

Australian Viola da Gamba Society Newsletter

Spring 2014

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WELCOME!

A warm welcome to all members of the Australian Viola da Gamba Society to the Spring 2014 edition of the newsletter. Thanks to contributors to this edition. Apologies for the lateness of this edition, which has been delayed by John's travels in Europe!

—John Weretka and Rhona Lever

CHRISTCHURCH CONSORT WEEKEND

Over Queen's Birthday weekend eighteen viol players met in Christchurch to enjoy playing consorts. This was the second event co-ordinated by Aart Brusse, and Christchurch players located a good venue and excellent caterers. The weather delivered crisp frosts followed by lovely clear sunny days so visitors enjoyed some earthquake tourism in Christchurch under favourable conditions.

The aim was to play some of the five- and six-part repertoire by great composers such as Gibbons, Lawes, Jenkins and Ward. Rhona Lever organised the music and the groups and the expert tutor was Polly Sussex. Music was available to practise beforehand, as it was too difficult for most players to sightread.

For most of the time we played in three groups but we also made two bigger groups to do Purcell's seven-part In Nomine. Some of the more difficult pieces were most successful when we played altogether in one group.

Players came from Dunedin, Wellington, Auckland and Melbourne to join seven players from Christchurch, and all enjoyed very much the opportunity to play this repertoire. Several less experienced players made big gains in confidence and old hands enjoyed the relaxed and friendly group playing without any pressure to reach a performance standard. All were

keen to repeat the event but at present there are no firm plans for the next consort weekend, so watch this space!

— Rhona Lever



Participants at the Christchurch Consort Weekend



Participants at the Christchurch Consort Weekend

REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BAROQUE MUSIC, SALZBURG, 9–13 JULY 2014

This will be a brief report: of the over 200 papers presented at the International Conference on Baroque Music in up to six parallel streams, only two dealt specifically with the viola da gamba. That said, this biennial conference is always stimulating and interesting, even if our instrument is sometimes under-represented. This year there was a very good contingent of our friends and colleagues from Australia and New Zealand, including Patricia Alessi, Georg Corall, Bronwyn Ellis, Sigrid Harris, David Irving, Paul McMahan, Alan Maddox, Samantha Owens, Zoltán Szabó, Peter Walls, Francis Yapp and me.

The first gamba paper was by Pia Pircher, a student at the Mozarteum University in Salzburg, where she studies with Vittorio Ghielmi. She looked into French viol music after the death of Marin Marais, including manuscript sources as well as the better-known prints. She finds an increasing expressivity that parallels the well-known German music of the period and perhaps influenced players such as Hesse and Abel. She also finds that there were many women among the professional players, who are rarely mentioned today.

The other paper on gamba music was mine, entitled 'Melodic, Harmonic and Structural Symbols in the Labyrinths of J. S. Bach and Marin Marais: Who Was the More Cerebral Composer?' The title was a bit naughty and was intended as a hook to get them in. It seems to have worked. I note that several techniques of symbolising the labyrinth are shared between the *Kleines harmonisches Labyrinth*, attributed to Bach as BWV 591, and *Le labyrinthe* from Marais' Book 4. The Marais work is much longer and more complex. I attempt to decode its thematic and harmonic structure, and to map it rather precisely against the famous myth of Ariadne and Theseus. I'm planning to publish this in due course.

The event that gambists might have enjoyed most of all was the concert given by the teaching staff of the Baroque music department of the Mozarteum: Dorothee Oberlinger (recorder), Vittorio Ghielmi (gamba), Luca Pianca, (lute) and Florian Birsak (harpsichord). Dorothee is a performer with a lot of technique, style and personality. For us, the highlight would have been Vittorio's performance of four pieces selected from different suites by Forqueray, culminating in a truly stunning rendition of *La Leclair*. I also had the pleasure of meeting and having breakfast with Vittorio who, like me, is an editor working with Berlin School music, so we had much to rave on about!

