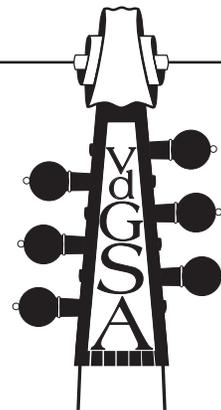


Viola da Gamba Society of America

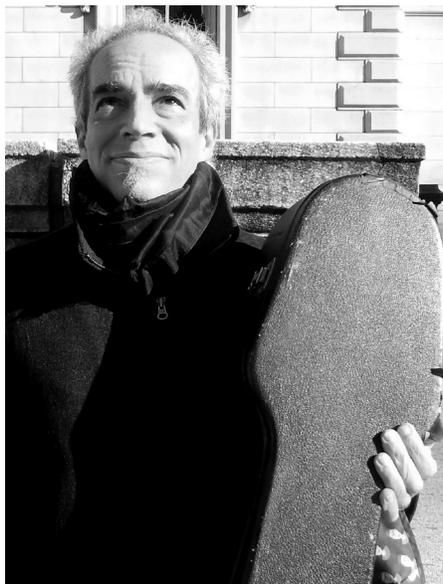
VdGSA News

Vol. LVII, No. 4 ISSN 0506-306X Winter 2020

President's Letter

Esteemed Members of the VdGSA,

Merely calling the past year unusual would be a mild understatement. After ten months of this pandemic much has become routine that still hardly feels normal. No longer novel is the electronic wizardry that brings us together while keeping us hermetically isolated in tiny onscreen boxes. You, perhaps better than I, might recall Roger North's words describing another time, when conditions for public music were strained, yet many "were good consortiers, and in this state was Musick dayly improving more or less..."



President John Moran Photo: Risa Browder..

Community and collaboration have taken on renewed meaning for us as a society, writ large and small. How we achieve our goals in response to an ever-changing world requires periodic re-evaluation. One of the most important ways we keep in touch and spread information about the viola da gamba continues to be our wide-ranging website, which has been undergoing a thorough remake over the past year and is due to launch in February. Some dedicated members of the tech team of the Website Committee, not previously singled out here, have been hard at work without a break since last fall: James Perretta, Doug Poplin, and Randolph Miles. Entrepreneur-in-Chief, more prosaically known as the committee chair, Tobi Szuts writes about our progress in this issue.

Regardless of the fermata—"corona" in Italian—hovering over so many activities, we have nevertheless been able to continue important programs, such as Rental Viols, and the Young Players' Weekend coming up in March. Awards were made through our Grant-in-Aid program to Joya Muma, who is acquiring a new viol, and Sarah Cunningham. The project Sarah has designed, recording videos of selected

movements of Marais's Book II with the original eighteenth-century markings found in the Sibley Library copy, will benefit connoisseurs far and wide. Help is also on the way for John Romey, who is receiving an Outreach grant to assist in an ambitious project: commissioning a consort of French-style Renaissance viols from John Pringle, which he will use in his teaching and elsewhere to introduce a broader audience to an under-explored repertoire. Every one of us benefits from these grants that enrich our entire community. Really, I'm proud of what we do.

The work of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee, chaired by Pat Neely, is off to a promising start with a productive sharing of thoughtful ideas. Opportunities abound and it is up to all of us to seize them, finding ways on the local level that we can be more welcoming, especially to people who might not look like us.

Final preparations began in late fall for January's Board meeting. Individual committees are getting together beforehand. During this time calls go out from our Treasurer, Tracy Hoover, and Executive Secretary, Leslie Nero, for program budgets and reports; deliberation ensues about plans, events, the fiscal year. Lacunae are filled. Expectations are high, as they should be with our engaged group of creative people.

Aberration or the new normal, we're coming to terms with our lot and learning from it. Take the time, please, if you can spare it, to let me know what's new in your neck of the woods; I always love to hear from members.

Holding this issue in your hands, you might have already

made a new year’s resolution, perhaps even broken it! Ordinarily I’m not big on this tradition, but this year feels different, so I am thinking about what I want to take on, even as I fiddle at home. Maybe I will see if I can catch up with low latency technology to play with more friends. Even if not, I will certainly make an effort to stay in touch.

Fondly,

John

From the Editors

This Winter 2020 issue is full of contrasts. With all of the uncertainties members have been living amidst for so many months, it’s not surprising that there are no words and images here about workshops, concerts, weekend retreats. We are grateful to pick up from here (Northwest) and there (Down Under) cheering reports of chapter activities that include Zoom workshops and inspiring videos being shared with ever-wider audiences.

But other customary features of the *VdGSA News* are present, including a double Member Profile and a *News Music* that comprises two four-page inserts with MP3 accessibility to enable at-home consorting. Other pages reflect that the Society’s to-do list, including website redesign and the Grant-in-Aid program, is being addressed full tilt. And finally, we are pleased to offer a bonus interview, of viol builder Wesley Brandt, courtesy of our Cascadia chapter.

Read on, stay safe, and enjoy a much-improved 2021!

Randolph & Jane

P.S. Have acrostic fans recognized the hidden treasure in John’s Letter from the President?

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ERRATUM

The editors apologize for the photo caption on page 19 of the Fall issue that placed Toronto in the province of Quebec. We can’t imagine having done anything more mindless or insensitive. Ever.

VdGSA News Staff

Randolph Miles & Jane Furth
Co-Editors
editor@vdgsa.org

Reviews
Music Editor
Member Profiles
Advertising Manager

John Moran
Sarah Mead
Suzanne Ferguson
Kip Irvine



Deadline for submission to the Winter issue is November 10th

News from Here There

News from Australia

During the past year, the Australian Viola da Gamba Society has created a wealth of interesting videos that are still available for our members to view. Membership of the Society is open to all, so for approximately USD \$25 you can improve your posture and essential playing techniques with Miriam Morris; explore fourteenth-century repertoire for tenor viol with Ruth Wilkinson; practice playing sixteenth-century notation with Brooke Green and a consort of viols; view Brooke's interview with Loren Ludwig about sixteenth-century composer Robert Stevenson; do a deep dive into lyra viol repertoire with Laura Vaughan; learn how to interpret a movement of a Bach sonata for viola da gamba and keyboard with Daniel Yeadon; get hot tips on how to play music by Abel with Reidun Turner; ditto for Simpson divisions with Brett Rutherford; practice solmisation with Matthew Manchester...The list of fascinating topics goes on and you can keep coming back to view the videos whenever you like.

All you need to do is sign up to become a member. You will be sent a username and password to access the National Viol E-School on our website: <https://www.avdgs.org.au/>

In addition, plans are being made for online interactive events for members—so if you sign up, you can look forward to meeting live Oz Viol players Down Under!

Brooke Green
Sydney, Australia

Cascadia Chapter News in the Time of COVID

This has been a very challenging year for everyone! At Cascadia Viols, we wanted to keep the spirit of the viol alive and thriving in our area of Oregon and southwest Washington. The pandemic made it impossible for us to hold the one-day workshops that we normally present. However, every cloud has a silver lining, and one of them in the COVID cloud is that it enabled us to bring in workshop presenters without being limited by the geographical constraints that we usually face. We began the season with an online workshop with Ros Morley on July 11th, and the workshop was a great success. Because the response was very enthusiastic and the workshop was highly successful, we decided to present all of our others online throughout the year. We are grateful to Ros for getting us off on the right foot!

We are offering two-hour online workshops on the second Saturday of each month throughout the 2020-21 season. Our presenters include David Morris (September 12), Alison Crum (October 10), Joanna Blendulf (November 14), Larry Lipnik (December 12), Brent Wissick (January 9), Catharina Meints (February 13), Sam Stadlen (March 13), and Martha McGaughey (April 10). We will be announcing our May presenter shortly.

The response has been wonderful so far. We have been joined by participants from all over the western U.S. and Canada, and with each workshop the word spreads and more people enroll. You can find more information or register for our workshops on our website at www.cascadiaviols.org.

We are offering these workshops free to Cascadia Viols members, and for a fee of \$15 for nonmembers. As a result our membership is at a record level and, more importantly, we believe that we are providing an important means of keeping viol players engaged in the musical community.

We wish everyone a safe, healthy, and musically inspired 2021!

Jeanne Collins
Salem, Oregon

The Viola Da Gamba Society of America Presents

Young Players Weekend 2021

Faculty: Amy Domingues and Gail Ann Schroeder
March 12-14, 2021
Online Via Zoom

For more information and application materials please contact

Pedro Funes-Whittington, director
Young.Players.Weekend@vdgsa.org
832-563-3823

<http://vdgsa.org/pgs/youngplayersweekend.html>

Be sure to look for us on Facebook!

Member Profile: Susan Marchant and Ron Vernon

by Suzanne Ferguson

Among the several couples in the VdGSA who were brought together by early music we can count former Board members Ron Vernon and Susan Marchant, who became acquainted at a recorder workshop in Alabama in October of 2000; they married in June, 2002. Susan had been playing the viol for a few years and, as Ron puts it, she “encouraged (begged) me to start playing the viol. I have been known to say that I started the viol for the same reason the U.S. Constitution was adopted, ‘to ensure domestic tranquility.’”

Settling together outside Oxford, Mississippi, on seven and a half acres of forested property, they have engaged in all sorts of playing and programming initiatives that carry out the VdGSA mission of “supporting...activities and resources relating to the viola da gamba...and the music for these instruments.”

They continue the story:

Ron: I am now retired from the music faculty of UM. I grew up in Tioga, a small community near Alexandria, Louisiana, and received my undergraduate education at Louisiana Tech University. I earned a DMA in conducting from the University of Texas and came to Oxford and the University directly from graduate school in 1972. In 1986 I became chair of the department of music, and from 1998 until my retirement I served as associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts. During my entire tenure I directed the orchestra and taught conducting.

Susan: My early career was as secretary/administrative assistant in teaching hospital and medical school settings. I worked for eighteen years at the University of Alabama Medical Center in Birmingham and am retired now from being a project coordinator in the Croft Institute for International Studies at UM, where I helped start an intensive Chinese language program.

