

Australian Viola da Gamba Society Newsletter

Autumn 2014

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WELCOME!

A warm welcome to all members of the Australian Viola da Gamba Society to the Autumn 2014 edition of the newsletter. Thanks to contributors to this edition. We'd like to encourage all members to contribute to further editions of the Newsletter but, in the meantime, we hope you will enjoy this edition!

—John Weretka and Rhona Lever

A WELCOME FROM INCOMING PRESIDENT, BROOKE GREEN

Dear Fellow Violists,

Greetings! It's difficult to find a collective noun to describe us. Gambists could make us in danger of being thrown on the barbie or drowned in mayonnaise. Violators is tempting but I suspect that the rest of you are far more morally upright than I am. If you have any suggestions please do send them to me and I'll be delighted to consider them.

I write in somewhat fearful trepidation upon taking on this new role. However I am reassured by strength and calibre of all the people around me: our dedicated Secretary and Treasurer, the unflagging dedication of the Newsletter team, the current and past committee, our past Presidents who continue to provide helpful advice, and you, dear fellow Violists who are always ready to do whatever is necessary to help send the good ship Viol on her merry way.

Plans are already been made for Easter Viol School 2015. Richard has approached Peter Tregear at the School of Music at the Australian National University and it is quite possible this will be our venue. Thank you Richard! I am delighted to announce that the wonderful Laura Vaughan will be the Music Director.

Meanwhile, go forth and make beautiful bow-strokes!

— Brooke Green

EASTER VIOL SCHOOL 2014

Over the last few years, it's been very interesting to note how the range of music for viols has been expanding: not only do there seem to be constantly new discoveries of 'old' music but contemporary music for players at all levels is growing at an exciting rate worldwide. Our theme, *Jenkins, his world and ours*, was my somewhat ambitious attempt to reflect this. Could we give everyone a taste of viol music of the seventeenth and twenty-first centuries and possibly inspire some people to pursue these twin themes?

We were extremely lucky to be able to coerce Liam Byrne to appear as our guest overseas tutor. It's obvious he has feet in both camps and what very fine, big feet they are! (Sorry Liam!) On the first day, Liam gave a talk about how to identify cadential points in Renaissance polyphony, showing how this can really help us better understand the structure of the music, to listen more comprehensively, to help us in our playing. On the second day, he complemented Polly Sussex's fascinating talk about the viola bastarda with a spontaneous and stunning performance, by memory no less, of Rognoni's divisions on *Ancor che col partire* — and these were not the easy divisions. Then on the third day we had a session on contemporary music for viols. Liam joined me, Laura Moore and Laura Vaughan performing some consorts by yours truly (*The Shades* and then *Shades of Shades* from my *Shades of Presence Past* suite — too many shades — apologies!). In the second part of this session Liam performed some

brilliant contemporary works for bass viol, and along with drone-specialist Laura Vaughan he played an intriguing new work by rising star Nico Muhly.

It was inspiring to see that for *Choices* we had enough people signing up for contemporary consorts to create three consorts, which I really enjoyed teaching. The other choices were taken by tutors who had a special interest in a particular field: Liam gave a popular masterclass; Laura Vaughan directed 'Making the music happen' with Lawes and Gibbons; Polly Sussex directed 'La dolce vita: English-Italian connections'; Jennifer Eriksson directed Marais; Laura Moore directed 'Fa la la: English madrigals' and I directed a class on pavans and galliard under the guise of 'Toe-tapping tunes'. There is often quite a bit of debate about how much technique people want to learn at viol school, so this year for the first time we combined technique and consort playing into a choices option. This class was taught by Liam and it was good to see that we had the numbers for three consorts.

We started each day with a warm-up session and the definition of warm-up was kept deliberately loose. How should you prepare for a long day of playing, or even just a short session when you are on your own? I think flexibility is the key (in body and mind) and by introducing many different approaches, from chair yoga led by Swami Byrne, to chi gong, to good old-fashioned open string exercises, I hope you will consider various options. Sometimes it's good just to have fun. Remember, making music is enjoyable! So for the first warm-up morning, I wrote a four-part *ANZVdG Anthem* with an In Nomine set to some of the 25 excuses for 'Why I can't play' provided by the New York Consort of Viols. ('My chair is too low', 'My pants/slacks/daks are slippery', etc.). Somehow *Waltzing Matilda* skipped in there too — don't ask me how. My grateful thanks to John Cunningham and Rachel Walker for their magnificent textual renditions!

This year, we offered pre-formed consorts the chance to be together for the first morning session. This proved to be a popular option and definitely one to consider repeating next year. We also sent out music in advance for the first class. It's always a monumental task trying to put players in well-matched groups on a rotation system, especially when there are an uneven number of certain instruments. So for instance, it was difficult for us to organise many groups to play five- and six-part

Jenkins, due to having slightly more bass players than tenor and treble. So in many cases we had to assign music of Jenkins' time, such as by Lupo, Ferrabosco and Coprario.

