

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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VdGSC 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



I hope you have all had a most excellent holiday season, and in that spirit I am offering you a few Internet gifts, in the form of websites you may or may not know about, and a few suggestions of upcoming events Portland and Seattle. In return, I hope that you may have a few things you can share with Cascadia Viols.

Here are a few websites with some serious and lovely content:

- ◆ <http://www.earlymusicources.com/home>
- ◆ <http://icking-music-archive.org/ByComposer1/Folop.php#Instruments>
- ◆ <http://www.greatbassviol.com/treatises.html>
- ◆ http://www.thecipher.com/viola_da_gamba_cipher.html

There are several interesting events coming up in the next few months including, of course, our three workshops. These and other events are listed in the calendars below and on the next page.

And on page 3 of this newsletter you'll see listed a few areas where we could use some help from the members of Cascadia Viols. Please let me or any board member know if you can offer any support with those or other needs.

We have had a most successful first year. Interest in the viol in Oregon and SW Washington has grown faster than I ever expected, and new players keep showing up. Let us all work together to bring the joy of playing and listening to our favorite instrument to a wider public.

Tim Scott

Calendar of Events

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

- ◆ January 8: **Viol lessons, Josh Lee.** To arrange to take a private lesson from our workshop leader, send a message to info@cascadiaviols.org.
- ◆ January 9, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.: **Workshop with Josh Lee.** Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, 147 NW 19th Ave., Portland. See the e-mail distributed on Dec. 27.
- ◆ March 19: **Workshop with Lee Inman.** The music of John Dowland. A short membership meeting will also be held on this day. Portland.
- ◆ May 28: **Workshop with Kerry McCarthy, one of the world's leading experts on William Byrd.** Singers will be joining us for this workshop. Portland.
- ◆ Several members of our chapter will coach afternoon sessions at workshops.

More Events of Interest to Our Members

- ◆ January 30–June 25: **Salon du Viol.** A series of playdays on the last Saturday of each month. Ashland. See their announcement, page 8.
- ◆ February 27 and 28: **Concerts by Jordi Savall.** On the 27th, Celtic music; on the on the 28th, a solo recital on bass viol. <http://www.earlymusicguild.org/tickets/spirit-of-the-viol/>. Seattle.
- ◆ March 12 and 13: **Concerts by the Portland Baroque Orchestra.** Viols will be featured, including those in J. S. Bach's "Brandenburg Concerto No. 6." Portland.

Report on the October Cascadia Viols Workshop: Modes and Moods, with Sarah Mead

Jeanne Collins

Many viol players eagerly anticipate workshops as an opportunity to spend a day playing wonderful early music. Sarah Mead's workshop was completely different from the norm, and yet she kept the attendees absolutely riveted! For the first hour we didn't play a note. Sarah began by explaining the concepts of solmization, and we practiced singing using the Guidonian hand, about which we have heard so much. She then explained the concept of modes, and illustrated the principles by singing several melodies in different modes.

As a result of Sarah's introduction to modes, the numerous short pieces Sarah chose for us to play in our grand consort then took on new life, as we identified the mode in which each was written and talked about the affect appropriate for that piece. It was interesting to learn that an individual mode can be associated with very different feelings: Phrygian can be sad, but it also can express anger; Mixolydian can have a conquering, marshalling-of-forces air, yet one of the pieces we played in that mode was humorous; Lydian might be pastoral, or have a domestic theme. The Dorian mode is particularly versatile; it can be serious, somber, robust, even happy. One of the pieces we played in the Dorian mode sounded minor, and yet upon reading the text, it turned out to be a drinking song, so Sarah encouraged us to play it with that in mind.

This workshop was also unusual in that we invited soft winds to join us. The gentle sounds of recorders added a welcome authentic mood to our playing. If we had lived in the 16th century instead of today, we would most certainly be very familiar with playing with these woodwind friends, not to mention shawms, kortholts, and cornamuses. As in the past, after a delicious lunch and time to talk with old friends and meet new ones, we reassembled for small consorts, led by Sarah, Mack Ramsey, Tim Scott, and Anthony Allen. We concluded a very satisfying day by joining together again for a final grand consort session, led by Sarah. ◆

Please see Jeanne's summary of Sarah's talk, on pages 4 and 5.



Cascadia Viols Interview: Kristina Herrick, Corvallis, Oregon

Cascadia Viols: You moved to Oregon fairly recently. Welcome! What brought you to Corvallis?