How did you both get into early music and when?

Susan: I grew up in southern California, and my introduction to early music came at a high school summer band camp in 1964 where I was playing clarinet. The Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts, now the Idyllwild Arts Foundation, has an extensive program of summer music, theater, dance, and art courses. One day the band camp director enthusiastically called a meeting to introduce us to a very special visiting

teacher who would perform for us on, of all things, the recorder. That teacher was none other than Carl Dolmetsch, who had come to hold an early music course the following week. (The viol teacher for that course was our own Peter Ballinger!) I was enchanted by the sound of the recorder and its music, but it wasn't until my early 20s that I was able to obtain a recorder. I moved to Chicago in 1979 and became active in the Chicago Area Early Music Association, playing recorder in the Harwood Early Music Ensemble.

Ron: During my tenure as department chair in the late 1980s, I wanted to enrich performance opportunities for our students in three areas. One was early music, another was some aspect of what we called “world music,” and the third was contemporary music composition and performance. Once we got all three initiatives started, I sought to help my colleagues who were leading the early music program by singing and playing the recorder along with the students. What started as an obligation became a deep interest—studying and performing a new repertoire was refreshing and enlightening. I spent one summer practicing recorder for two hours every morning, and started attending San Francisco Early Music Society workshops, taking lessons whenever I could.

When did you take up the viol?

Susan: When I moved from Chicago to Birmingham in 1985, I met Phoebe Larkey and Gilbert Ritchie and we, along with David Cantrell (voice and recorder) formed a group, PanHarmonium. One day my dear friend Phoebe brought out a bass viol and said, “Here, try this!” She got me started and I soon continued lessons with Martha Bishop in Atlanta. I was hooked! Although we've all moved elsewhere, several PanHarmonium members still come together to perform with the actress/storyteller, Dolores Hydock. Several of you in the VdGSA have heard one of these performances of medieval stories set to period music.

Ron: After we married I started going with Susan to the Music on the Mountain Workshop in Monteagle, Tennessee, and would take a lesson with Alison Crum each year. My first Conclave was at Holy Cross in 2005, and I haven't missed one since. Every time I go to a workshop I take a lesson with one of the fabulous professionals there.

Both of you have also remained active with recorders and other kinds of music?

Ron: Yes. I am the music director of the Memphis chapter of the American Recorder Society and of the Germantown [Tennessee] Symphony Orchestra, the community orchestra for the Memphis area.

Susan and I organized our Mockingbird Early Music Ensemble in 2003 along with a recorder player and keyboard player, and we have been rehearsing and performing ever



Susan Marchant and Ron Vernon. Photo: Greg Johnson.

since. At home we have three harpsichords of different styles and numerous viols, vielles, recorders, and crumhorns to use in the Mockingbird programs. We have joined with the VdGSA chapter, Rocket Viols of Huntsville, Alabama, and other players from Birmingham and Nashville to present early music festivals in Huntsville.

Susan: I am president and chapter representative for the Memphis ARS chapter, and I manage the Mockingbird ensemble's programming, rehearsal schedule, and advertising. We play an average of three concerts each academic year in Oxford in the campus interfaith chapel and in our home. Our calendar also includes a spring concert with poetry, usually held in March in conjunction with the vernal equinox, J. S. Bach's birthday, and the Baha'i new year. This past spring would have been the twenty-seventh event—I began organizing it while still living in Birmingham—but we had to cancel due to the pandemic.

I've also played in university music department productions and, broadening my horizons, with the Germantown Symphony Orchestra. On their tour of Washington, D.C.,

in 2006 I played recorder on Purcell's "Suite from *Bonduca*" and percussion on several other pieces, including bells for "Chattanooga Choo Choo," performed on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial!

From time to time professional early music ensembles have passed through Oxford and we have been lucky hosts to the likes of Parthenia, Anima Baroque, Alison Crum and Roy Marks, and the Wayward Sisters. When they visit we have frequently been able to organize house concerts and private lessons. We have also hosted Circuit Rider workshops in our home as well as other play-in and lesson gatherings.

Both of you, at different times, have been elected to the VdGSA Board. What roles did you play there?

Susan: In my two terms on the VdGSA Board (2007–2013) I was Festival Liaison (primarily with the Boston and Berkeley early music festivals), Chapter Coordinator, and Conclave exhibit supervisor.

Ron: During my two terms (2013–2019) I concentrated

on producing teaching videos, coordinating instrument donations, and administering the Consort Loan Program. Since then I've continued to work with the donations and the CLP.

Would you like to tell us a bit about your families?

Ron: I have three children and five grandchildren. All my children were very active in music, playing violin or cello in orchestras, and horn, oboe, and percussion in bands, but they have pursued other careers.

Susan: I have one daughter, who is an optician in Birmingham. She also is an excellent song writer and guitarist. I've played bass viol in a folk-rock group she formed, performing original material and covers of Neil Young, Indigo Girls, even Beatles songs. It was great fun!

These days we have three adopted cats and a rescue dog; people seem to abandon animals on our property knowing we will take them in.

Do you have any concluding observations about your involvement with the viol and the VdGSA?

Susan: After taking up the viol I never lived in an area that had a regular professional teacher available, and I can't imagine how I could have thrived as a viol player if it had not been for the resources provided by the VdGSA. Thinking back on my thrill hearing Carl Dolmetsch at music camp in 1964, I'm reminded to thank the Society for encouraging and supporting young players, keeping the viol very much alive and well today.

Ron: Every time I take on a job or some other responsibility with the idea of helping others, I find my own life is enriched more than whatever I can offer someone else. Whether it is learning new repertoire, developing a different perspective about my role in society, meeting new and amazing people: all of these things have made my life richer and more fulfilling. The VdGSA has been a huge part of that experience, and I am deeply grateful.

Thank you so much, Susan and Ron, for talking with me; and best wishes for your continued successes in promoting the viol and early music!

The New Website Cometh

Fueled by pumpkin pie and colder evenings, the Website Committee is making steady progress toward launching the new VdGSA site in February of 2021: we've roughed out all the major features and have more than fifty per cent of the content migrated to the new site. It might not be apparent, but our website is remarkably large and serves a very wide audience: people who have never heard of a viol, those wanting to learn more, scholars, and of course our members. Our site is bigger and more varied than those of most small businesses I know. It encompasses databases, a trove of teaching videos, music editions (free and for sale), music-minus-one audio files, issues of the *VdGSA News* and the *Journal of the VdGSA*, Conclave pictures, and all the back-end tools that make our Society run on a daily basis.

Our next steps are to finish all the major elements and then have the Board help us test it out at its January 2021 meeting. While our plan is to transfer almost all of the content onto the new site, the enormity of the task means that some of the less crucial pages, like the Conclave pictures, probably won't be migrated until after the launch. In February we'll turn our attention to building out Conclave registration to support Conclave 2021 in whatever form it takes.

In preparation for the switchover, we've turned off the ability to renew your membership on the current website. This will save everybody work to start 2021 memberships afresh on the new platform. (If you've already renewed, don't worry—your information will be transferred!) We'll send out an email notice when we launch the new site.

This massive project wouldn't be anywhere close to schedule without the nine committee members relentlessly working in the time between their day jobs, their families, and sleep: Ruby Brallier, Leslie Nero, Randolph Miles, John Moran, James Perretta, Doug Poplin, James Renken, Zoe Weiss, and myself. The launch date has only slipped a few weeks since we formalized our schedule in July.

While we all miss the joy of playing consort music these days, I think I speak for the committee when I say that working on this project right now—during a time when we can't gather with friends to play—is an endeavor of hope; that it will even make it easier to play consort music in the future, when we can meet again.

Tobi Szuts
Chair, Website Committee

Grant-in-Aid: Anne Legêne

In the spring of 2017, I commissioned a tenor viol from Judith Kraft in Paris. Not owning a tenor had become an impossibility—as the designated tenor player of the Arcadia Viols, I had been borrowing instruments from my generous consort partners for too long already! I needed a beautiful tenor of my own, one that would match the quality of the other instruments in the ensemble.

I had come across some fine basses of Judith's occasionally, and knew her to have a great reputation, but even so, it felt like a leap of faith. It always does, I suspect.

The instrument was to be delivered in three-and-a-half years, which gave me the chance to save up for it. By my calculations, I was going to have just about the full amount by June, 2020, when the tenor would be ready and my husband and I were to start a European trip in Paris to meet Judith and the tenor.

And then, of course, the pandemic happened. All travel plans were off the table and several well-paying gigs and concerts were cancelled. I had been counting on the earnings to make up the rest of the money for the tenor. It was time to look for help.

This is when the VdGSA came to the rescue. I applied to the Grant-in-Aid program, and within a week had been approved. What an incredible service the Society provided to me. My heartfelt gratitude goes to the Board and to all the members for supporting me in this way!

The story goes on, because I never did get to Paris and never did meet Judith in person. But neither did the tenor need to be shipped here over sea: I owe another huge debt of gratitude to VdGSA member Biz Auld for bringing it over from France on her way back to the States. How incredibly kind and generous of her! In the middle of tightly shutdown pandemic time, when my husband and I had spent weeks at home without going anywhere or seeing anyone, we made a delightful day trip to southern Connecticut to pick up the tenor from Biz's house. Unfortunately, we couldn't hang out for too long, muzzled as we were with the masks, etc.; we just chatted for a few moments and then had to say goodbye.

Back home the tenor was unpacked for the first time...and it is a beauty! Based on an original by John Rose (circa 1600) in the Paris collection, it is similar to one in the Ashmolean (Oxford). It sounds absolutely beautiful, with a clear ringing tone, and it plays like a dream.

Thank you, VdGSA and Biz, for your help in bringing this instrument to me and the Arcadia Viols!

Anne Legêne
Great Barrington, Massachusetts

Grant-in-Aid

Thinking about applying for a VdGSA Grant?

Applications for the next round of grants are due

APRIL 15.

Visit vdgsa.org/pgs/gia.html for more information.



Support the VdGSA



Gifts to the VdGSA can take many forms: monetary contributions, instruments and bows, sheet music, CD collections, and more. Money that you donate can be either unrestricted, or designated for particular funds or endowments—the Society offers a wide variety of programs to our members.