Putting these classes together requires the skills of a champion sudoku player and I really want to thank Laura Moore and Laura Vaughan for their skills and patience in this area. Laura Moore was outstanding with her untiring dedication in supervising every organisational aspect of the school, while teaching classes and being available at a minute's notice to perform anything I threw at her. Thanks Laura! We really couldn't have got to the finishing line without you!

And of course, a big thank you to all the tutors: Liam Byrne, Laura Vaughan, Polly Sussex, Laura Moore, Jennifer Eriksson, for their musical expertise, their dedication and patience, and of course for superb playing in the Tutors' and Friends' concert. While I'm on this topic, thanks also to the Friends in this concert: Josie Ryan, Cathy Upex, Margo Adelson, Victoria Watts and Fiona Ziegler.

There are so many others to thank: Helen Alajajian and Cathy Upex for organising lunches, Ted Granlund for being the music librarian, Margo Adelson for being the key lady and Victoria Watts, Allison Balberg and many others who were always there as a general back-up for anything we needed. Thanks also to Patrice Connelly for setting up her Saraband shop and being on hand for music advice. In the luthier/viol repair department I would like to thank Chris Twiddle and also Mikhail Prokop who arrived with a beautiful pardessus for us to try. Thanks to Tony Watts for wrapping up the accounts with inordinate care and patience. Thanks also to Peter Hawkins and David Archer for making video and audio recordings of the Tutors' and Friends' Concert. We hope to put some of these up on the website in the near future. No doubt I've forgotten to thank someone — my apologies in advance. Whoever that is, please feel free to email me in capital letters or post me a packet of broken viol strings.

From your feedback forms, some people indicated they would like two classes of choices per day so that is something we could consider. Also I note that you would generally like to do less sight-reading and have music sent out in advance. We will try our best to accommodate this a bit more next year, even though I have to warn you, no matter how much we plan

ahead, no matter how much we scrutinise your self-evaluation forms, often it is not until the classes are in action, that we can understand how certain groups might need to change their make-up. (And that's not just the eye-shadow darlings!)

On the final afternoon, we had a students' concert and it was great to see the quite remarkable progress players had made since the beginning of the school. Was that only four days ago? Bravo! Keep up the great work and see you next year!

— Brooke Green



Laura Vaughan at the Easter Viol School



Brooke Green at the Easter Viol School



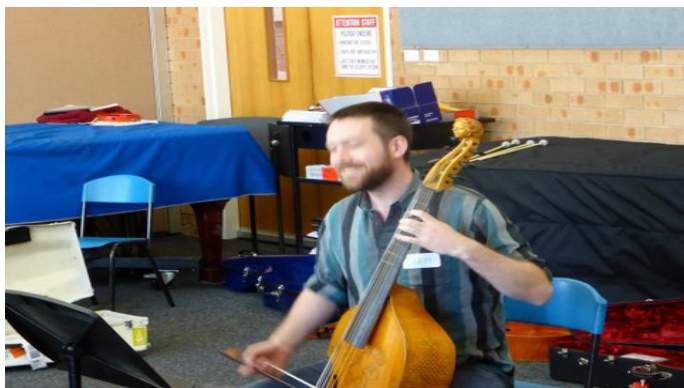
Massed LuMi violas!



Laura Moore at the Easter Viol School



Participants' concert at the Easter Viol School



Liam Byrne at the Easter Viol School

COURSES AND EVENTS FOR TRAVELLERS OVERSEAS

5-7 June

Berkeley Exhibition

Where: Large and Small Assembly Halls at the First Congregational Church of Berkeley

The Exhibition is where the general public can meet publishers, instrument builders, service organizations and other early music practitioners. Free and open to the public.

Information: <http://www.amherstearlymusic.org>

6-20 July

Amherst Early Music Festival

Where: Connecticut College, New London, CT

The program includes two weeks of classes for amateurs and pre-professionals, a music and instrument exhibition, a professional concert series, and concurrent special courses for advanced students. In 2014 the Festival features the Music of France and the Low Countries, Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Les Indes Galantes*, Baroque Academy, Recorder Special Programs, Ensemble Singing Intensive, and a reprise of New London Assembly, a week of English country dancing with a historical focus.

Information: <http://www.amherstearlymusic.org>

13-19 July

Pacific Northwest Viols and Margriet Tindemans Summer Workshop

Where: Bastyr University, Seattle

Faculty will include Jack Ashworth, Joanna Blendulf, Ros Morley, Margriet Tindemans and Craig Trompeter.

