

Australian Viola da Gamba Society Newsletter

Spring 2015

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WELCOME!

A warm welcome to all members of the Australian Viola da Gamba Society to the Spring 2015 edition of the newsletter. Thanks to contributors to this edition.

This edition features articles on workshops at Amherst and Schloss Seehaus, information on the Viol School in 2016, viols in Adelaide, Wellington and at Presbyterian Ladies' College and an exploration of Jenny Eriksson's electric gamba and the role it plays in her new group, the band *Elysian Fields*.

Please think of the ways you can contribute to the newsletter, especially if you have been overseas to a workshop. Send any material to Patrice (patrice@saraband.com.au).

—John Weretka and Patrice Connelly

CD FOR REVIEW

Jenny Eriksson has kindly made available a copy of her new CD, *Smorgasbord: Music from Sweden* for review in this newsletter. Lots of fantastic music from the 'art music' and folk traditions of Sweden.

If you have the time and interest to review it, please drop John a line (john.weretka@gmail.com).

LOW INSTRUMENTS AT SCHLOSS SEEHAUS

...let the bass boom and be heard by all... who would want to disturb such joy and fun?...

Under the motto of this anonymous eighteenth-century quote (found in an engraving from Wolfenbüttel), an unusual and stimulating five-day course for low, fretted bass instruments ('Tiefe Bundinstrumente') took place in August at the beautiful and atmospheric Schloss Seehaus, south of Würzburg, Germany.

Fourteen participants in all were involved, mostly music students and young professionals, in this unique look at the relationship and functions of viol, bass and contra-bass instruments in the music of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The palate of instruments involved ranged from the standard gamba consort (with an emphasis on the bass viol), through the violone in A and G as well as the 'Wiener' tuning in F and the violono grosso in D. The course allowed for, and indeed encouraged, much discussion of and experimentation with these various tunings and instruments as well as many other theoretical aspects of the lower compass in early music.

The instructors for the course were Johannes Weiss (chamber music), Heidi Gröger (viola da gamba) and Dane Roberts (violone/double bass). They, and all involved, were strengthened and motivated by the masterful cooking and cuisine coordination of Brian Gillard. The excellent weather allowed often for eating and drinking in the beautiful garden of the Schloss between the various shifts of music making on these long and intensive days.

As well as individual instruction, chamber music

was highly emphasized. In particular the music of the stylus phantasticus composers August Kühnel, Johann Michael Nicolai etc. was highlighted and proved very well suited for the instruments available.

The course ended with a well-attended concert in the 'Musiksaal' of the Schloss involving most of the course participants and giving a good overview of the pieces studied during the week. Of particular note was the opening piece of the concert, a 'canzon' from Hentschel for eight (!) bass instruments.

— Heidi Gröger

(Editor's note: I attempted to find out from Heidi whether this course was to be offered on an ongoing basis, but she had not replied at the time of going to print. I would advise anyone interested in this course to email Heidi directly at <info@heidigroeger.de> for further information. The photos from the course, below, are courtesy of Heidi Gröger)



SAVE THE DATE — 2016 EASTER VIOL SCHOOL

The 2016 Easter Viol School 'Broken consorts' will run from Friday 25th - Monday 28th March at Canterbury Girls Secondary College (Melbourne, Victoria).

The leadership group for the school is:

Laura Moore (musical director)

Wendy Gillespie (international tutor)

Tutors: Laura Vaughan, Ruth Wilkinson (viols), Simon Rickard (bassoon), Matthew Manchester (cornetto), Anna Sandstrom (soprano).

The 2016 school will celebrate the viol's prominent eras in ways similar to those in which it would have been played at the time. Through the combination of different instrumentation, this weekend will explore different styles from the dances of Praetorius to the sublime madrigals of Dowland.

The workshop will cater for all standard players, including a beginner's scholarship program. This program will be aimed at proficient string players with little to no viol playing experience.

Enrolment forms and application forms will be available from late November, and we encourage any queries or suggestions to be sent to Laura Moore (laura.moore393@gmail.com)

AMHERST

In July I attended two weeks of the Amherst Early Music Festival at Connecticut College in New London. The Festival is both a summer school of music workshops for amateurs and aspiring professionals, and a series of concerts by faculty and students open to the local community.

This year the organizers excelled themselves with the program for viola da gamba. For the first week, they invited the viol celebrity (and really nice guy) Paolo Pandolfo as tutor. For the second week, they ran the 'Viol Excelsior!' program, designed and team-taught by Julie Elhard and John Mark Rozendaal.