The conference was expertly managed in the most warm and friendly way by the Austrian team. Possibly their only mistake was to accept all comers for the delegates'

concert, which then went on for three hours! I organised a group that they put on last, in the hopes of enticing people to stay instead of drifting off to the many wonderful eating houses in Salzburg, so at about 11pm we finally got to play a fine trio by C. P. E. Bach to celebrate his 300th anniversary. The group was rather professorial (not me), and also a lot of fun: David Irving, Peter Walls, Peter Holman and me. Of course I needed a viol, so when the Mozarteum bureaucracy wouldn't let me borrow one of theirs, Vittorio came to the rescue by putting me in touch with one of his students, Shen-ju Chang, who was kind enough to lend me one. She is already a fine player, and I think we will hear more of her.

In 2016, the ICBM is in Canterbury, where it will be organised by Robert Rawson. It's a great conference, scholarly but not boring, and I can thoroughly recommend it!

— Michael O'Loughlin

PERTH VIOL CONSORT

On 12 September, Perth Viol Consort made their debut at the chapel of St George's College at the University of Western Australia. Shaun Ng was joined by Makoto Harris Takao and Andrew Tait on the tenor viol and the great bass viol respectively. The concert, entitled *Music of 1600s: Works for 3 viols*, featured fantasias by William Byrd, Eustache du Caurroy, Orlando Gibbons, Henry Purcell and a choral work by Orlando Lassus. Plans for the next performances in Perth for 2015 are already under way. You can view pictures and more information at shaunng.com.au or 'Like' the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/PerthViolConsort to be informed about future performances.

QUEENSLAND VIOL NEWS

Things are starting to hot up here north of Brisbane. I have four regular viol students now, located in Maleny, Mt Coolum (Sunshine Coast) and two tiny localities north and west of Kilcoy: Yednia and Hazeldean. While none is up to consort standard yet, I have hopes that they'll form a nucleus of viol players for a consort one day. Chris Twidle, whom many of you know, regularly plays bass in a local Maleny recorder consort, so as people see the instrument, knowledge spreads.

I've also been pursuing viol tryouts as a way of spreading the word. Not everything comes off, but I did one successful tryout for CADMA on the Sunshine Coast a couple of months ago, and the Early Music Society of Queensland is about to include viols in some of their early music days coming up.

A tryout at Caloundra Music Academy (also Sunshine Coast) has had to be postponed, but the notices did elicit quite a bit of interest, and we'll be trying to get a group together early next year. Margaret Caley and I have started preparations for an October early music day in Brisbane for AUSTA Qld. This will be string teachers professional development, and I will have viols there ready for all participants to try and some consort music for them to sight read

and marvel at! Margaret and I will join forces with AUSTA Qld current President Dan Holloway on cello to do part of a Buxtehude trio as a demonstration of how viol fits with baroque chamber music of considerable stature. Then I shall whisk Dan away for his second viol tryout in the hope of convincing him to join us. That's my cunning plan (like Baldrick) anyway. I hope to be more successful overall than Baldrick was in Blackadder.

One of my students has a daughter going to a local state high school west of Kilcoy, and the music teachers there are excited about viols and are planning my visit for next term.

Michael O'Loughlin has been teaching Shannon Luk (who started viol with me a couple of years ago), and I'm pleased to announce that after a massive learning curve, Shannon got a very good mark in his mid year recital on bass viol. The viol is now on the radar at the Queensland Conservatorium, who had to add it to their list of eligible instruments after Shannon applied for his postgraduate work last year. So, Queensland viols are growing, instruments are available, and more opportunities are opening up. We're all really looking forward to Easter Viols coming back to Queensland in a couple of years.

— Patrice Connelly
patrice@saraband.com.au

Patrice has been busy lately ...

A whole bunch of new viol editions are available now (or almost ready):

SM89 - J.S. Bach: 19 Chorales arr. for TrTr/TTB viols

SM90 - R. Mico/Anon: Five Fantasias for 2 viols: TrB, TrTr, BB. Alternative arrangements of the 5 pieces included

SM91 - G. Guami: Canzona 6, arr for TrTrTB viols. Great little piece!

