speed, weight, and placement (sounding point). Experiment on each string and listen for differences.
- ♦ Don't lock your body position. Your weight must always be grounded, but you must also be free to move (think of having a beautiful frame, like a ballroom dancer, and moving within that frame). On basses in particular, your upper body must be able to turn as you go from top to bottom string.

Happy practicing! ♦

The Viol Curmudgeon: Viols and Wolf Notes

Bill Monical

While usually mentioned as a problem found in cellos, wolf notes are common to all members of the violin and viola da gamba families. A wolf note is created by instability between the musical pitch of an instrument's body resonance interacting with a nearly identical bowed note being played on a vibrating string. As these slightly different notes cancel each other out, the result is a beating, burbling, or stuttering sound.



In all bowed instruments, complex body resonance is a major element of sound projection that also amplifies the wolf note effect. As a result, great sounding instruments and wolf notes go together. When an instrument is in accurate adjustment and at its musical and resonant best, the wolf note also becomes more pronounced.

The presence of a wolf note is heard mainly on the lower strings of instruments and is not directly caused by the model, style of construction, design, repair, or age. However, some excellent instruments do not seem to have a wolf because the "beating" is not activated by any specific note. For example, if the wolf occurs *between* two notes (i.e. between F# on the D-VI string and open G on the G-V string of a bass viol), the problem is rarely noticed. This is why a wolf may suddenly appear when playing at a 415 or 440hz, but usually not both.

Some Practical Solutions

Using the example above, an open G wolf on the G-V string can be diminished by simultaneously fingering the octave g on the e-III string, which is also in sympathetic vibration with the wolf pitch. A traditional cellist's solution is to gently squeeze the ribs while playing, changing body resonance, but this is rarely effective on the viol. Soundpost adjustment, combined with using a lighter gauge of lower G-V & D-VI string (having less tension), will also sometimes diminish the wolf. But *never* place a cork under the fingerboard or tailpiece; doing so will both mute the entire instrument and lead to damage and the development of cracks and warping.

The wolf problem can also be intensified by seasonal temperature and humidity changes. Drier and colder conditions can result in increased soundpost tension, causing musical quality to be more focused and also increasing wolf difficulties. Gently relaxing soundpost

tension by adjustment will usually be helpful in diminishing wolfish prominence.

There are two basic types of commercial wolf-eliminators. The first is a weighted metal tube, available in many sizes and placed on one or both lower strings between the bridge and tailpiece. These change string mass, are tunable, and are quite inexpensive. The second type is a permanent device, tuned to the problem note, that completely absorbs the beating effect. It is not usually appropriate for viols and must be fitted very precisely inside an instrument, which can be quite costly to install.

To reduce or eliminate wolfishness, always bring the viol with related questions to the attention of an instrument professional for diagnosis. Usually a minimally invasive practical solution can be found if the wolf is unrelated to and not caused by other physical instrument problems.

All best wishes,
Cascadia Viols Curmudgeon Bill Monical
info@cascadiaviols.com

Just for Laughs

Wolves

Bill Monical

In 1995, the National Parks Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed and initiated an experiment reintroducing wolves into Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho. The program became an immensely popular environmental success, with a flood of published reports confirming the newly restored ecological balance in the region. You can imagine the laughter and merriment when about a year later, the Fish and Wildlife Service mounted a raid on a highly respected importer of stringed instrument products and accessories—U.S. Customs officials had noticed that the company was importing 500 wolf-eliminators!

Can We Stand Her?

Eileen Flory

In the last newsletter, Karen requested humorous suggestions made by the spell-checker. Here's my favorite: Whenever I reply to an e-mail message from Joanna Blendulf, the spell-checker hangs up on her last name and suggests "endurable." Our Joanna, of course, is way beyond durable.

Report on Cascadia Viols January Workshop: Improvisation with Josh Lee

Karen Bartlett

Cascadia Viols' fourth workshop was held at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral on January 9, 2016, with presenter Josh Lee. In addition to Josh, we were fortunate to have two coaches for the afternoon small ensembles: Ann Schaffer from Eugene, and Dirk Freymuth, new to us, from Western Oregon University in Monmouth. As in the past, there were other valuable resources available, including our faithful "viol curmudgeon," Bill Monical; instrument makers to talk with (Charlie Ogle and Wesley Brandt) with instruments to try out; and sheet music displays from Boulder Early Music Shop to browse.

To start off the morning, Josh Lee got us fully engaged by asking *us* to ask *him* questions—multiple hands raised, no shy participants here! "Practice Pointers" on p. 2 lists a few of the main points covered by Josh as he kept those questions in mind throughout the session.

The second segment of Josh's morning presentation revolved around a topic most likely intimidating to many of us, present author included: improvisation over a bass line. Josh did a wonderful job of eliminating the fear aspect of this undertaking by leading us through a series of baby steps, each of which was simple enough to encourage our confidence, and then building on each.