Information: jobaim@msn.com

13-18 July

Benslow Music International Viol Summer School

Tutors: Alison Crum, Ibi Aziz, Roy Marks, Peter Wendland

Information: <http://www.benslow.org>

26 July-1 August

Dartington International Summer School

Tutors: Fretwork

Viol players from beginners to advanced

Information: <http://www.dartington.org>

27 July-3 August

VdGSA Conclave

Where: Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

Information: <http://vdgsa.org/pgs/conclave-2014/2014conclave.shtml>

3-10 August

Baroque Week at Cambridge Early Music Summer Schools: The Purcell Legacy

Where: Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge

Tutors: The Parley of Instruments — Peter Holman, Judy Tarling, Mark Caudle, Gail Hennessy, Philip Thorby

Information: <http://www.cambridgeearlymusic.org/Courses-Baroque.php>

3-7 August

Viola da Gamba Summer Course

Where: Rasteau, south of France

Tutors: Paolo Pandolfo and Amélie Chemin

Viol solo and ensemble repertoire; methodical instrumental technique for all levels. Individual and group lessons.

Information: viols.rasteau@yahoo.com

10-18 August

Renaissance Week at Cambridge Early Music Summer Schools: Musica Transalpina

Where: Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge

Tutors: Philip Thorby, David Hatcher, Emma Murphy, Frances Eustace, Lynda Sayce

Information: <http://www.cambridgeearlymusic.org/Courses-Renaissance.php>

10-16 August

Viols West Workshop

Where: California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, CA

Music Director: Rosamund Morley

Tutors: Joanna Blendulf, John Dornenberg, Julie Jeffrey, Josh Lee, Lawrence Lipnik, Rosamund Morley, and David Morris

Viols west workshop welcomes viola da gamba players of all levels to a week of beautiful music. Daily classes focus on technique ensemble skills and allow opportunities to study both solo and consort repertory. There will also be a special afternoon section for voices and viols and evening programs filled with various musical actives, including ad hoc consorts and a faculty concert.

Information: violswestworkshop@gmail.com

16-23 August

Irish Recorder and Viol Course

Where: An Grianán, Termonfechin, Ireland

Tutors: Ibi Aziz, Marion Doherty, Pamela Flanagan, Emma Murphy, Marion Scott, Philip Thorby

A course designed for players of recorders, viols and other early instruments, covering a wide repertoire from the 15th to the 21st centuries. Sessions include one-to-a-part groups, lectures, technique classes, consort songs, trio sonatas, choir, large and small ensembles

Information: info@irishrecorderandviolcourse.org, <http://www.irishrecorderandviolcourse.org>



Lunchtime at the Easter Viol School



Tutors' Concert at the Easter Viol School

CATCHING UP WITH SARAH MEAD

Sarah Mead has an extremely busy professional life as a teacher and performer in the Boston area and around the world. Recently she visited New Zealand and Australia partly on holiday and also to teach and perform. Members of the AVdGS will remember her well as the overseas tutor at the Easter Viol School held in 2010 in Bermagui. Sarah is Professor of the Practice of Music at Brandeis University in Boston, a specialist in renaissance polyphony, performer and teacher on viols, member of the board of the VdGSA, and currently the musical director of their annual Conclave.

In March viol players were lucky to have Sarah come back to Australia and New Zealand, combining work and holiday time. She did a viol workshop near Canberra (see the item about Burrawang), then she and her husband did a campervan tour of the South Island of New Zealand before tutoring a weekend workshop in Christchurch. Sarah went on to do some teaching and performing in Wellington as a guest of Victoria University, and in Sydney at the Conservatorium. In Sydney she performed with Josie and the Emeralds in a concert which included sumptuous works by Jenkins, Coleman and Loosemore from seventeenth-century England, when the lyra viol was at the height of its popularity. This concert also included contemporary music: Sarah Mead's *Fantasia sine nomine* for five viols (Australian premiere) and Brooke Green's *Shades of Presence Past* for viol quartet.

While Sarah was in Christchurch she was able to take some time to talk to me about her visit.

I began by asking her about the origins of the instrument which she played in the concert with Josie and the Emeralds in Sydney. It is a lyra viol with Australian connections which Sarah acquired quite by chance as a result of meeting Ruth Kelly in Australia in 2010. Ruth Kelly had done extensive research into lyra viol music and instruments and as a result had commissioned Canadian viol maker, Dom Zuchowicz, to make a lyra viol. It is a very beautiful looking instrument similar to a bass viol with six strings, but with the addition of seven extra wire strings which run under the fingerboard and are supported by a low bridge under the main bridge. These sympathetic strings are tuned from an extra peg box at the top. They are not bowed or plucked but resonate with the notes played on the instrument. Sarah supplied two pictures which show the overall

shape of the instrument, and the seven wire strings. At the time that Sarah met Ruth this viol was actually with Ruth's son in California, and was not being played. Ruth agreed to sell it to Sarah, and now, restored and restrung, it is used for performances of lyra viol music in alternative tunings. Currently it is tuned in harpway tunings for the forthcoming concert and we were lucky enough to have some close up demonstrations of the instrument at a workshop for viol players in Christchurch.

Sarah talked to me about the experience of exploring the lyra viol repertoire with this instrument. It has been a revelation to discover how the instrument dictates the bowing technique, especially on the thick gut bass strings. The way the music is written makes so much more sense in relation to how the instrument wants to be played. Her discoveries about the relationships between the music and the instrument have inspired Sarah to do some lyra viol composing herself.