The “Donate to the VdGSA” webpage, vdgsa.org/pgs/support.html, provides all the information you need to make a gift of any kind, including instruments. Monetary contributions can be made via the secure online donations page or by check to the VdGSA Treasurer.

In Memoriam

Martha Bixler

1927–2020

Martha Bixler died peacefully on October 7th of this year at an assisted living facility in Amherst, Massachusetts. She was ninety-three years old.

When, in 1979, Martha signed up for Martha Bishop's "baby viol" class at the ARS annual summer workshop she was already high in the firmament of early music as a recorder performer, teacher, and authority on historical performance. Sarah Mead remembers, "The first time I saw Martha's name on my class list for Conclave, I blanched: What could I possibly teach a legend like HER? Would she eviscerate me with her knowledge and experience? What a relief and delight to discover her generous attitude and lively curiosity as she undertook a new instrument in her later years."

Born on August 9, 1927, Martha grew up in western Massachusetts. She received bachelor's degrees from Smith College and the Yale University School of Music and, later, a master's degree from Brooklyn College. She moved to New York City after Yale to pursue a career of teaching and performing that spanned more than five decades. Judith Davidoff recalls very-long-ago trio sessions at Martha's apartment, then in the East 40s near the United Nations: "The bathtub was in the kitchen and the harpsichord had to be carried up two flights."

In 1955 Martha became quickly and deeply involved with the American Recorder Society, performing in a concert of La Noue Davenport's Manhattan Recorder Consort and soon conducting musical meetings. Her dedication to the ARS is reflected in the positions she filled over the following decades, several of them more than once: newsletter editor, board member, president, music editions editor; she was also its memoirist, publishing *The American Recorder Society and Me* in 2014. She performed with the New York Pro Musica and numerous other groups, organized and taught at workshops throughout the U.S. and abroad, and served on the music faculties at Sarah Lawrence College and Columbia University. Her instruments included harpsichord, piano, and sackbut; she made some twenty recordings and performed on television.

Martha's extended family was large—three sisters, eight devoted nieces and nephews (whom she called her niblings). Her beloved husband of more than thirty years, Richard Sacksteder, died in 2007. She doted on her two "kitties," Despina and Julia.

"I often thought of myself as Martha's third cat—except that I could change a light bulb and be there for her if she needed me," says Scot Zoid, who rented a small room off the kitchen in Martha's Upper West Side apartment during her last ten years living there. Scot speaks of Martha's "generous spirit and her love of Baroque music, wanting to keep it alive. Her purpose for renting out that room was to enable students to continue to study. She gave me the opportunity to live in it for very, very little money and practice for five hours a day—I would have been working three part-time jobs. I was completely illiterate in terms of music then. Martha was really encouraging to me in her passive-aggressive way: 'Do you mind if I say something, dear?' I was like, 'Please do, you're the authority—I don't know anything about this stuff.'" I was so happy to be there. I would not exist if not for her."

Jane Furth
New York, New York

Martha was responsible for my discovery of early music in a roundabout way. In the late 60s, she was in Chapel Hill doing a concert with Trio Flauto Dolce (Martha, Morris Newman, and Eric Lieber). Also in Chapel Hill were Helen and Bill Jenner. Bill taught math at UNC; Helen taught music at home. They had occasional recorder playing sessions with math department friends, mainly as an excuse to drink beer.

Bill went to the concert and came home raving about this gorgeous woman and how beautifully she played the recorder. Helen decided she needed to see for herself and so went to the workshop being held at UNC the next day. She says that the experience blew her mind, and she began to pursue ways to explore the recorder's potential, including going to summer workshops that were the forerunners of today's AEM gatherings. As music director of the newly established ARS chapter (Triangle) in Durham, she began teaching recorder to adults, which led to her forming a performing group with her more advanced students...then adding a singer...who dragged a friend (me) to a rehearsal, where I heard early music for the first time and found my musical home. I learned recorder; later, Helen shoved a tenor viol at me....

What if Martha Bixler had never come to Chapel Hill and played so beautifully? I can't imagine my life without early music. I am glad I was able to tell her a few years ago how widely her influence reached, and that I am proud to consider myself one of her "music daughters."

Kathy Schenley
Chapel Hill, North Carolina



Martha Bixler in 2014. Photo: John Sidtis.

For more than a quarter of a century I knew Martha Bixler as a brilliant spark of energy and joy, sharing her abundant charisma, ability, fruits of experience, and material support with the early music community in the U.S. Her presence, passion, and generosity are sorely missed.

I first laid eyes on Martha at the English country dancing sessions that she led every late-afternoon at Amherst Early Music, ecstatic gatherings that formed an essential pivot between days of laborious practice, and evenings of inspiring concerts. Later, as enthusiastic student at the VdGSA Conclave, Martha brought the same infectious vitality to my classes. For me as a younger teacher, to have the confidence and support then of such a veteran was a gift for which I can never be sufficiently grateful.

When I moved to New York City, Martha hosted and participated in my weekly Viola da Gamba Dojo meetings in her home for more than ten years, providing an essential support to our community. (She also opened her home to visiting musicians, facilitating the work of touring artists and local presenters.)

A perpetual student, always eager and never too proud to learn from others, Martha was also a stimulating classmate. Some of my favorite times with her were at the home of the late, great Lucy Cross during Lucy's famous sessions on early notation, witnessing Martha patiently pressing Lucy for insights into music ficta in esoteric Renaissance music.

Wherever you are, Martha, thank you! Your loyalty and devotion to the art lives on in so many.

John Mark Rozendaal
New York, New York

I studied the recorder with Martha for almost a decade, but as it turned out, we had something else in common besides the recorder: we both loved tennis—to watch on TV, not to play. She often called me to ask what channel the tennis was on. In fact, a few weeks before she died she called, during the French Open, and asked for the channel number. I told her and began to settle in for a chat. But not Martha—she said, “Thank you, dear” and click, she had hung up. That was the last time I spoke with her.

Diana Wall
New York, New York

In Memoriam

Marjorie Bram-MacPhillamy

1919–2020

Marjorie Bram-MacPhillamy, the second president of the VdGSA, passed away in July at the age of 101. I was able to visit with her a couple of times about ten years ago in Bradenton, Florida, where she lived for over forty years. In her early nineties, she remained gracious and interested in the VdGSA. In addition to a number of earlier gifts, she has remembered the Society in her will.

Since so few of our current membership knew Marjorie in her active years with the Society, as an introduction I've adapted and added to the following biographical sketch from Phyllis Olson's in *Pastime with Good Company: The Early History of the Viola da Gamba Society of America* (1998).

Marjorie Bram received her bachelor's degree in violin and viola performance from Temple University in Philadelphia in 1940 and, after working as a professional string player and teacher, received her MA from Columbia University in 1951. In 1960 she took up viols, and in 1961 and 1964 attended "summer school" in England, where she studied with Nathalie Dolmetsch and Sheila Marshall, among others, and was lent an original Henry Jaye bass viol to practice on! She also worked with August Wenzinger several summers at Skidmore College (Saratoga Springs, New York) beginning in 1966. At that time she was instrumental music supervisor in South Orange, New Jersey, public schools (through 1974) and conductor and music director of the South Orange Symphony Orchestra. Beginning in 1964, she founded and directed the Friends of Early Music of South Orange, in which she played viola d'amore and viola da gamba.

Retiring in 1974, she moved to Bradenton, Florida. There she met and in the early 1980s married Harold MacPhillamy, a widower and retired research chemist. In Bradenton she founded the Florida Friends of Early Music and performed there until 1984, as well as teaching numerous students including young Mike Twyford and retired Ohio State University string bass teacher Theron McClure.

Marjorie attended and/or taught at the VdGSA Conclaves from 1965–73 and served as president of the Society from 1970–72. She was our first "managerial" president: on assuming the position in 1970, she undertook a personal survey of Conclave attendees, asking for the first time what people thought about the Society's activities, about whether they wanted regional Conclaves, about how to attract more

advanced players to Conclaves and to increase membership. She reorganized the staffing for the Society and the Conclaves, and moved quickly to set VdGSA finances on a firmer footing. While regional Conclaves never materialized, opportunities for advanced players began. Marjorie served on the Board of Directors twice and was made a Life Member of the Society in 1999.

On learning of Marjorie's death, Phyllis Olson wanted to add to the record, "the great relief felt by [VdGSA co-founder] Eloise Glenn when she was able to get a professional musician like Marjorie to take over from Karl Neumann as the second VdGSA president. It took a lot of persuading, but it was an excellent continuum for the time. Eloise wanted her to serve longer, but Marjorie insisted that she could not."

A number of long-time members, several of them Life Members and renowned teachers, have also contributed their fond recollections of Marjorie Bram-MacPhillamy:

Former President (2000–2004) Brent Wissick writes,

I met Marjorie Bram at the Milwaukee Conclave in 1979. It was my first, at age twenty-four, and I was struck by the affection and reverence with which she was held as a past president of the Society. She was also warm and welcoming to those of us attending for the first time, and clearly offered wise counsel to those who were leading the Society at the time. She did not often attend in the following years, but I saw her a number of times in Florida over the next two decades as she continued to support workshops and concerts in the Tampa area. The Society owes her a large debt of gratitude.

Thallis Drake remembers farther back:

My introduction to Marjorie was back in 1972—my very first Conclave—at Allenberry [southwest of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania]. I had joined the Society a couple years earlier thanks to the temporary loan of a viol to use with my recorder consort, but I had no teacher. A weekend ARS workshop in Appleton, Wisconsin with Judith Davidoff showed me I had lots to unlearn! And so began one of the happiest associations of my life: the VdGSA. The then-president, Paul Smith, urged me to come to Conclave and bring my violin. It was there that Marjorie Bram gave me my first real lessons, still on a borrowed instrument. (I remember the piece: *Spagnoletta!*)

One winter, long after Marjorie had married and "retired" from Conclaves, my husband Doug and I were in Florida for a regatta. While he was racing, I drove to Bradenton for a lovely visit in her little white

house. Regrettably, that was the last time I saw her, but we always exchanged newsy Christmas messages.