Having retired this year from my 28-year career as a classical music announcer for Valley Public Radio, I was looking to get out of the California Central Valley's heat and drought. My guy and I had been considering Oregon for a while, and came up on a scouting trip, checking out much of northern Oregon and southern Washington. Someone suggested that we stop in Corvallis on the way home, and our decision was made right away; it is just what we were looking for.

CV: What opportunities have you found to play with others?
For the last few years, I have had no one to play viol with; I had been playing with an excellent harpsichordist who could play the top and bottom parts of trio sonatas, but now am so pleased to have the opportunity to play with other viol players in Oregon.

CV: Tell us about your earliest musical experiences.
I grew up in Finland, where music was part of our daily curriculum. We played recorders in the early grades, and began every morning with a Lutheran hymn! I feel fortunate to have had music early in my life.

As a young woman I worked as a stewardess for Pan American Airways, traveling all over the world, exposed to different cultures and languages, and that is valuable in my music world. Later, I became interested in and aware of renaissance music as a vocal major at university. My voice teacher suggested that I was not opera material, but well suited for singing earlier music.

CV: How did you first become interested in the viola da gamba?

For 10 years, many years ago, I directed The Fresno Early Music Ensemble, usually about 16 musicians, in renaissance costume. We sang, danced the pavans, galliards, and bransles etc., and also had a recorder (krumhorns too) and a viol consort. That is when I met Pearl Winter, who got me started playing the viol. We bought a consort of instruments—not very good ones—and I started on the treble, but when the opportunity came to buy a better tenor, I focused on that. I still may get a treble to be more “valuable” in consort playing.

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



At Valley Public Radio, I wrote, produced and hosted an early music program for 14 years, over 450 programs. It was called “In the Mode” and aired on Sunday afternoons. That gave me an opportunity to hear all the good performers and consorts, and I was able to interview and feature the music of some of our favorite teachers: Shira Kammen, Wendy Gillespie, Larry Lipnik, Rosamund Morley, Julie Jeffrey, Pat O’Scannell and others.

CV: Do you have a memorable listening experience you could tell us about?

It is hard to pick a favorite when you hear so many good ensembles. As far as recordings and performances, Jordi Savall and his groups stand out. I was thrilled to hear a performance of their comprehensive project *Paraisos Perdidos* in Berkeley with his late wife Montserrat Figueras and other fabulous musicians, and even got their autographs!

CV: Anything else you want to share?

I wish I were a better viol player. I do practice more now that I am retired, but will never be great. Purcell is my favorite composer; it is my dream to be able to perform his music well. I’m very happy to have the viola da gamba in my retired life, and to have time to practice—it is my favorite thing to do! ♦

Just for Laughs

- ♦ My spell checker doesn’t like barless music—but it *loves* braless music! Have you asked *your* spell checker what it likes? Let us know. ~*Your editor*
- ♦ From the Cascadia Viols website: “Though we are trilled to offer a lending library to our members, we strongly encourage anyone to ultimately purchase music they enjoy.”

Still Needed: Your Help!

Can you help with any of these needs? If so, please let any board member know.

- ♦ Airplane miles
- ♦ Scholarship money
- ♦ Instruments and bows to lend to beginners
- ♦ Help with Facebook and other media. If everyone could post on our Facebook page (thanks, Barry Hirsch), that would be fun and generate interest.
- ♦ Sponsorship of a guest presenter or performer ♦

Hexachords, Solmization, and Modes—from Sarah Mead’s Workshop

Jeanne Collins

Hexachords and Solmization

The system of solmization used in modern Western music is believed to have been developed by the Italian pedagogue Guido d’Arezzo (c. 990-1050). The system is based on a series of hexachords, or sets of six pitches, in which the pitches are related by whole steps except for the third and fourth steps, which are related by a half step. Syllables were assigned to the pitches, those syllables being *ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la*. Thus, each pair of syllables is related by a whole step except for *mi-fa*, which is related by a half step. The assignment of the syllable names to pitches is based on the first syllable of each phrase of text in a then-familiar chant, *Ut queant laxis*:

Ut Queant Laxis

Many early music buffs are familiar with the history of solmization, and have heard about the Guidonian hand. Very few of us, though, have ever had the chance to put it into action. The hand was used as a pedagogical device for teaching children to sight sing. Each syllable, and its associated pitch, was assigned to a specific joint on a specific finger, and the teacher would lead the singers by pointing to successive joints on his hand. Sarah led the group in singing a simple melody using this method.