Sarah is a specialist in Renaissance music generally as well as a teacher and performer on the viol. Talking about repertoire for viol consorts she explained that it is very good for viol players to go back to the sixteenth-century vocal music (chansons, madrigals and motets) in order better to understand the origins and development of the seventeenth-century English consort repertoire. Playing music with text is a valuable study because if you phrase the music to express the text then the music comes to life. Modern rhythmic conventions relating to barlines do not apply as the music can change between duple and triple rhythms freely in order to express the text. Also harmonic conventions do not apply as this is modal polyphony.

Links to further information:

Dom Zuchowicz was a highly esteemed Canadian instrument maker, but died in 2011. There was a special concert to celebrate his work and you can find a video of Sarah playing this viol at that concert here: <http://vimeo.com/32720821>

The consort Nota Bene has a webpage: www.nb-violis.org/

— Rhona Lever



Sarah Mead's lyra viol



Close up of the bridges on Sarah Mead's lyra viol

A RECIPE FOR A MUSICAL HOUSE PARTY — MARCH 2-7 2014

As with any recipe, one of the keynotes for success is the preparation and thought that goes on beforehand and that was certainly accomplished. Our hosts, Joan and Richard Milner, found an idyllic house in an idyllic spot in the Southern Highlands. There were two rooms suitable for playing, a large kitchen for meal organisation, good sleeping accommodation for the nine of us, and magnificent views across the valley. A meals and shopping roster were sent in advance so we knew when we were, and when we were not, on duty.

Another most useful preparation was the excellent books that Richard produced of the proposed music, which were distributed in advance so that our parts could be practised. We stayed in the same group each morning and were reassigned for the afternoons and played eight- and nine-part pieces in the evenings under the skillful baton of Andrew Parkin. And some of us, when the rest of the world slept, played scrabble.

Of course, ingredients for any cake come in various packages and we were privileged in having Sarah Mead to stir (or beat, or whip?) these ingredients into a firmer consistency. Together we worked towards a 'work in progress' feast for the entertainment and edification of the villagers of Burrawang. As every cook worth her salt

knows, it is a risky business presenting a new recipe to visitors, but our cake rose quite well to the occasion, and, even though we felt it sank ever so slightly in the middle, it was never the less warmly and enthusiastically received by our audience.

What shall we remember about Burrawang? We can laugh again at our mishaps, recall the mist coming over the hills, the good company and the good food that we enjoyed, as well as all the good playing. And we feel very fortunate that we were invited to share in a big slice of the cake!

— Ann Kanaan



Misty morning at Burrawang



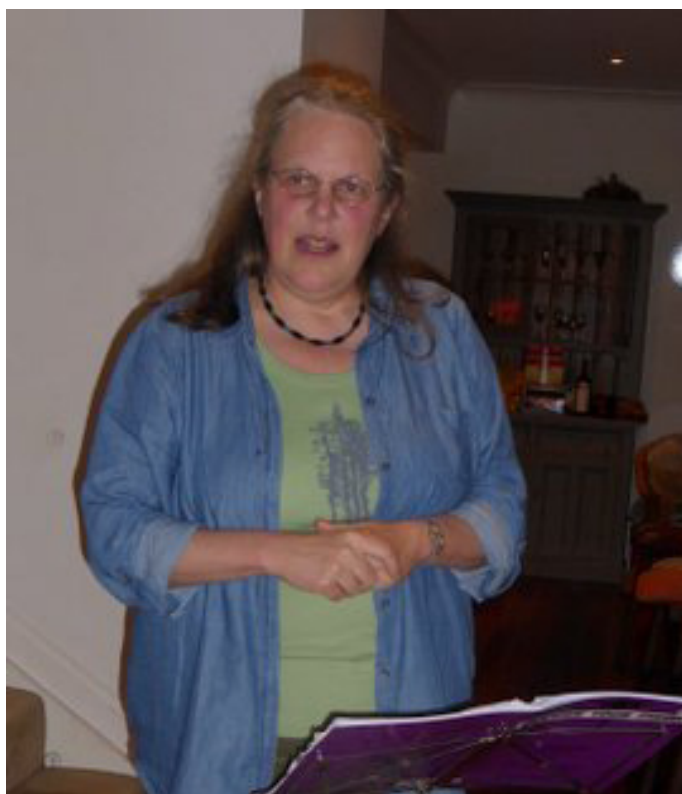
Ann Kanaan at Burrawang



Sarah Mead teaching in the main music room



Joan Milner, Di Ford, Glenice Norton and Andrew Parkin at Burrawang



Sarah Mead at Burrawang

EASTER VIOL SCHOOL 2014

Directed by Brooke Green with tutors Liam Byrne, Jennifer Eriksson, Laura Moore, Polly Sussex and Laura Vaughan, the annual Easter workshop was held at the MLC in Sydney over Easter.

Liam was a popular overseas tutor with his superb playing, huge knowledge of the repertoire and versatile skills in tutoring amateur players at all levels. He e-mailed afterwards:

Hey everybody!