From Mary Anne Ballard, who taught at a number of Conclaves over the years, beginning in the 1970s:

In the summer of 1971 I spent five weeks with Marjorie and three other viol players (Lanny Corson, Sarah Cunningham, and Ann Jones) studying with August Wenzinger at the Aspen Music Festival. Our daily schedule was strict: solo class all morning and consort class every afternoon—sometimes the reverse. Then, late afternoon concerts in the tent. One day Wenzinger, who was an alpinist and quite used to outdoor physical exertion, invited the group to hike to scenic Maroon Bells with him. About half way up the path, Marjorie needed to sit on a rock and rest. August was immediately sensitive to her discomfort, so we simply stopped and enjoyed the amazing scenery. After forty-nine years, the precise details of our experience there escape me, but the impression that remains is of Marjorie's combination of seriousness and good cheer. Rest in peace, Marjorie. If there is a viol consort in heaven, I'm sure they will welcome you!

Long-time Secretary-Treasurer of the VdGSA (1976–1996), John Whisler, recalls that at his first Conclave in Memphis in 1974, his master's degree advisor, Conclave host Efrim Fruchtman, was also Conclave host:

Efrim saw to it that I learned to know the major figures of the Society, including our first President, Karl Neumann, and subsequent presidents Paul Smith, Wendell Margrave, and Bruce Bellingham. And of course, Eloise Glenn, who, with her late husband George, was a founder of the Society, and Al Folop, whose life and service to the VdGSA have been celebrated recently in these pages.

Missing from this august group was Marjorie Bram, our second President. By the time I arrived on the scene her active participation in the Society was nearly over. I didn't meet Marjorie until the 1982 Conclave in Annapolis; she had recently married after many years as a single professional woman, and was introducing everyone to Harold MacPhillamy with the obvious radiance of a new bride. Although we were brand new acquaintances, she treated me as a new-found friend. The VdGSA has a rich and wonderful history of people so very worth knowing, and Marjorie Bram MacPhillamy was a star in its firmament.



Marjorie circa 1970. Photo: courtesy VdGSA Archives.

Fellow Life Member Martha Bishop also emphasizes Marjorie's caring spirit and her continuing contributions to the VdGSA:

I remember Marjorie Bram as a very kind and generous person. She preceded me by almost a decade as President of the VdGSA, and when I became President, I received a small gift package from her containing useful office items to use in my new job. She did much to develop the flock of gamba players in Florida and I'm sure helped them in acquiring instruments to play.

Among Marjorie's instruments was a cherished seven-string bass viol by Dietrich Kessler. My most recent connection with her was through that viol. When she retired from playing, Marjorie sold the Kessler and generously donated the money to the Society. A student of mine, Paul Miller, fell in love with the viol at a Boston Early Music Festival and bought it from dealer William Monical, who was well aware of its provenance. Paul played it for a number of years and then, following in Marjorie's footsteps, donated the viol to the Society,

where it is now being played by a young virtuoso student, Nathan Francisco, of Ooltewah, Tennessee. Marjorie's legacy lives on!

The distinguished musicologist Richard Taruskin, who was a frequent Conclave faculty member during Majorie's era and who became a genuine friend, reflected on her "really unforgettable personality."

There is obviously something salubrious about the viol. Marge Bram (after the legendary Rachel Archibald) is, to my knowledge, our second centenarian. Thoughts of her take me back a long way, to the pre-California part of my life and the pre-Florida part of hers, before she added MacPhillamy to her name. I met her at the Saratoga Springs "Summer School for Viol Players," the first such summer workshop in the USA, in 1966 and, as fellow Columbia alumni, we hit it off immediately; or, you might say, she adopted me, rank beginner that I was that year, and became my secret Gambenmutter. She was wonderful to talk to. She was a fine violinist who knew a tremendous amount of repertoire, and one of the things she knew, to my utter amazement, was *Mañana*, an encore piece by Otto Luening, my beloved composition teacher at Columbia—and hers too, somewhat earlier.

When I started doing the Conclaves in the mid-1970s, Marge was always on hand, and we always made a point of having dinner on the day after, right before catching our planes or trains. I remember one particularly heavy one—both in terms of cuisine and in terms of earnest conversation—at a German restaurant in Milwaukee. She had a wonderful ear—not just a musician's ear, but an ear to lend when you needed one. Behind it was a big, warm heart. Talking to Marge helped me over some big decisions and one awful bereavement. I've always remembered her with poignant gratitude.

At every Conclave, "We Missed You" letters are prepared for people to sign to former participants who have not come to Conclave that year. Every year, faithfully, a letter was prepared, signed, and sent to Marjorie Bram-MacPhillamy. For many years Marjorie remembered us as well, sending a telegram with her good wishes to be read at the Conclave banquet. Although only a few of our members are still active from her "time," we do remember her, and miss her.

Suzanne Ferguson



Marjorie in 2011. Photo: Suzanne Ferguson.

WANTED!

Unused viols for young players

The VdGSA'S program of providing consorts of viols for young players' classes, from elementary grades through high school, has grown beyond expectations in its six-year existence. Several of our programs need more than the number of instruments we initially loaned to them, and additional program applications are coming in each new academic year. We need at least a dozen additional instruments in all sizes to meet the expanding interest.

If you have unused viols that you would like to see in the hands of young players, please correspond with:

Ron Vernon at rvernon@olemiss.edu.

Make an investment in the future of the viola da gamba and the VdGSA!

News Music

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Through a Glass Darkly

As the months of social distancing have worn on and our opportunities to share musical experiences are mostly confined to Zoom, I have found myself reflecting on the aptness of the Biblical text from I Corinthians: *For now we see through a glass dimly, but then we shall see face to face.* The glass we stare into these days is not the one Paul referred to in his epistle, but it still obscures much of what we love about seeing (and hearing) each other face to face.

With that image in mind, I sought out a setting of this evocative text that we can each play with a recording, with hopes for a future when we can once again make music in person. The music-minus-one tracks will be available on the current website with the *News Music* scores when you read this, and will be available on the new website when that launches as well.

The prolific and multi-faceted Roland de Lassus (whose works have shown up more than once in this column) seems to have been one of a very few composers to set this text over the centuries. This text, from I Corinthians 13, is set as a pair

of motets. We have decided to provide scores to both of them here in a special double feature.

In the evocative opening Lassus embodies the “child” of the first four lines as a duet in the highest voices, a repetitive refrain that is responded to by the lower quartet on the words *loquebar, sapiebam, and cogitabam*. When the writer declares that he is now a man, all six voices join together and stoutly declare their rejection of childish things, the word *parvulus* echoed one more time by the high duet. The dimness (or enigmatic nature) of our current vision is suggested by the introduction of E-flats, while the clarity which will come from seeing in person (*facie ad faciem*) is rendered in joyful homophony, first in duple time and then in an ecstatic triple meter reminding us of the tripartite nature of the deity.

In the bonus second part Lassus continues to paint the text for us. Our partial knowledge is illustrated by partial choirs in the first eight bars; the certainty of eternal knowledge to come is expressed in the strong cadence at bar sixteen. The trio of Faith, Hope, and Love are announced by a trio of voices, and the extended chords of the final six bars leave us with a sense of the enduring harmony of love.

*Cum essem parvulus,
Loquebar ut parvulus,
Sapiebam ut parvulus,
Cogitabam ut parvulus,
Quando autem factus sum vir,
Evacuavi quae erant parvuli:
Videmus nunc per speculum ænigmate,
Tunc autem facie ad faciem.
Nunc cognosco ex parte,
Tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum.
Nunc autem manent:
Fides, Spes, Charitas tria hæc:
Major autem horum est Charitas.*

When I was a child,
I spoke like a child,
I understood like a child,
I thought like a child.
But when I became a man,
I put away childish things.
For now we see as through a glass, dimly,
But then face to face.
Now I know only in part,
But then I will know as I have been known.
Now therefore remain
these three things: Faith, Hope, and Love;
But the greatest of these is Love.

The poetry of these words can resonate with us no matter what our spiritual leanings might be. In this year of living remotely, the vivid musical illustrations of Lassus serve as a reminder that we will again meet face to face!

Moving?

Please send your new address to:

Attn: Membership

VdGSA

P.O. Box 582628

Minneapolis, MN 55458-2628

or email: membership@vdgsa.org



Composers and Arrangers: Do you have a short piece (or an idea for one) that you'd like to contribute to *News Music*? Send your music electronically to Sarah Mead [mead@brandeis.edu] to be considered. Remember that all music published here must be original and uncopyrighted or in the public domain, and should credit the original composer and the modern editor. Please submit either in Sibelius or .xml, along with a pdf for comparison.

An Interview with Wesley Brandt

by Karen Bartlett

(This interview, slightly adapted, appeared in the July 2020 newsletter of Cascadia Viols.)

Wes, how did you get interested in making viols?

I had been interested in certain early music already. Then I saw the 1991 French film *Tous les matins du monde* with Jordi Savall on the sound track and was hooked on both the music and just the sound of the instrument itself. I know of other makers who had a similar experience. I had wanted to travel to Europe for some time, and in the fall of 1993 I took my first trip to the Netherlands and France. I ended up at that year's London Early Music Exhibition, where I found out I could study viol making in England, which I did off and on for the next two years. I had already been building and repairing guitars for about sixteen years, so that helped.

Did you play an instrument, or have an interest in music, or in building things, when you were a child?

I tried to play trombone for a while in grade school but mostly I was into making the sliding sound and was not disciplined enough. Then at about fourteen I started messing around with guitar.

My memory is that you have been mostly Portland-based for many years. Did you grow up in Portland?