SM92 - Easy Baroque duets for treble viols or violins, music by Hook, Mouret, R. Marais, Anon, Purcell, Rameau, Telemann and Turk

SM93 - Renaissance duets for treble viols. Canons, Carminas and songs by Anon, Asola, de Turnhout, Lemlin and Brumel

SM97 - Roger L'Estrange: Divisions for solo bass viol. 4 Virtuosoic sets!

SM98 - Edward Blankes: 6 Fantasias for TrTrT viols. Very Morley-esque! The first was for TrTB but is transposed so all 6 can be played by the one combination. Score and parts for all above. Call today.

The New Saraband Book!!!

A Tempest in a Glass of Water. Gordon J. Kinney's translations of French Renaissance & Baroque viol treatises. Kinney died in 1981, leaving an enormous body of work, particularly translations of De Machy, Danoville, DuBuisson, Jambe de Fer, Trichet, Loulie, M & R Marais and more. One of Kinney's articles included. \$33



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COURSES AND EVENTS FOR TRAVELLERS OVERSEAS

3-5 October

Viol Consort Playing Weekend

Where: Alston Hall, Lancashire, England

Tutor: Elizabeth Dodd

Focus on Ward, Jenkins and Lupo

Information: alstonhall.general12@lancashire.gov.uk

23-27 October

Viols in a Desert Oasis

Where: Esplendor Resort, Rio Rico, Arizona, United States

Tutors: Mary Springfels (artistic director), Jack Ashworth, Julie Jeffrey, Lawrence Lipnik, David Morris

Early morning classes will concentrate on warm-up and technique. Later classes will explore consort music for viols from the 'New' and 'Old' world, while the evening sessions will feature relaxed consort playing with faculty joining in. The workshop will also include sessions for viols and voices, a lecture about Renaissance music in the New World and a faculty concert.

Information: www.Vdgs-SAZ.org

7-9 November

Rondo Viol Academy course for intermediate and upper intermediate viol players

Tutors: Alison Kinder and Jacqui Robertson-Wade

Information: www.rondoviolaacademy.co.uk

13-15 November

Royal Greenwich International Early Music Festival

Where: Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, London, England

Exhibitions, masterclasses, concerts, demonstrations

Information: <http://www.earlymusicshop.com>

CONCERT DIARY

Sydney

22 November 2014, 1600

Josie and the Emeralds: St Cecilia 2014

Glebe Town Hall, 170 St Johns Rd, Glebe

\$35 and \$25 concession, available at the door and through Glebe Music Society www.glebemusicfestival.com

Melbourne

15 March 2015, 1830

The Choir of Queen's College and the Queen's Viols

Queen's College Chapel, Queen's College, University of Melbourne

Sunday Chapel service includes a performance of Buxtehude's *Vulnerasti cor meum* and works for viol consort

Free

29 March 2015, 1830

The Choir of Queen's College and the Queen's Viols

Queen's College Chapel, Queen's College, University of Melbourne

Sunday Chapel service includes a performance of Pachelbel's cantata, *Meine Sünde betrüben mich* and works for viol consort

Free

VIOLA DA GAMBA SOCIETY OF AMERICA
52ND CONCLAVE, 2014

Miami University, Ohio July 27-August 3

This conclave was a smaller more intimate workshop than the previous 50th anniversary one that we attended two years ago.

This time we opted for just one tutored session each day and the rest of the time we joined the Seasoned Players. This was a group of very experienced players so it was a wonderful opportunity to play with violists who know the consort repertoire inside out.

We split up each session into groups of five or six depending on what instruments were available, so we got to play with a wide variety of experienced players. We were dubbed the Couch Consort because we were relaxed about starting each session, waiting to see who out of our pool of players was coming.

The Conclave was studded with mini, or micro lunchtime concerts, supertime concerts, evening concerts, student groups performing and groups playing at the final dinner as well as the main concert put on by the Faculty. The stand-out micro concert for me was Tina Chancey and Annalisa Pappano playing pardessus duets.