Hope you are all having a wonderful autumn down there. I just wanted to thank you all again for having me in Sydney for such a wonderfully intense weekend of fabulous consort playing. It was a great pleasure playing with you all. I had an absolute blast!

I hope it's not long before I'm down on your side of the world again!

Greetings from slightly less sunny Iceland,

Liam

Unfortunately neither of the newsletter editors was able to be there, but we do have a brief report from a participant:

Congratulations to the organisers of the EVS. As an initially reluctant participant, I was impressed with the timetabling and smooth running of the school, including the organisation of the food. I overheard some comments from tried and true EVS's that this was the best organised school they could remember. Well done!

I enjoyed the preformed consorts very much as it meant the notes were learned and the group was ready to really benefit from the input of the tutors. Lectures were informative, particularly Liam's. The 'choices' were wide ranging and enabled all of us to be accommodated. Negatives?? Not many and the feedback forms allowed us to make suggestions to further improve an already successful formula.

Thank you very much to the organisers.

Susan Christie

A WORKSHOP WITH JANE JULIER

When Jane Julier visited Sydney in March 2014 to deliver and set up my beautiful new tenor viol, she also gave a workshop on viol care and maintenance. About ten players dropped in throughout the day. She gave us lots of advice on how to improve the set up of our instruments, how to fix our pegs and frets — all very useful! Jane makes all sizes and types of viols and has a particular interest in English consort viols with bent fronts, such as those by Henry Jaye. She would like to visit Australia and New Zealand in 2016, to give more workshops both to players and makers. Stay tuned!

— Brooke Green



MUSIC REVIEW

BROOKE GREEN: SHADES OF PRESENCE PAST

Now look! Or Hwæt! As the Anglo-Saxons used to say,¹ when your consort has battled through John Jenkins' *Newark Seidge* and wants a change, this is the music for you.² It's Brooke K. Green's *Shades of Presence Past* for viol quartet (PRB Publications, Contemporary Consort Series No. 79).

In the opening blurb Brooke says that the pieces 'sprang from the idea that ghosts of the past inevitably haunt our present-day dreams' and this haunting of ideas from the past makes the pieces seem familiar to viol players. So for someone who distances him/herself from contemporary music this work may tempt you into the world of 21st century music. *Shades of Presence Past* is scored for four viols: treble, tenor, bass and seven-string bass. There are four movements, each with an evocative name: 'Spirits and Dreams', 'Shades of Shades', 'Johnny D's Jaunt' and 'Ghost of Gadget'. All the pieces are accessible for the intermediate to advanced players, with each having its challenges.

So four Melbourne based viol players enjoyed an evening playing this music and I volunteered to gather the comments.³

The opening movement, 'Spirits and Dreams', is thoughtfully written and easy to play from an ensemble point of view. Once the mood is established the movement stays in that mood with a return to the opening theme at the end of the movement. Chromatic passages in this piece presented points of interest and would benefit from individual practice. This in turn, I think, would then be very useful in your technical mastery of the viol. Discussions on interpretations regarding the playing of the dotted notes were debated but the piece is explicit on tempo and sound markings.

'Shades of Shades' was the second movement, which we played with gusto. Comments were made that it brought to mind Elena Kats-Chernin and was 'a bit clichéd'. It was rhythmically vibrant and good for ensemble playing with enough accidentals to keep the players alert. A light touch and bounce is needed but the sense or mood of the piece was evident, even if it was played at a more relaxed speed than suggested.

The third movement, 'Johnny D's Jaunt', was met with great enthusiasm and thought to have great potential. Bertolt Brecht, Bobby Darin and 'Mack the Knife' were all mentioned after we played this piece. The 3+3+2 time signature made the piece swing — and kept us on our toes, so to speak. The *pizzicato* section was easy and added

to the swing of the piece that ends with an impressive flourish.

The final movement, 'Ghost of Gadget', was thought to be the least successful of the pieces and just rollicked along with the impression of only rhythmic activity.

Well, all up the consensus was that Brooke has composed a great addition to 'new music for viols' and it is certainly worthwhile adding to your collection.

— Janet Norman

Contemporary Consort Series No. 79

**BROOKE K.
GREEN**

Shades of Presence Past

for Viol Quartet

PRB Productions



1 I'm reading Beowulf at the moment.

2 Just swap one treble for a tenor.

3 Lyn Hawkins, John Weretka, Vic Watts, Janet Norman

IN CELEBRATION OF CRYSTAL — THE MARAIS PROJECT AT 15

In wedding terms ours is a crystal anniversary: more distinguished than wood (5) and tin (10) but still many years from receiving a letter from the Queen or even the Governor General. I appreciate the opportunity of sharing my thoughts on the last decade and a half.

Where have we come from?