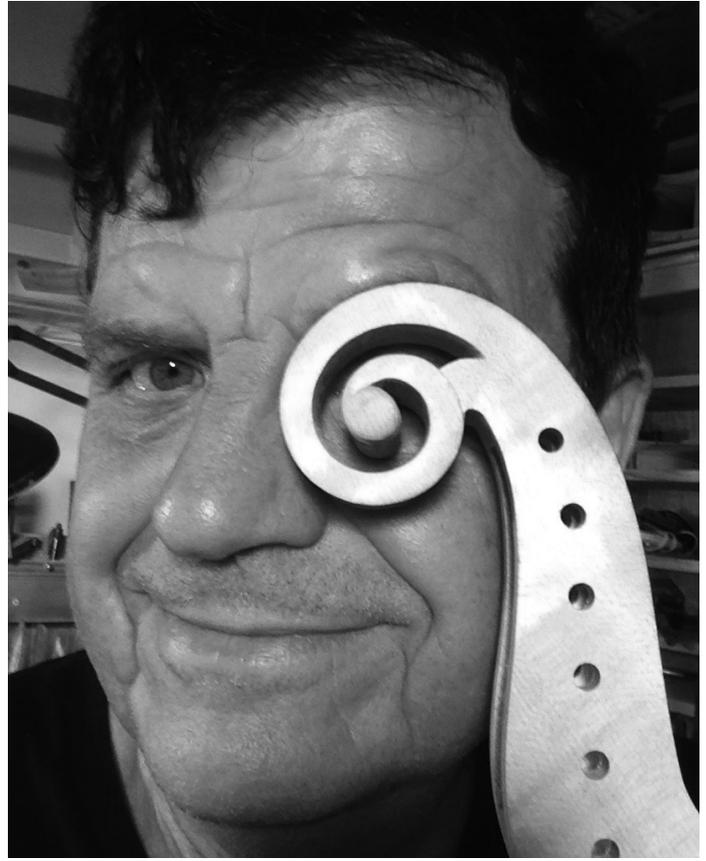


Scroll. Photo: Wesley Brandt.

I grew up in a small farming town fifty miles north of Detroit, Michigan, then went on to college and finally ended up in Ann Arbor. From there I moved to Corvallis, Oregon, and finally to Portland in 1983, with several years in the Netherlands and England between then and now. It was the culture of the West Coast and the beauty of the land that brought me here.

A while back you spent some time in the Netherlands. What was that experience like?

From 2003 to 2006 I had a small shop, in which I also lived, in



Wesley Brandt, viol maker. Photo: Wesley Brandt.

Amsterdam—which was very exciting. I love the Netherlands, its beautiful old cities, lovely architecture, canals, and of course the people and culture, but I was a new maker on the scene and it was too stressful financially.

Interest in the viol has mushroomed in the last decade or more, especially in the Portland area. Has that influenced your work, or how you make viols?

Portland is a very small part of the national market. My sales have been more or less steady since I started twenty-five years ago, but the 2008 recession slowed things down for several years.

What might a typical (pre-pandemic) day for you be like?

I'm an early riser so I'm usually at the bench by seven or eight a.m. But depending on what is going on I'm usually at it ten to twelve hours a day, not necessarily full on but it's always surprising how much there is to do besides actually putting together viols. Self-employed people will understand.

Has the pandemic affected how you work?

Not much differently since I already work by myself, and so far I don't see that it's affected me—though there aren't any of the exhibitions, festivals, or workshops this year that usually lead to some sales, so things may change. I do miss



Oblique. Photo: Wesley Brandt.

not being able to get out to one of my local cafes for coffee for my first break in late morning or for lunch, where I'll do email and other things on my laptop. I really do need to get out of the shop some.

You have been making viols for many years. Has your concept of the kind of viol you want to make changed over time?

I'm always thinking about, observing, and questioning what I've done or what I'm trying to do. I'm still trying to figure out exactly what needs to be done to consistently make a good—hopefully, a great—viol for the type I focus on now, the “bent front” design, which was very much an English style of making.

Violin makers have it easier in some ways. The dimensions of the violin family's instruments are quite similar. They have hundreds of examples of successful old instruments in excellent playing condition, set up professionally, and tweaked to the max as examples

to study closely. They have a huge amount of information at their fingertips: publications, books, drawings with precise measurements, photos, documented experiments. Also, the setup and stringing are quite standardized. Now the internet makes all this even more accessible.

There is nothing of the sort for viols, for various reasons: very few instruments have survived intact; there are not standard sizes but a continuum of sizes and string lengths from treble to bass; individual makers and countries evolved their own designs, which were much more varied than in the violin world. Also, of course, the viol disappeared for a long time, and after it came back the instrument has been nowhere near as studied as the violin. There is almost no written information about viol making available other than a few good technical drawings—just scattered bits here and there.

Is there a part of the viol making process you like best?

I really enjoy working at the bench when the more difficult parts of making the instrument have been brought under control and everything is going smoothly. Or when I find an improved way of doing something that makes it more precise and controllable. I also like the final stringing and setting up when it gets to the point where I have a good idea what I've made—especially now, when I'm more and more happy with what I hear right away. And then once I ship an instrument off, I always do a little relaxing for a couple days, maybe go off camping.

What are some of the greatest challenges in making a viol?

Besides more or less reinventing the wheel, what has also been difficult is figuring out the stringing. Though it's getting better, there has been little standardization with viol strings,



Supine. Photo: Wesley Brandt.



Inside. Photo: Wesley Brandt.

as in one maker's medium gauge can be another's heavy or light. Other big differences in type and construction, even with plain gut, have made it quite challenging. On top of that are large variations in string lengths and just the way a string, or set of strings, interacts with a particular viol itself. Both individual and total string tension are important to pay attention to.

For many years I had to question if problems I was having were because of the strings or me. A combination of gauges and type of string may work well on one instrument but not as well on another, even if they have the same string length, because it will also depend on how that particular viol is made. The choice of strings on a viol is far more important than I had believed earlier. After you are convinced that the viol is working well, you can experiment with a bit lighter or heavier stringing and types of strings. They really are the vocal cords of the instrument and shape its sound. Then there's all-gut stringing, which is becoming more popular, but it can be quite tricky getting the bottoms to work well.

When you receive an order for a viol, do you work to any extent with the player to customize the instrument?

I am totally open to customizing if it's something I believe in, certainly anything to do with the string length, neck shape, fingerboard width and radius, bridge radius, even building with a certain stringing in mind. I'm not a decorative carver so I don't do that. I prefer not to do too much decorative purfling, especially on the front, or to cut a rose into it. I believe both of these can affect the acoustics of the front.

How long, approximately, does it take you to make a bass in comparison to a treble?

A bass is at least a third more work, if not more.

Do you have an interest (if not the time!) to devote your creative outlet to making other kinds of instruments?

I started as a guitar maker before I switched over to viols. Since then I've made a small number of mandolins, mandolas,

octave mandolins, and a few more guitars, but I focus all my energy now on viols. Though some of the knowledge crosses over, the more focused you are on making one instrument, the more almost intuitive it becomes. That is what I think a luthier strives for: to know things almost subconsciously so you can judge a piece of wood or a part of an instrument just by manipulating it.



Seven-String viol. Photo: Wesley Brandt.

When you are not busy in your workshop, how do you like to spend your time?

I never seem to have much spare time, but I am quite interested in recording and sound design using acoustic instruments and shaping the sounds with reverb, delay, and other effects. Also in figuring out a good, affordable amplification system for viols but sound that is very natural. Looping interests me, too—it's cheap for nice devices these days. One of my customers uses a looper to build up parts and then plays along with herself to practice. That could really benefit isolated players.

**Indeed, a useful stratagem for us all these days.
Thank you, Wes!**

VdGSA stickers are in stock again!!

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vdgsa.org/pgs/books.html



VdGSA Info Site

Grants to Support Regional Activities

The philosophy of any VdGSA educational grant is to provide the greatest number of teaching and learning opportunities for the greatest number of people, with special preference given to areas not regularly served by teachers. If you need help finding coaches, please contact Julie Elhard, julie.elhard@gmail.com, (612) 516-0416. For other information or organizational advice, contact Amy Domingues, cellolady@gmail.com, (703) 508-9685. See vdgsa.org for detailed application information.

Chapter Start-Up Assistance

In addition to the regular grants program described above, a special fund has been created to provide one-time assistance for areas wishing to start new chapters of the VdGSA. These awards are for up to \$500 and can be used for any reasonable costs associated with chapter start-up. See vdgsa.org for detailed information.

Grants-in-Aid Program

Grants-in-Aid are open to both student and regular members of the VdGSA. We invite proposals that relate to the mission of the Society, to support activities relating to the viola da gamba. The application process, which begins by contacting the President, has two periods annually, with the deadlines of April 15 and October 15. Details regarding the application and selection processes are available on the VdGSA's website under "Grants & Programs," or by contacting President John Moran by email at lusion@earthlink.net or by post at 814 N. Daniel St. Arlington, VA 22201.

Circuit Rider Program

The VdGSA initiated the Circuit Rider Program to provide support to communities that do not have a local viol teacher, yet wish to set up an ongoing relationship with a teacher. The purpose of the program is to provide an opportunity for players in such communities to have ongoing lessons that will give direction to practice time and help set goals. Applying for a Circuit Rider is straightforward: simply download the application form from the VdGSA website (click on the sidebar "Grants & Programs") and send the completed form to Isabel Hendry at the address given there.

Donating to the VdGSA

The "Donate to the VdGSA" webpage, vdgsa.org/pgs/support.html, provides all the information you need to make a gift to support the wide variety of programs offered by the Society. Gifts can take many forms, including monetary contributions, instruments and bows, planned giving, sheet music, CD collections, and more. Monetary gifts can be unrestricted, or

designated for particular funds or endowments. Gifts can be made via the secure online donations page or by check. Contact VdGSA President John Moran if you have questions. If you would like to donate a viol to the VdGSA, please follow the procedure described in detail on vdgsa.org/pgs/support.html.

You may want to consider making known your wishes for the future disposition of your instrument by placing instructions in your viol case. Many families have no idea what to do with your instrument(s) if something should happen to you. You can easily print the document "My Wishes for My Viol" from the link shown on vdgsa.org/pgs/support.html.

VdGSA Music Part Replacement Service

How many of us have perfectly good VdGSA Music Editions that we'd love to use when our friends come over for consorts, but there's a part missing from the set? It happens to all of us, sooner or later! Replacement parts are available for \$1.00 per page, including postage. All you need to do is email Alice Renken (arenken@sandwich.net). If you prefer, Alice will be happy to email you a pdf to print out on your own printer.