Next, Sarah explained how this system was used with melodies having a range of more than six notes. In the sequence of six notes starting on C, the pattern of whole and half steps described above occurs naturally, with *mi-fa* associated with the pitches E-F. This hexachord based on a starting pitch of C was known as the “natural hexachord.” In order to expand the range of pitches that was available, however, the syllables had to be assigned to different pitches. In other words, the hexachord had to be based on a different starting pitch. Two other hexachords were thus used. When the hexachord started on G, the syllables *mi-fa* were associated with B–C. The B was written as \square and was referred to as the “hard” B. When the hexachord began on F, a B was required in order to create a half step between *mi* and *fa*. This B was written as \flat and was referred to as the “soft” B. The change between hexachords beginning on different pitches is called *mutation*. The series of hexachords began on G an octave and a half below middle C and ended on E an octave and a half above middle C. Thus, the assignment of syllables to pitches looked like this:

Legend:
 UT = C HEXACHORDS (NATURAL)
 ut = F hexachords (soft)
 ut = G hexachords (hard)

Pitches were named using a combination of the note name and the syllables that could be associated with it. Thus, for example, middle C was called C *sol-fa-ut* (and was indicated by pointing to the tip of the ring finger; see the diagram below) and the C an octave below that was called C *fa-ut* (and was indicated by pointing to the base of the index finger).



The Viol Curmudgeon: Changing and Storing Strings

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 western Oregon 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.

Any questions? Just send an e-mail at your convenience.

All best wishes,

Bill Monical, the Cascadia Viols Curmudgeon

info@cascadiaviols.org ♦

Tenor Madness Class

Laura Kuhlman

Being a beginner viola da gamba player has been a surprising and exciting journey so far. I am surprised at how hard it is to be a beginner again and yet I am always excited about playing my viol. Anthony Allen has been a great influence and encouraging teacher. When he suggested I participate in a consort class of all tenor viols, I of course feared the mere thought it. Who in their right mind would want to sit next to me and be assaulted by the sound of my bowing?

Well, believe it or not, on November 14, six other tenor viol players gathered to play, probably not because of me but because this was a chance to work on tenor-specific playing techniques under the guidance of Anthony Allen. In attendance were Barbara Walden, Zoe Tokar, Gwyneth and Bruce Van Buskirk, Kristina Herrick, Rae Parlier, and me. We disassembled my neatly crafted living room and got down to some serious tenor viol playing.

Anthony led us in a variety of opening exercises to get our minds and bows working in harmony with our fingers. Nothing beats a few minutes of Zen long-tone bowing on all strings! It is what I am surprisingly best at these days. Then came the notes! Christopher Simpson has a wonderful exercise from *The Division Viol*, which took us from G string to g string. We worked on articulation of bowing and precision finger action, all the while making the exercise sound musical.

One of Anthony's new melody loves is the tenor line from *Esprits divins* by Claude Goudimel (d. 1572), so much so that he made a four-part setting for tenor viols. We all played the melody line to understand the phrasing and then continued on to construct a marvelous four-part consort. It really was a beautiful sound. I continue to use the melody for a warm-up to my personal practice session.

Our final tune for the afternoon was a three-part "Fantasy" by Thomas Lupo. The notes were a bit over my skill level but I managed at least one note per measure! We played together and then we listened while just three played. I was inspired to keep practicing in hopes of sometime coming back and playing more notes!

I am very happy Anthony convinced me to participate in this two-hour session of tenor viol madness. It was great to meet other players and build my confidence to play with others. I hope we will do this again. I know my living room appreciated the beautiful noyse! ♦

Practice Pointers:

Members' Tips

What have you found helpful in your practicing? Please send your tips to the editor, Karen Bartlett. Here are a few from some of our members:



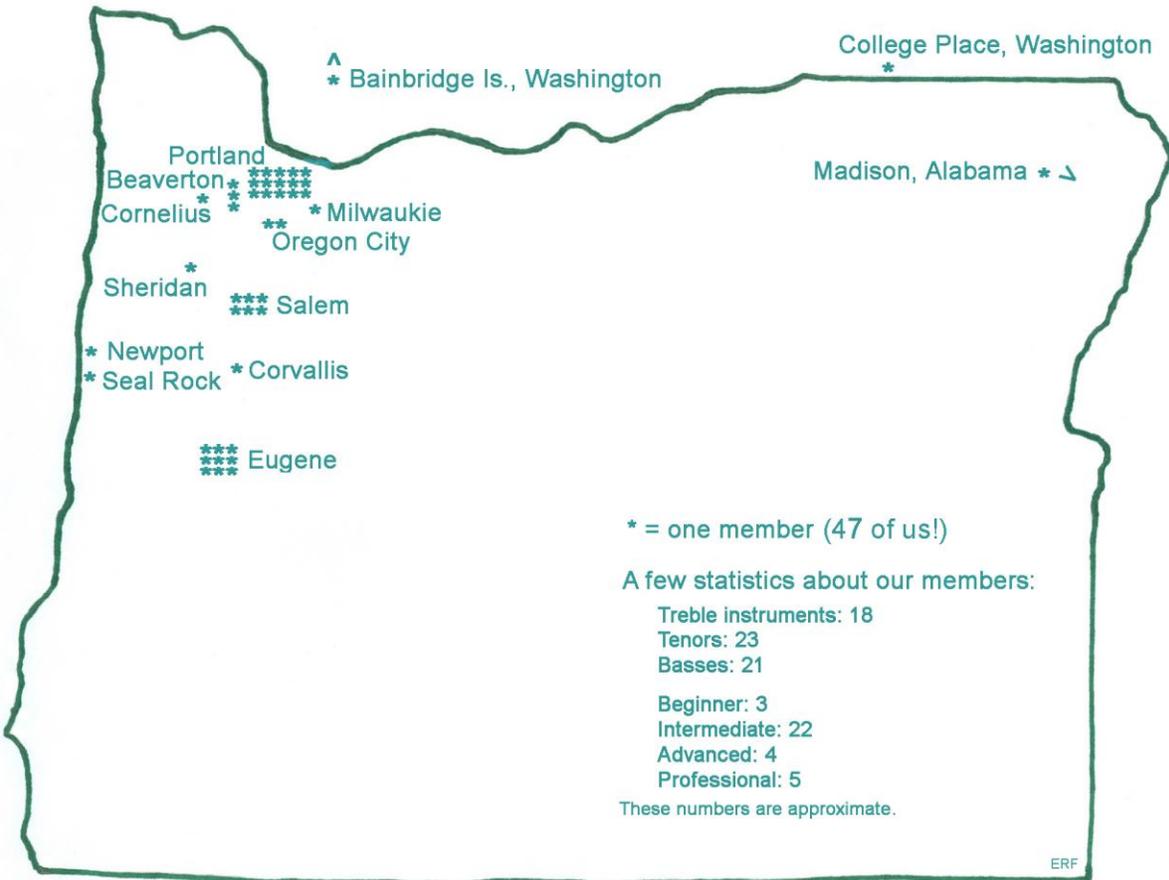
- ◆ Never practice anything faster than you can play it accurately and in tune. The rest of it doesn't matter if you don't do this. ~ *Jeanne Collins*
- ◆ Make the music **bigger**. This can help you learn the music more easily, especially if it is very small. It also actually can look easier if it is enlarged. ~ *Tim Scott*
- ◆ Take a short piece of music that you love, preferably with many long notes, and use it to practice concentration and relaxation, not allowing your thoughts to wander; consciously make your body, arms, and shoulders relax (a large sleeping cat on your shoulders). I use "Esprits divins" by Claude Goudimel; the "In nomine" tune would work well also, and there are also lots of good choices in medieval music. ~ *Kristina Herrick*
- ◆ After working on a difficult passage, leave the page open and set it aside so it is within reach of your chair, then make sure you end your practice session just a few minutes early in order to go back to that passage and play it again. Sometimes I also take a minute or two out of the middle of my practice session in order to go over the material. I find that repetition after allowing some time to go by can be much more helpful than just consecutively repeating a passage over and over again. ~ *Karen Bartlett*

Happy practicing! ♦

Classified Ads

- ◆ Six-string bass gamba for sale, made by John Pringle in 1994, double purfling on the front, very good condition, new strings, comes with a Kingham case. Asking \$4,500. Contact Anthony Allen, (541) 914-6714, allena392@gmail.com.
- ◆ Baroque cello for sale from Charlie Ogle's Beijing workshop, made in 2009, lightly played, comes with a padded soft case, price \$2,500. Contact Anthony Allen, (541) 914-6714, allena392@gmail.com.

A Picture of Cascadia Viols in December 2015



Salon du Viol 2016

Hosted by Pat O'Scannell and the *Rogue Consort of Viols*
 A structured Play Day on the last Saturday in each month.

Music provided, or bring something to share!

All levels welcome. Guided session for beginners.
 Intermediate & advanced players form consorts and read.

All events in Ashland, Oregon \$20 per session
 10:00am-1pm and 2-5pm Luncheon included

January 30: England February 27: France March 26: Spain

April 30: Germany May 28: Italy June 25: Wildcard!

for reservations contact: pat0@opendoor.com (541) 482-9757