The origin of The Marais Project was my career frustrations back in 2000. As non-orchestral, non-mainstream instrumentalists, viol performers have no formal career structure. Inspired by pianist Gerard Willems, who at the time was completing his landmark recording of the complete Beethoven piano sonatas, I came up with the idea of performing all of the works of Marin Marais as a major goal. The Marais Project's first concert took place in July 2000 at St Scholastica's Chapel, Glebe, Sydney. Marin Marais was the only composer featured.

Very quickly I realised that there was no future in doing concert after concert of Marais so we had to 'mix it up' with other repertoire, a philosophy we have continued over the years. We approached this in several ways. Firstly, by expanding from Marais into French Baroque music in general. To my immense joy I have discovered many French gems such as cantatas with obligato viola da gamba, rarely heard chamber music and even folk songs. More recently we started performing and recording some of the songs of Edith Piaf. Secondly, I asked Australian composers to write for us. Finally, we made the important decision to extend ourselves 'sideways' rather than 'upwards' as we established ourselves. It is worth explaining this concept a little further. In conventional classical music terms, as an ensemble becomes better known it typically (but not universally) moves up the artistic chain. That is, they invite high profile, established artists to appear with or compose for them. With no funding for overseas or even interstate airfares and hotels we made the decision to expand horizontally into other genres. I sought out top class jazz and world music artists, composers, actors and others. All were Sydney-based; each brought amazing skills and talents. This is not to say our approach is right or to criticise other approaches but it was one way we used to turn a constraint into creative outcomes.

Our primary focus was, and still is, on Marais and

the French Baroque, but we have been enriched along the way through acting as an open rather than a closed project.

What has changed in the past 15 years?

The number and quality of viol players in this country has steadily increased. It's exciting to have chamber music colleagues of the caliber of Josie and the Emeralds, Latitude 47, the Badinerie Players, Ironwood, Ludivico's Band, Salut! Baroque, Danny Yeadon and many more bringing the viol family before the public in creative, innovative and often fun ways. It is fair to say that audience acceptance and interest in early music as a genre has also risen, as has the competence of early musicians. Many of us have 'portfolio' careers, also playing modern instruments and crossing over into other genres as did their Renaissance and Baroque forebears.

What has changed for the worse? Formal music criticism and arts journalism – along with print media in general – is in decline in this country. I don't see this turning around. I am very comfortable with some aspects of social media including the rise of the 'amateur' on-line critic (there are good and bad examples of these folk), but increasingly, if you want a good background article or even a review of your work you have to write it yourself or at the very least, organise it all. In addition, non arts-literate journalists always need an angle to sell 'product'. This pushes arts marketing to more and more extreme claims of 'unique' and 'moving'. In parallel we've seen the emergence of the gorgeously made up, soft focus publicity photo (female) and the bare-chested 'six pack' shot (male). The Marais Project has at times been as guilty of marketing crimes as any other ensemble! (I should say, however, that no male Marais Project performer has volunteered for the 'six pack' shot yet.)

I also have concerns about the state of music education and music literacy amongst young people. For more than 25 years I have been part of the Musica Viva in Schools programme, performing specially arranged Baroque operas in infants' and primary schools. I still give up to 80 concerts per year in schools. Lovers of classical music need to know that many schools have virtually NO music education at all or rotate a term of music with terms of drama, gymnastics and other art forms so music skills are quickly lost. Students can sit for Year 12 music without being able to read any form of notation other than a chord chart. This situation will

have a lasting effect on classical music audiences.

Engaging the young

If viol music, early music and classical music are to have a long-term future we need to seek ways to engage the young on their terms. A colleague recently told me the story of the board of a well-known classical music organisation that was lamenting the fact that so few people under 55 attended their events. He suggested holding a competition where they invited young video artists to attend their concerts and rehearsals and make short videos that would be used for promotion. The Board's response? They were worried about controlling the quality of what these young people produced and the effect on the organisation's brand. They did not proceed. How sad. Any teacher will tell you that if you want a young person to be interested in something outside of their immediate experience the trick is to give them a worthwhile job to do: write a review, make a video, interview a performer. This is not a matter of the old or young being more or less important. It's simply about ensuring we are thinking about tomorrow's audience today. On a positive note, last year *Stringendo* magazine, the journal of the Australian String Teachers' Association, published an issue where all the reviews of music and CDs were done by string students in high school. Our 'Lady sings the viol' CD was reviewed in that issue by a sixteen-year old student who showed wonderful insight into what we were trying to do.

We follow our own advice in regard to engaging the young. The Marais Project premiered a piece by composer and gambist Alice Chance when she was still at school and have commissioned a further work from her for 2014. The young person who does all of our promotional and youtube videos started with us aged 20. Susie Bishop and Emily-Rose Šárkova who will appear in our second concert have not yet turned 30. Our final concert this year will premiere a new piece for electric gamba and bass guitar by 21-year old Siebe Pogson who will also perform with us. We give few explicit instructions to these fabulous young people but let them follow their own direction. I've not yet been let down!