Members' Area on the Website

There is lots of good stuff in the exclusive Members' Area on vdgsa.org, but you need to log in to see it. Here's how you do it: Click on "Members' Area" in the menu at the left of each page. You'll be asked for a user name and a password. Your user name is part of the mailing label on your *VdGSA News* envelope (go retrieve this now before the trash is taken away!) and looks like "ZX4823"—two letters and four numbers. The password is "vdgsa1962"—the same for everyone. Note that your user name must be in capital letters, and the password is in lower case. If you lose your user name, email the webmaster, who can help you out.

Viols to Rent

The VdGSA maintains a rental collection of approximately 70 viols for use in the US and Canada. Information about the availability of these instruments can be had from the rental program administrator: Kathleen Merfeld, 1416 Calder Rd., Key Largo, FL 33037; (305) 451-0134; rentalviol@vdgsa.org. For detailed information see vdgsa.org.

Viols for Sale

Are you looking to buy a viol? We have lots of them listed in the classifieds section of vdgsa.org, the Society's web site. There are bows and other instruments as well—check it out if you're in the market. And remember that listings are free to members! Click on "Classified Ads."

Points of Contact

President

John Moran, (VA), (571) 225-1607, lusion@earthlink.net

Vice-President

Chrissy Spencer, (GA), (828) 789-9089, chrissy.c.spencer@gmail.com

Past President

Lisa Terry, (NY), (718) 219-6166, lisa.naef.terry@gmail.com

Treasurer

Tracy Hoover, (KS), (316) 648-6157, treasurer@vdgsa.org

Investments

Patricia Jennerjohn, (CA), (510) 325-8623, patricia@focusedfinances.com

Secretary

Leslie Nero, (MD), (301) 588-6672, lesneran@rcn.com

Membership

Nancy Washer, (NY), (585) 395-0922, membership@vdgsa.org

Conclave Music Director

Julie Elhard, (MN), (612) 516-0416, julie.elhard@gmail.com

Conclave Managers

Risa Browder, (VA), 571-645-1160, conclave.manager@vdgsa.org

Becca Humphrey, (PA), (610) 675-9536, conclave.manager@vdgsa.org

Pedro Funes-Whittington, (TX), (832) 563-3823, conclave.manager@vdgsa.org

Conclave Vendor Liaison

Kip Irvine, (FL), (305) 254-9220, advertising@vdgsa.org

Conclave Auction Coordinator

Ruby Brallier, (OH), (425) 495-6157, auction@vdgsa.org

Conclave Work-Study Coordinator

Koren Wake, (WA), (207) 712-9594, workstudy@vdgsa.org

Conclave Consort Cooperative

Robert Bolyard, (IN), (917) 488-1641, consort.coop@vdgsa.org

Conclave Loaner Viols

Kathleen Merfeld, (FL), (305) 451-0134, rentalviol@vdgsa.org

Conclave Bursar

David Poon, (BC), 604-512-9152, dporgan@gmail.com

Chapters and Areas Chair

Amy Domingues, (DC), (703) 508-9685, cellolady@gmail.com

Workshop Grants

Lucy Bardo, (MA), (413) 229-7720, lbardo2@gmail.com

Grants-in-Aid

John Moran, (VA), (571) 225-1607, lusion@earthlink.net

Circuit Riders

Isabel Hendry, (KS), (316) 765-4495, izhendry@yahoo.com

Teacher Development

Jane Hershey, (NH), (603) 547-7837, janelhershey@gmail.com

Young Players' Representative

Jamie Gallupe, (MD), (650) 245-6409, cellistjamie@gmail.com

Young Players' Weekend Coordinator

Pedro Funes-Whittington, (TX), (832) 563-3823, pafunes@me.com

Festival Liaison

Erik Andersen, (CA), (718) 310-8294, vdgsafestivals@gmail.com

Social Media

Phillip W. Serna, (IL), (847) 722-2093, phillip@phillipwserna.com

Viol Rental

Kathleen Merfeld, (FL), (305) 451-0134, rentalviol@vdgsa.org

Donation of Instruments

Ronald Vernon, (MS), (662) 816-3417, rvernon@olemiss.edu

Consort Loan Program

Ronald Vernon, (MS), (662) 816-3417, rvernon@olemiss.edu

Music Publications

Alice Renken, (MN), (507) 645-6890, arenken@sandwich.net

New Music

Liam Byrne, (GER), (+49 15128910730), liambyrne@gmail.com

Traynor Competition

Martha Bishop, (GA), (404) 325-4735, walmart@comcast.net

Videos

Zoe Weiss, (NY), (607) 227-9888, zoeweiss@gmail.com

Journal Editor

Robert A. Green, (MD), (410) 923-5648, rgreen1965@aol.com

Newsletter Co-Editors

Randolph Miles, (NOR), +47 913 08 232, editor@vdgsa.org

Jane Furth, (NY), (212) 924-2783, editor@vdgsa.org

Reviews Editor

John Moran, (VA), (571) 225-1607, lusion@earthlink.net

Website Committee Chair

Tobi Szuts, (CA), (510) 206-2652, webmaster@vdgsa.org

Reviews

Edited by John Moran

Phillip W. Serna: *Size Matt'reth Not* Dwarf Star Audio, 2020

Phillip Serna's latest album, *Size Matt'reth Not*, neatly combines his two specialties: double bass and viola da gamba. The highlights of this recording are Orlando Gibbons's pieces for "The Great Dooble Base," also known as the G violone. The "violone" was in its literal sense a large viola or bowed bass, a term that readily adapted itself to a host of different instruments; in the sense of a larger-than-bass-size viol, the violone was the direct ancestor to the double bass. This program originated with one of Serna's many viol outreach collaborations, in this case a presentation on the violone for the 2019 International Society of Bassists Convention in Bloomington with Joanna Blendulf, Christopher Burrus, Michał Bylina, Jessica Powell Eig, Patrick Erickson, and Eric Fisher.

The exceptional construction of the album makes it a digital curiosity. Serna has recorded each part separately and pieced them together himself. I was immediately intrigued by the process behind it, having often spent long evenings alternately complimenting and berating a consort of Lindseys produced on my looper pedal, most of whom are frustratingly deaf to the others. Personally, I have always considered the results inferior, suitable only for scratching a chamber music itch when other musicians are unavailable. Levering his considerable production skills at his own Dwarf Star Studio, however, Serna has certainly demonstrated that such techniques are much more than mere novelties. This is not his first foray into the one-man-band format: he has also recently released *Leonora Duarte: The Complete Sinfonias à5 for Viol Consort*; *Drawing Blankes: Fantasias for Viol Consort by Edward Blankes*; and *Michael East: The Fancies à2 from the Seventh Set of Bookes*—all similarly fashioned by layering multiple, pre-recorded tracks. (And there are many more in the works!) Serna has combined his album production style with the burgeoning music-minus-one trend—most of the tracks on this latest recording are also available on his website for individual purchase, each with space for one to join the virtual consort.

The millennial in me finds CDs archaic and inconvenient. You could, technically, order a CD version of *Size Matt'reth Not*, but why would you when you could download the mp3 files directly from www.phillipserna.com? While I do certainly appreciate the direct mp3 format, the download process here was a bit cumbersome. Each of the twenty-seven tracks has to be downloaded individually. Track numbers are not included on the files, so each needs to be cross-referenced with the pdf booklet's track list, renamed, and numbered. This lengthy

process is a bit of a killjoy for a new album, but likely an easy fix for the website.

The English (plus Ferrabosco the elder) fantasias on this recording are near and dear to viol players everywhere. Most of them are by Orlando Gibbons, including the fantasias for two treble viols, the three-part fantasias, the three- and four-part consorts with the violone. The album ends with selections from Lupo and a compelling pairing of Daman's *Fantasia di sei soprani* with A. Ferrabosco's *Fantasia di sei bassi*. Written for Prince Charles I's thriving string band in the seventeenth century, Gibbons's consort music combines Italian style and improvisational keyboard influences. The short motives and dense, imitative counterpoint require thoughtful articulation and sensitive, flexible responses throughout the ensemble. How does that work out when the whole ensemble is a single person?

That question most clearly captures my interest while listening to this album. I admire the work that must have gone into synching rubato and dramatic pauses before metrical changes, and consistent dynamic swells throughout all the parts without visual cues from other players. The biggest shortcoming found here is in the execution of the faster pieces, where the seams begin to show. Individual parts do not always line up rhythmically in tricky passages, especially ones with dotted or syncopated motives. The results can be momentarily disorienting. When it works, though, it really works: the slower pieces, especially, flow wonderfully. The ones with the most homogeneous scoring, the Daman and Ferrabosco fantasias, are both eerie and fascinating. Serna plays creatively with the stereo sound on these tracks.

All things considered, I find Serna's entrepreneurship progressive, impressive, and inspiring. His output embodies the kind of out-of-the-box thinking that continues to keep the early music community alive and energetic in the digital age.

Lindsey Macchiarella
El Paso, Texas

Friedemann and Barbara Hellwig.
Joachim Tielke: Neue Funde zu Werk und Wirkung
Deutsche Kunstverlag, 2020. ISBN 978-3-98211-6. €27.99.

In 2011 Friedemann and Barbara Hellwig published a splendid and comprehensive 456-page book on the life and surviving instruments of Joachim Tielke (1641–1719), the important German maker of viols, lutes, and guitars, which I reviewed in the June 2012 issue of this newsletter. They have now produced an eighty-page supplemental volume containing a variety of additional information that has surfaced since then, whose title translates as *Joachim Tielke: New Discoveries about his Work and*

Influence. While none of these discoveries significantly alters our understanding of Tielke's accomplishments overall, the new book is nevertheless welcome for the further light it sheds on several aspects of his legacy. Because it is written entirely in German, and is therefore less accessible than the original publication to people without a reading knowledge of that language, a more-than-usually-detailed summary of its contents may be helpful to readers of this review.