First, Josh distributed the "La spagna" bass line, which Diego Ortiz used for six *recercadas* in his 1553 *Tratado de glosas*, with the appropriate chord written below each note, as shown below (thanks to Josh for letting us publish a version of his handout).

Our first task was simply to look at the different chords and familiarize ourselves with the tonic, third, and fifth in the chord; in the case of Dm, for example, recognize that F and A are also possibilities. Once we had looked at each chord and named the notes for each, Josh then asked us to pluck the third and fifth while he bowed the bass note; we paused at the end of each measure in order to think about which notes we would pluck in the next measure. Next step was to do the same thing, but use the bow, first with a pause, then without. By then, we were starting to feel comfortable with choices of notes to play. After that, we experimented with adding passing tones between the thirds of the chords, keeping the rhythm a simple four equal beats per bar. Beyond that, it is easy to imagine other variations: more complex rhythms, more divisions (faster note values), wider range (leaps), etc. To

the delight of us all, Josh demonstrated a beautiful and heartfelt improvisation of his own on this same bass line. If you missed the workshop, or would like to hear him improvise again on this very piece, go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACqi_UAe56k. The term "*recercada*," (more often spelled "*ricercar*" or "*recercar*"), comes from the Italian verb "*ricercare*," which means "to seek out." Josh certainly inspired us to do our own "seeking" by giving us an approach to use to start exploring the realm of improvisation.

The morning session also included a presentation by our Viol Curmudgeon Bill Monical on wolf notes and how to cope with them. Tim Scott skillfully demonstrated a really bad wolf note on a cello, and then used a wolf eliminator to show how it can be placed and moved closer or further from the bridge to improve or even eliminate the wolf; placing it too close the bridge, for example, muted the tone and caused the wolf to come back. It was interesting to learn that the presence of a wolf note is not a defect and is not a reflection on the quality of the instrument, and that "wolves" generally are not a problem in warm, humid conditions. For the complete story, see Bill's article on p. 4.

Our afternoon was spent in small ensembles with coaches Josh, Dirk, and Ann. Both of my groups focused on ensemble awareness, and I will include a few tips from those sessions in future newsletters in the "Practice Pointers" column.

What a wonderful way to spend a gray, rainy winter day—playing music we love with each other on instruments we love, getting our questions answered, dipping our toes (well, fingers) into improvising, discovering the mystery behind wolves, improving our ensemble playing in the afternoon sessions, drooling over sheet music and new instruments, connecting with friends, and meeting new friends who love the viol. A huge thank you to all who make these gatherings possible! ♦

La spagna

Dm Am Gm Bbmaj Am Gm Bb
Cmaj Dm Fmaj Cmaj Dm Fmaj Gm Cmaj
Dm Cmaj Gm Fmaj Gm Cmaj Bbmaj Ebmaj
Dm Gm Am Cmaj Dm Fmaj Cmaj Dm
Cmaj Bbmaj Am Gm Dmaj Gmaj

Report on Cascadia Viols May Workshop: John Dowland, with Lee Inman

Karen Bartlett

The theme was sad, but the day was joyful. Members of Cascadia Viols assembled on March 19, 2016 at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland, to delve into the melancholy world of John Dowland (1563-1626). Under the expert and thoughtful guidance of Lee Inman, in our morning session we explored the first and third pavans from Dowland's *Lachrimæ or seven teares figured in seven passionate pavans*, scored for five viols (or members of the violin family) and lute. We were delighted to be joined by Portland-based lutenist Hideki Yamaya, who stayed for the afternoon program in order to coach the small ensembles.

Dowland's *Lachrimæ* is unique and innovative for his time because of its scoring, its cyclical nature, and its varied treatment of thematic material. The "Lachrimæ" theme, with its well known opening "falling tear" descending tetrachord, was one of the most popular tunes in England, and was first used by Dowland as a lute song, "Flow My Tears." According to Lee, Dowland's genius lies especially in his ability to unify the seven pavans without resorting to the usual custom of composing divisions; by the time one reaches the last pavan, the theme appears only in fragments, and yet the feeling of melancholy remains throughout the set.

During much of the Baroque, it was a common intent among composers to express musically a specific emotion, or affect – a practice dating back to Greek theories concerning rhetoric and oratory. The affect of melancholy was particularly fashionable during Dowland's lifetime, and was associated with artistic fervor, creativeness, and even genius. During one of the afternoon ensembles, we read through another consort piece of Dowland's with the clever title "Semper Dowland, semper dolens," – "always Dowland, always suffering." From the little we know of Dowland's life, he was not a particularly happy man, so it is not clear to what extent his personal feelings or the desire to follow a trend influenced his writing. Lee, however, also noted that he felt that there is a very subtle progression toward optimism or hope throughout the seven *Lachrimæ* pavans. Even by the third one, "Lachrimæ gementes" (sighing tears), the mood is more uplifting; the tessitura is higher, and the "sighing" theme is much less frequent.