The future

I imagine the future holds more Marais, more French Baroque music, more Australian music, more collaborations and more experimenting with my newest instrument, the Ruby electric viola da gamba. I've commissioned jazz artists Matt McMahon and Siebe Pogson to write works for the Ruby gamba for our October concert and Matt is also arranging a couple of Australian jazz charts including a ballad by virtuoso Australian electric bassist, Steve Hunter. We will also release a CD of Swedish Baroque and folk music — spiced with a pinch of Marais — later in 2014. The CD after that one is already scoped. My love affair with the viol will, I hope, progress from crystal (15) in 2014 to china (20) in 2019.

Thanks

I would like to acknowledge the many fine musicians who have worked with The Marais Project. They are too numerous to name individually. I cannot thank enough my close colleagues Cathy Upex and Danny Yeadon (viol), Tommie Andersson (lutes and guitars), Fiona Ziegler (violin, tenor viol and mandolin) and Belinda Montgomery (voice) along with Llew and Mara Kiek. Thanks also to the ABC, Fine Music 102.5, the NSW Early Music Association and, of course, to the Australian Viola da Gamba Society and its members.

Music is a collective activity: we cannot do anything of substance alone.

— Jenny Eriksson

AN ACCOUNT OF THE PERFORMANCE BY THE HILLIARD ENSEMBLE WITH CONSORT ECLECTUS

On the night of 17 January, Consort Eclectus teamed up with The Hilliard Ensemble to perform both early and modern music at the City Recital Hall in Sydney. The four seasoned men of the 40-years-running British vocal chamber group gave several performances during the week for the Sydney Festival, but this was the most special one because of an augmented Consort Eclectus accompanying them on viols. They saturated the Recital Hall with rich sound.

The four singers started the performance a capella with a series of six early songs, none very long. They varied between jovial, melancholic and sacred-sounding. The first three were anonymous thirteenth-century English pieces about historical Thomases. They were, as expected, expertly sung, with the upper voices having lots of melodic variety and the bass staying grounded throughout (he had many short syllables to enunciate at the same pitch). They always savoured the final notes, using the venue to its greatest acoustic capacity.

At one point during the third piece, which called for three singers, a light cough escaped from the dormant performer's lips while he was sitting and listening to the others. Ya gotta wonder if his fellow singers had words with him afterward. The fourth, fifth and sixth songs were sacred (*Ave Regina* by Walter Frye, *O pulcherrima mulierum* by John Plummer, and *Ave Maria mater Dei* by William Cornysh). All sounded beautiful, with soft starts and harmonies to relish, and the Cornysh piece had a surprising harmony at the end which made for a more interesting soundscape. One could forgive that there were no strings on stage yet.

The seventh and final piece before the interval ended the 'Will the viols appear?' suspense. *My days* by Nico Muhly was written for voices and viols in 2012 in honour of Gibbons' madrigals and motets. It told a story (and it was a good long story!) with a variety of themes; the lyrics even included extracts from a report on Gibbons' death. The viols started with a round of Bach's toccata (think the first three notes of the toccata, repeated over and over amongst the viols in conversation). This formed the background that the tenor viol leapt onto with the melody, in the upper register of the instrument — an intriguing

and pleasing introduction that brought on much anticipation for where the piece would lead. They delved into the story with melody changing among parts and changing in feeling (there were tense sections, sombre sections and joyous sections). A stand-out sound memory was when the bass viols had a duo and you could count the seconds the resonance lasted — Danny and Ruth relished every wavelength from their viols. You'd think the Recital Hall was built specifically for the purpose of fostering the most beautiful and lasting resonance of bass viols.

After the interval the viols broke out into Dowland's *Lachrimæ*. They made it look so easy, playing into their strings like sharpened knives streaking through butter, and they looked like they were having great melancholic fun.

The ninth (and final) piece brought the singers out on stage again, plus a sixth violist (Brooke) for a modern marathon composition by Gavin Bryars called the *Cadman Requiem*. It was written in memory of Bryars' friend Bill Cadman. Within this piece Faure's requiem was recognisable (by those who are familiar with Faure's requiem). The piece had five sections and hence featured a variety of themes, styles and string techniques. In one section the violists executed a vibrato motion with their bows, which must have been nothing short of mind-twistingly difficult. In another section their left hands slid from one fret to another *glissando* (and they passed this action around to each other, during the process of which they landed on some unusual harmonies which intrigued the ear). Another noticeable feature was the prevalence of stealth bowing (i.e. having to stealthily move the bows in the air and reset them on the strings again with elegance).

The entire concert was a great treat and I hope these groups will collaborate again in the foreseeable future. In that event I will try to pay attention not just to the viols but also to the singers when they're performing simultaneously.

— Allison Balberg

I thought the concert was brilliant! The different timbres, textures and sonorities the music demanded of the viol players were so beautifully and expertly met by the performers. The tuning was impeccable, the ensemble was extremely tight and blended so well with the rich, warm tone of the singers. I felt

like I was watching and listening to master craftsmen who with their fluid technique and emotive phrasing really brought out the fragments of a lifespan in Nico Muhly's *My days* and the tragic mood of Gavin Bryars' *Cadman Requiem*. The viols' beautiful phrasing and blended tone in the Dowland was exquisite.