In the opening section the authors describe and illustrate five newly identified instruments by Tielke, which they cite in their foreword as the primary justification for publishing this supplement. The group comprises three plucked-string instruments (an *angélique* and two lutes, one consisting of only a body now paired with a later table and neck) and two bowed instruments, a *pochette* and a baryton. The *pochette*, or dancing master's fiddle, was acquired in 2013 by the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Hamburg and is noteworthy for having been made in Tielke's own shop, unlike the three previously known examples that he imported from Paris for resale to his German clientele. The baryton belongs to the Municipal Museum in Munich, where it lay unrecognized from 1944 until the luthier Pierre Bohr recently brought it to the attention of the Hellwigs. Its body outline is very similar to the other two known Tielke barytons, but because the pegbox was cut down in the course of its conversion to a cello, it is not possible to determine how many strings it originally had. Also described and pictured here is a carved viola da gamba pegbox, now attached to a neck and body by a different maker, that the authors cautiously categorize as "based on Tielke's style between 1686 and 1694" without actually attributing it to his workshop.

The second chapter contains nine sections that range in length from a single paragraph to four pages and cover miscellaneous topics pertaining to Tielke's life and work. The most substantial of these is a survey of the principal types of decorative heads found on his instruments, mainly either ladies with pearl necklaces or lions, whose carver(s) probably worked for other luthiers as well. Also of interest is the discovery of an original copy of a booklet printed in honor of Tielke's fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1717, the contents of which were previously known only from a later transcription. The final portion of this chapter briefly presents additional and updated information—in several cases amounting only to a change in ownership—about seventeen instruments described in the 2011 volume, including seven viols. Here the most interesting item for gambists is the revelation that the bridge on a 1685 viol now in the Danish Music Museum in Copenhagen is probably original to the instrument, making it only the second such example from this maker, together with the one on the circa 1694 viol that once belonged to Duke Johann Ernst III of Saxe-Weimar (the younger brother of Johann Sebastian Bach's employer, Duke Wilhelm Ernst) that is still preserved in a museum in Weimar.

The middle half of the new book is given over to a republication

of three articles relevant to Tielke that originally appeared in a festschrift for Friedemann Hellwig's eightieth birthday (*Hinter den Tönen: Musikinstrumente als Forschungsgebiet = Behind the Notes: Musical Instruments as a Field of Research*; Nuremberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 2018). In the first of these, Micha Beuting and Peter Klein report the results of their dendrochronological investigations of fourteen instruments by Tielke, including seven viols and the newly identified baryton. This relatively new research technique seeks to date pieces of coniferous wood used for the fronts of stringed instruments by comparing the microscopically measured width patterns of their growth rings with other samples of known date. In only one case are the results surprising: a viol in the Musical Instrument Museum in Berlin, whose attribution to Tielke was already considered questionable on stylistic grounds, turns out to have a front made from a tree that was still growing in 1865, so at least this part of the instrument could not have been made during his lifetime.

The other two reprinted articles concern Tielke's guitars. Sebastian Kirsch offers observations on the specific construction techniques used to make one particular example (now at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, where Friedemann Hellwig worked as an instrument conservator from 1963 to 1986), and Andreas Michel describes the guitars supposedly modeled after Tielke's work that were made by the early twentieth-century luthier Richard Jacob Weißgerber of Markneukirchen. While these are both solidly researched and well-written articles, they are perhaps of only limited appeal to those of us whose interest in Tielke is based on his viols.

The volume concludes with a list of errata in the 2011 publication and a useful chronological index of all 174 instruments known to survive from the Tielke workshop, with names of institutional (but not private) owners and page references to their descriptions in both books. Finally a brief notice states that the authors' archive of materials relating to Tielke "will eventually be transferred to the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg" (whose collection already boasts a baker's dozen of his instruments, half of them viols), to which all future inquiries should be directed. This provision for continuity of research efforts is very welcome because even after the publication of this supplemental volume there are still unanswered questions about Tielke's activities. Some of these are listed just before the updates at the end of Chapter 2, such as exactly where his home and workshop were located in Hamburg and to what extent the often-elaborate decorative elements of his instruments were created by subcontractors. Additionally, the Comments column of the index includes the terse annotation "not found" for seven instruments known to have survived into modern times, including two viols as well as a violin (one of only five by Tielke) that a generation ago was privately owned in New Jersey.

All in all, this is a worthwhile companion to the Hellwigs'

earlier book, and it is to be hoped that those who already own the 2011 volume (especially libraries, but also individuals) will want to acquire this one as well. If you have been meaning to order a copy of the parent volume—which contains an English summary and a trilingual glossary in addition to hundreds of color photos, and is thus an attractive coffee-table book as well as a serious work of scholarship—but haven't yet done so, you should act soon because the original printing is nearly sold out and its already very reasonable price has been lowered to only €59, or less than \$75.

The world-wide community of viol enthusiasts owes a great debt to Friedemann and Barbara Hellwig for their tireless devotion to documenting and interpreting the legacy of Joachim Tielke, from whose workshop there are more viols still in existence than for any other maker of the historical period: eighty-three basses and fragments of eight more, as well as eight smaller instruments that the Hellwigs classify as a type of viola d'amore without sympathetic strings rather than as true treble viols.

Thomas G. MacCracken
Oakton, Virginia

Wildcat Viols: The Magnifick Consort of Four Parts

2017

When Purcell wrote his nine viol fantas(z)ias à 4 in 1680, viol consorts had all but disappeared from England. These pieces are the product of a genuine fascination with the fantasia tradition following Gibbons and Locke, and appear to have been written for the sheer love of reviving viol consort music. I'm sure most of us can relate! These works, alongside fantasia suites by Locke and Legrenzi's viol sonatas, animate the Wildcat Viols' second album, *The Magnifick Consort of Four Parts*. Formed in 2003 in San Francisco, the Wildcats have made a name for themselves as Purcell specialists. Joanna Blendulf, Julie Jeffrey, and Elizabeth Reed have added Annalisa Pappano to their already first-rate ensemble. They've also contracted John Hadden, internationally renowned early music producer, engineer, and editor. This project was in the works for many years, finally made possible by funding from the San Francisco Early Music Society and California Arts Council.

All works on this album were written in the twilight of the viol consort era when the violin family was ascendant. Some speculate that Henry Purcell's mysterious viol fantasias were never played during his lifetime, written only as abstract

academic exercises. The existence of parts tells a different tale: they were probably enjoyed by intimate pockets of viol lovers. In Giovanni Legrenzi's Italy, the violin family overtook gambas early on, but viol consorts make late, surprise appearances almost exclusively in connection with the *Ospedali*, girls' orphanages known for their highly regarded musical performances—Legrenzi's two sonatas for viola da gamba were likely written for a consort of young women. Matthew Locke was one of the last major viol consort composers of England. His fantasy suites assimilate the older styles of master fantasia writers such as Coperario, Jenkins, and Lawes, but are also notably forward looking. His suites are some of the earliest extant multi-movement works. As such, they provided an invaluable model for future composers. The album is titled after Roger North's comment on these suites, which he also called the last of their kind (apparently unaware of Purcell's viol contributions). The CD liner notes thoroughly explore this fascinating history with impressively detailed research and a writing style as polished as the performances. Jeffrey's background in musicology is clearly at work here.

On the borders of Renaissance and Baroque style, of single and multi-movement works, this exquisite selection occupies multiple liminal spaces. Staples of the viol repertoire, Purcell's bold and eccentric chromatic twists coupled with extraordinary contrapuntal techniques have made his fantasias a favorite of viol players. Dramatic sectional contrast and constantly shifting textures form a common stylistic thread among tracks by all three composers. In dialogue with the old and yet wildly experimental, these works are the height of fantasia mannerism, pushing the genre to its limits. As a bookend lover of both early music and modernism, I find this album satisfying on so many different levels.

The Wildcat Viols match Purcell, Locke, and Legrenzi at every turn with refinement and *sprezzatura*. The ensemble is incredibly responsive and flexible, navigating sharp changes with polish and grace. Tempo choices are gratifying, the Legrenzi C minor sonata sobs pitifully, and the Locke courantes are feather-light. Hadden is with them every step of the way; the audio work is both clear and intimate. Highly recommended. This album reminds me of why I play the viol.