The classes at Conclave remained the same over the whole week and my one class was a Lawes class with Sarah Cunningham. It was an exciting class to be in as Sarah is an inspirational tutor and our group really came together well by the end of the week and we had fun playing at the final dinner.

As usual at conclaves there was as much or as little impromptu evening playing as your constitution would allow, a fundraising auction which is an event in itself, music stalls, instrument stalls, and viol repairers on tap.

It was a great conclave, catching up with friends from previous conclaves, wonderful playing and fantastic concerts. We plan to go again in two years time.

We capped this off with much tripping around the States, starting with Kauai (Hawaii) and Palo Alto before the conclave. Then after our violing, we visited Rebecca Humphrey-Diederich and her husband Tom (who many of you know from their four years here), went birding on the Arizona/Mexican border and

explored the beauties of the Bryce Canyon area.

— Lyn Hawkins

REVIEW OF MARAIS PROJECT CONCERT

2014 marks the fifteenth anniversary of the commencement of The Marais Project. This institution, in which viola da gambist Jennifer Eriksson with her contemporaries in early music performance set out to perform the entire oeuvre of Marin Marais, has already performed eighty-five per cent of Marais' total output.

The last fifteen years of the Marais Project have put a very pleasurable focus on the agility and sonority of the viola da gamba as well as early music concert programming.

This latest exciting concert in the anniversary year series, titled Re-Imaginings, was an undertaking attractive to a broad range of audiences, while building a solid bridge between early music and modern musical styles.

Central to the excitement of the afternoon was the use of Eriksson's new electric viola da gamba. This instrument is bowed standing around its fixed support with an amplified, heightened fullness of resonance.

Five pieces with electric gamba, bass, piano as well as also saxophone provided distinctive ensemble sonorities. The combination blended the increased speaking quality of the electric gamba with new works and new arrangements influenced by ambient, blues and jazz styles.

In this way, the concert gently and seamlessly guided the audience from the traditionalism of Marais' *Suite* in E minor (1725) to world premiere works employing both eighteenth-century technologies and those exploiting the latest options from our own time.

One of many highlights was the fifth book of Marais' *Pièces de viole*, played with elegant variety of gesture and which included a particularly expressive sarabande by Jennifer Eriksson with Raymond Harvey on harpsichord. Composer and wind player Paul Cutlan provided an innovative and insightful work to be played on the acoustic viola da gamba with harpsichord.

Pianist Matt McMahon brought us his unique keyboard atmospheres in his semi-improvised solo *Country and*. Layered textured and delicate interplay celebrated the new possibilities of the electric gamba while not forgetting traditional gestures.

New works *At Carna* and *For Thomas Wyatt* showcased these qualities and recent compositional freedoms as well. They were penetrating and compact soundscapes.

The skill of McMahon as a composer and arranger nursed the newness of the electric gamba through a very swift and confident 'childhood' in this concert. The instrument communicated easily within a modern group. The popular eighteenth-century viol morphed super-smoothly before our eyes into a gig ensemble instrument where descriptive music and eclectic programming took priority rather than old-fashioned fixations with instrumentation, historical exclusivity and limited preconceptions of compositional goals.

Also excellent in this program was the bass playing and composition from Eriksson's son, Siebe Pogson. To comment that Siebe Pogson is a 'feel' player is a great understatement. His intelligent, well-nuanced work on this instrument instantly pleased the ear and anchored each ensemble with interest. *Dark Dreaming*, Pogson's new work for piano, electric gamba and electric bass, was a clever and effective exploration of the new tone colours and timbres at hand.

In Eriksson's hands the acoustic or electric viola da gamba was never out of place in this concert. Nor did it lose one fragment of its character from the divisions and cadence the Marais Project has exposed us to thus far.

This concert was performed at the Recital Hall West at the Sydney Conservatorium on Sunday 26 October, for one day only. For more about The Marais Project : Re-Imaginings, visit www.themaraisproject.com.au

— Paul Nolan

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