In our reading of the first and third pavan, Lee reminded us of the following:

- Since these are pavans, that is, dance forms, rhythmic precision is important. The bass provides the rhythmic foundation, but the tenor voice often has a rhythmic vitality of its own that needs to be emphasized; a little extra articulation in busy sections is helpful in driving the rhythm.
 - When playing a piece in a slow tempo, as these are, it is easy to fall into the habit of making every note equally important. Shorter notes are generally *not* as important, so lighten up on eighth notes, and use very little bow.
 - Never rest on a rest! By this, Lee means "breathe." Paying attention to your breathing can help you know exactly when to enter with your next note.
 - Often an ensemble will mainly discuss how to play the middle part of a piece, but the last note is important also, so consider as a group how you want to play it. Lee felt that the last note of the "Lachrimæ gementes," for example, should be grand, rich, and sustained, as it expresses some optimism.
 - Lee suggested giving the last long note of a piece some interest and control by speeding up the bow so it peaks about three-quarter of the way through, and then slowing down to the end, *but at the same time* keeping the bow pressure constant. Be sure everyone takes the bow off the string together at the very end, for resonance.
 - Hideki noted that the text is an important source for musical interpretation, especially phrasing.
- Our morning session ended with a special treat: Hideki played for us the lute part of the first pavan. The inclusion of lute with viols was not common at this time, but its sonority helps to clarify and enhance the harmonic structure of the pavans. Its score is almost identical with *all* the parts assigned to all of the five viols. Quite a challenge, but Hideki made it look easy. (He did admit that some chords were almost impossible to play in the context of the piece!)
- Following a brief business meeting, we enjoyed a scrumptious lunch provided by Trinity, and had time to talk with friends before dividing into small ensembles coached by Lee, Hideki, and Anthony Allen. Our day ended with a grand consort, playing the second Dowland pavan. All seven pavans are scored for five viols, but if you have a group with only four players, and can not find a fifth, then you are in luck: Jeanne Collins has expertly created a reduced, 4-part version of the second pavan ("Lachrimæ antiquæ novæ"). And her reduction of the first pavan ("Lachrimæ antiquæ") appeared in our very first newsletter. ♦



Josh Lee relaxes on January 9



Hideki Yamaya and Lee Inman collaborate on March 19

Sheet Music for Four: John Dowland, "Lachrimae antiquae novae"

A continuing series of five-part music reduced for four-person consorts by Jeanne Collins

John Dowland's *Lachrimae or Seaven Teares* was a set of seven pavans based on Dowland's earlier lute song, "Flow My Teares," and was published in London in 1604. The "Lachrimae" tune actually did not originate with Dowland, but was a widely popular instrumental piece at the time, and was probably first published around 1590 for solo lute. Dowland set (and presumably wrote) the text to create the lute song, which he published in his *Second Book of Songes* in 1600.

The pavans were set for five viols (or "violons") and lute, and the first, the "Lachrimae Antiquae," was an instrumental setting of the lute song. The remaining six pavans were essentially variations of the first pavan (although not strict variations in the meaning of the terms as applied to music of the classical period). These variations included evolving melodic and harmonic changes, and some listeners view them as representing a gradual emergence from the despair of the lute song, culminating with "Lachrimae verae," which might suggest the concept of tears of joy. The "Lachrimae antiquae novae" presented here is the second in the set of pavans. It is closely related to the original pavan, although to me it provides subtle hints at an ever-so-slight easing of the despair of the original "Lachrimae."

I am happy to supply the adaptation in any combination of clefs. If you desire a copy of the score with different clefs, please e-mail me at traingal@teleport.com. ♦

Can we invite this musician to our next workshop?



Lachrimae Antiquae Novae

from *Lachrimae* or *Seven Teares*

John Dowland

(1562-1626)

The first system of musical notation consists of four staves. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom three staves are in bass clef. The music is written in a single system with a brace on the left. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The melody in the treble clef starts with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4-B4, a quarter note C5, and a half note D5. The bass clef parts provide a harmonic accompaniment with various rhythmic values including quarter, eighth, and half notes.

The second system of musical notation consists of four staves. It features a repeat sign (double bar line with two dots) in the middle. The key signature changes to two sharps (F# and C#) at the beginning of the second half of the system. The melody in the treble clef continues with quarter and eighth notes, ending with a half note G#5. The bass clef parts continue with their accompaniment, including some sixteenth-note passages.

The third system of musical notation consists of four staves. The key signature returns to one sharp (F#). The melody in the treble clef has several rests, indicating a more active bass line. The bass clef parts continue with their accompaniment, featuring a mix of quarter and eighth notes.

System 1: Four staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom three are in bass clef. The music consists of a sequence of notes and rests, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

System 2: Four staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom three are in bass clef. The music continues with various note values and rests, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

System 3: Four staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom three are in bass clef. The music continues with various note values and rests, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.