Lindsey Macchiarella
El Paso, Texas



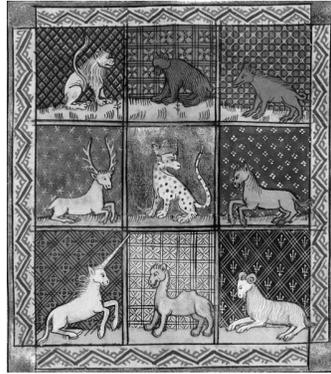
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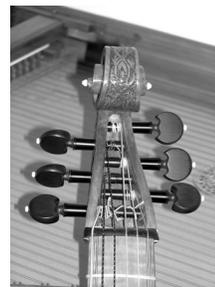
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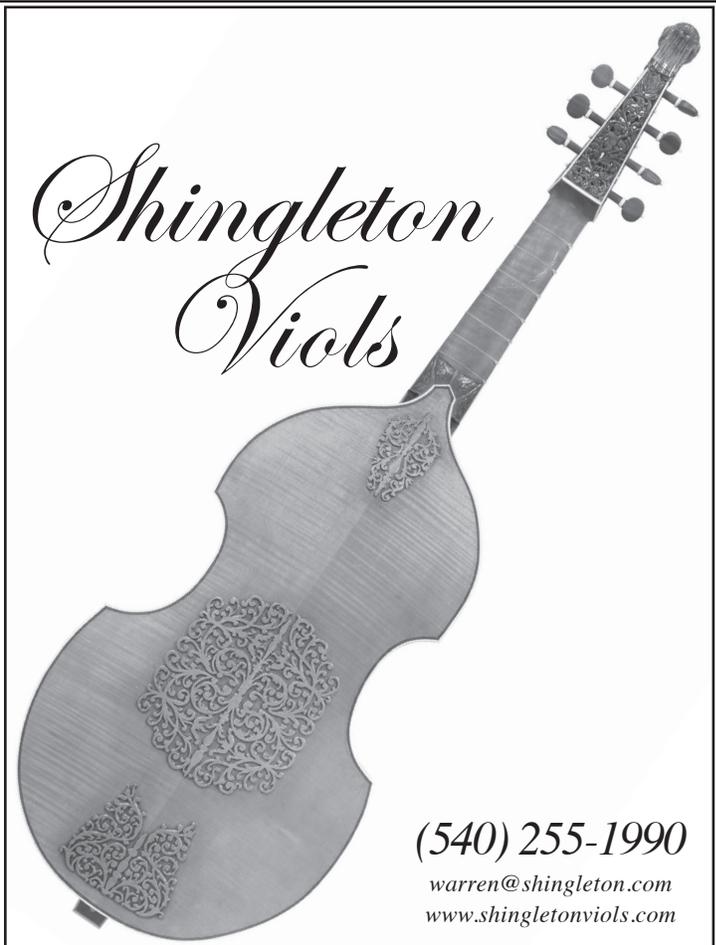
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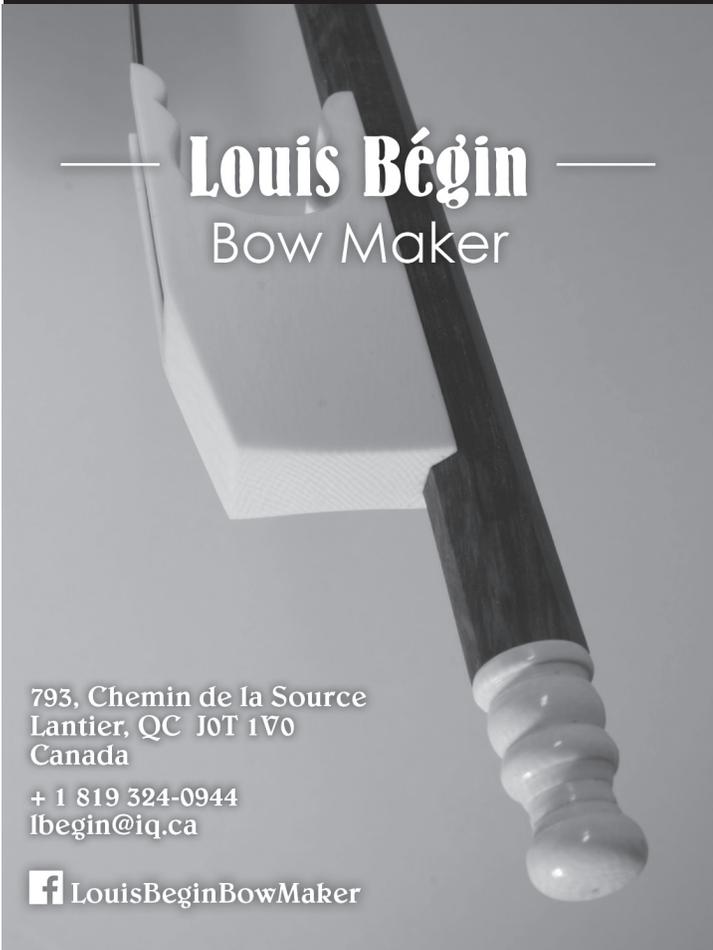


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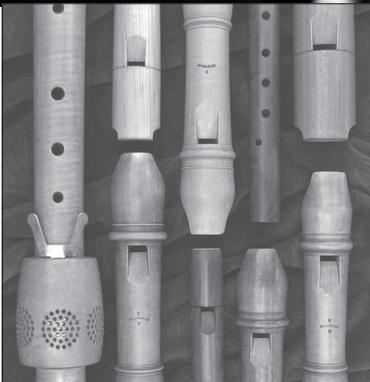
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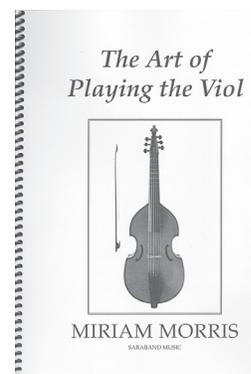


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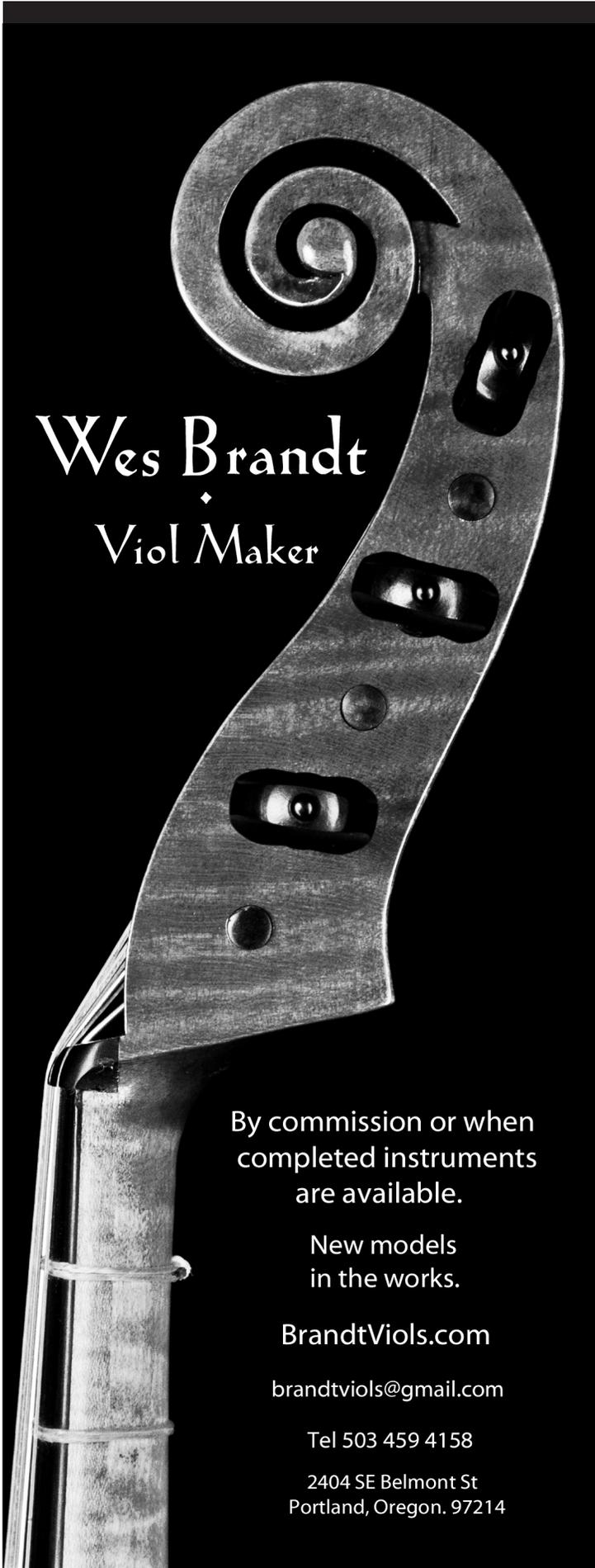


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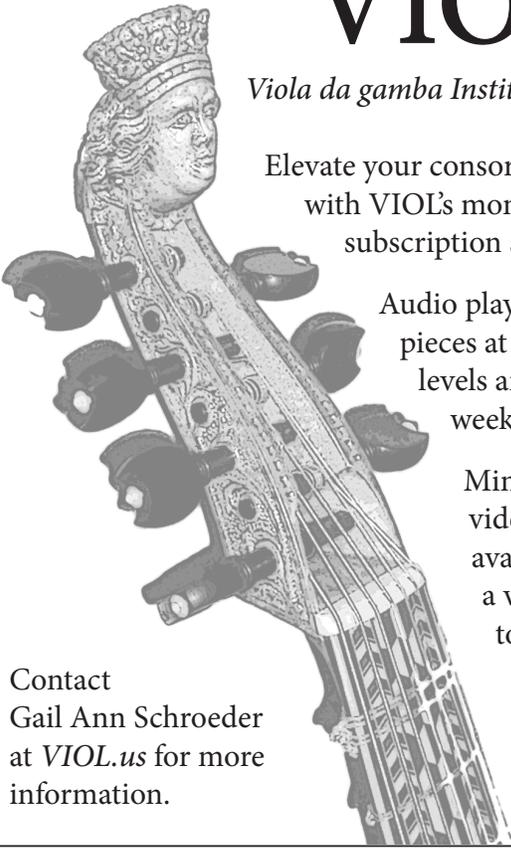
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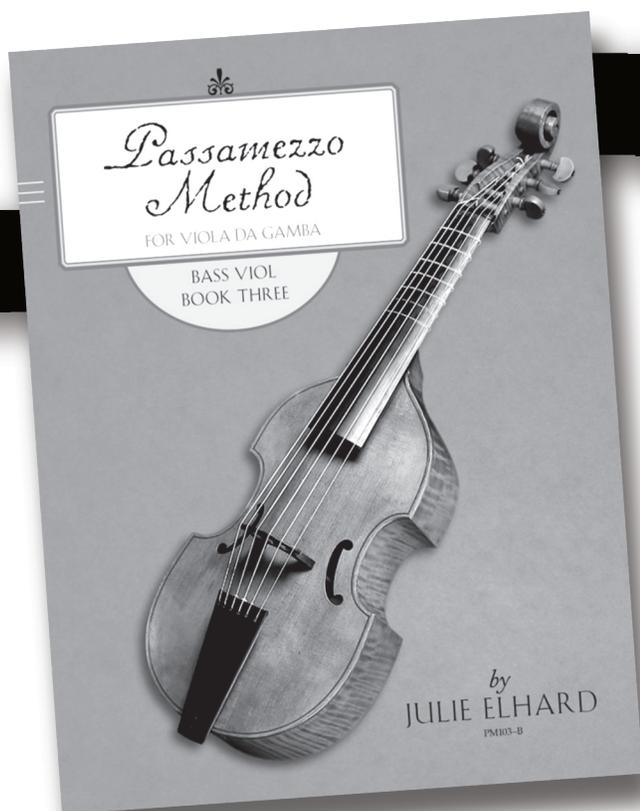
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