The Hilliard Ensemble: David James, Rogers Covey-Crump, Steven Harrold, Gordon Jones
Consort Eclectus: Laura Vaughan, Laura Moore, Brooke Green, Victoria Watts, Daniel Yeadon, Ruth Wilkinson

— Cathy Upex

CONCERT DIARY

Sydney

25 May 2014, 1500

Marais Project Concert 1: Rameau
Recital Hall West, Sydney Conservatorium,
Macquarie Street, Sydney
Tickets: \$35/20; family ticket \$90 (2 adults + 2 children)
Information: (02) 9809 5185

1 June 2014, 1430

Josie and the Emeralds celebrate Jeanne d'Arc
Blessed Sacrament Church, 59 Bradley's Head Road,
Mosman, Sydney
Information: <http://www.mosmanconcertseries.org.au>

24 August 2014, 1500

Marais Project Concert 2: Collusion
Recital Hall West, Sydney Conservatorium,
Macquarie Street, Sydney
Tickets: \$35/20; family ticket \$90 (2 adults + 2 children)
Information: (02) 9809 5185

Melbourne

6 July 2014, 1415

Convivio: Transfigured Bach
Trinity Uniting Church, 17 Black Street, Brighton
Information: <http://www.earlyartsguild.info/events.html>

3 August 2014, 1415

Cynthia O'Brien and Ruth Wilkinson: Doux
Rossignols
Trinity Uniting Church, 17 Black Street, Brighton

Information: <http://www.earlyartsguild.info/events.html>

7 September 2014, 1830

The Choir of Queen's College with viol consort
presents John Ward's *Prayer is an endless chain* and
consort works by Coprario and Byrd
Chapel of Queen's College, University of Melbourne,
1-17 College Crescent, Parkville
Free
Information: <http://www.queens.unimelb.edu.au>

JOSIE AND THE EMERALDS CONCERT REVIEW

I've wanted to attend a performance by the Emeralds for the last 18 months but their concert dates invariably clashed with other commitments. I'm intrigued with the growing interest in historically informed performance and the increasing appearance of the viol da gamba in ensembles. In fact, a whole family of Viols — treble, bass, tenor and vielle (medieval fiddle, forerunner of the violin) — were strutting their stuff last Sunday in Mosman. For those unfamiliar with a viol, they look like mini cellos with either 6 or 7 strings, and are played on the lap or between the legs using an underhand bowing motion.

Josie Ryan and the Emeralds (with the addition of talented 17 year old Jacques Emery on various sensitively-played percussion instruments and double bass) presented an intriguing program as part of the Mosman Concert Series on Sunday 1 June in Blessed Sacrament Church. This seemed a very fitting location for music celebrating the life of Jeanne d'Arc, with religious iconography and stained glass windows reminding us of the faith that inspired Jeanne's courageous actions in the 15thc. A very appreciative audience was in attendance, including the parents of Dorothy Porter to hear their daughter's poems set to music.

The first half of the program focussed on music from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, from little known composers such as Guillaume Dufay, John Dunstaple, and Josquin des Prez. The one nod to modern times was a piece composed by Brooke Green, ensemble Director, in which she wove together a poem by the medieval mystic Hildegard, a quote from philosopher Heidegger, and a melody of Nick Cave. Josie Ryan and Belinda Montgomery provided the soprano voices throughout and when singing about Jeanne d'Arc, Josie appeared in a

fifteenth century helmet and brandishing a sword, providing a visual image to the music. Ave, Maris Stella by Dufay was simply beautiful and I could imagine Jeanne d'Arc singing this deep prayer of the heart. There was a haunting quality to much of the music which was well supported by the viols played by Brooke Green, Laura Moore, Fiona Ziegler, and Catherine Upex.

The second half of the program presented modern works, including by Elena Kats-Chernin and Arvo Pärt, with a nod back to the Middle Ages in Dufay's Veni, Sancte Spiritus, sung prayerfully and with great tenderness by Ryan and Montgomery. The core of the second half was the poetry of Australian poet Dorothy Porter (1954–2008) set to music by the very talented Brooke Green and sung with clarity, expressiveness and feeling by Josie Ryan. I especially loved Hot Date with Death although sadly the words were not included in the otherwise comprehensive program notes.

The highlight of the concert for me was the very last piece, simply titled If — music by Michael Nyman and text by Roger Pulvers, both having given permission for this piece to be performed. Josie Ryan and Belinda Montgomery sang this so exquisitely that I found myself holding my breath at the sheer delicacy of it. As it ended I just wanted to sit there in a meditative place for a few minutes but the generous and well-deserved applause won out! If you've never thought about medieval or renaissance music, or have considered the viol da gamba a poor cousin to the cello, please reconsider and come to their next concert, and watch for their soon-to-be released CD. You won't be disappointed!

— Marguerite Foxon

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