It was a tremendous privilege for this amateur viol player to be exposed to the musical genius of Paolo Pandolfo for 2-3 sessions a day. I audited the first session of the day, the masterclass, where advanced students played Marais, Sainte Colombe, and Bach. Paolo Pandolfo is a lively teacher, inspiring both students playing and those listening. From time to time he took up a bass viol, strumming it like a

guitar, and added the continuo line. Seeing musical intelligence and creativity at work close up in an informal way outside the recital performance was a tremendous privilege. Pandolfo also tutored a technique class for everyone, and some consort classes in the afternoon. His solo concert, *L'Aria del Granduca*, at night was both brilliant musically, and a physical tour de force. Pandolfo played from the solo viol repertoire of Abel, J.S. Bach, Sainte-Colombe, Hume and Ortiz, finishing with his own compositions and improvisations. The concert lasted for over an hour and a half.



In the second week, the Viol Excelsior program aimed high, at the program says, in 'getting students to grow as musicians'. Both Julie Elhard and John Mark Rozendaal have extensive knowledge of viol pedagogy and long experience of working with amateurs to get the best out of them. For some classes we worked from John Mark's Viol Dojo books, getting a glimpse of his techniques to teach rhythmically tricky pieces from the beginning of his method. Julie Elhard generously showered us with useful technical exercises. I found her scale plus one exercise simple and effective. When I explained to John Mark that I had great difficulty getting one particular note on the viol ever to sound right, his reply was to 'Think of it as a spiritual exercise,' That worked. Whenever I had to play that note, I was terrified it would come out as somehow unspiritual. The sound improved.

Viol workshops are notoriously tricky things both for those who arrange and tutor them, and for the participants. Participants come with varying abilities and often very different goals about what they want. I come to be surprised by something entirely new and different, and, because, I play in groups at home,

I am not so concerned about playing consort music most of the time. Others get little chance to play in a group at home, and want less talking, more playing. It's never going to work out perfectly for everyone. I came home this year from the Amherst experience enthused from enjoyable music, with lots of practical (and spiritual) ideas about how to become a better player.

— *Rosaleen Love*

COURSES AND EVENTS FOR TRAVELLERS OVERSEAS

Please note that this is only a selection of courses which include classes for viol players. You can find more information at <http://vdgsa.org/> and <http://www.vdgs.org.uk/>

20-22 November

Consorting viols (2-night option)
Tutors: Alison Crum, Roy Marks, Ibi Aziz, Peter Wendland
Information: Benslow Music, <http://benslowmusic.org>

20-23 November

Consorting viols (3-night option)
Tutors: Alison Crum, Roy Marks, Ibi Aziz, Peter Wendland
Information: Benslow Music, <http://benslowmusic.org>

VIOLS IN WELLINGTON

There has been quite a lot of activity in Wellington over the last few years. Lisa Beech, a viola player (along with many other instruments) rediscovered her love of viol music and began playing treble viol with Robert Oliver playing bass, and his wife Andrea, a former oboist who has taken up the tenor viol. They were joined by Jane Brown, a 'cellist who had played the viol while a student at the Royal College in London, and who plays mostly tenor. For a while, Sue Alexander played tenor making five parts for a concert in November 2014, joined by Pepe Becker, soprano, singing some consort songs. This year, the group has been joined by Sophie Acheson, a viola player who had experience playing viol while studying viola in the USA, and as a five-part group, gave a well-received recent lunchtime concert in Wellington. They are planning a further concert on St Cecilia's Day of music by Jenkins and Dering,

with Pepe Becker, soprano, singing Gibbons consort songs.

Another group, more amateur in its makeup, includes Diana Barnes playing treble, Alan Clayton playing bass, Andrea Oliver playing tenor, with Robert teaching and playing whichever instrument is needed to make up a quartet.

Alan makes instruments. His first was the 7-string bass he plays, and the treble Diana plays. He has also made two tenors, and is currently working on an alto and another treble.

— *Robert Oliver*

For many years, there were fairly regular consort-playing sessions held in Wellington city involving the following players:

Mark Moorhouse (treble)
Linley Rose (treble or tenor)
Sue Alexander (usually tenor but sometimes treble or bass)
Kevin Wilkinson (usually tenor but also treble or bass as required)
Marian Minson (bass)

Since 2003, both Kevin and Linley have been living in the Wairarapa. The playing has continued but the venue has changed. Kevin and Marian share the hosting duties and the usual pattern is two or three sessions in Greytown with the three Wellington city players enjoying a day in the country, followed by a session in Wellington with the two country folk enjoying a visit to the big smoke. Itinerant players occasionally join us and are always welcome.

— *Kevin Wilkinson*

NEWS FROM SARABAND MUSIC

I've just returned from Adelaide, where I was selling at the Australian Society for Music Education (ASME) Conference recently. Apart from the paper I presented on music and health, I missed almost all of the other talks except for Richard Gill's keynote speech. As usual, it didn't disappoint. He began with 'I'm going to get political.' He did. Criticism of NAPLAN, the way music teachers are generally considered and (under)paid for their work, and their level of autonomy were all covered, along with his deploring of lumping music under 'The Arts' in the National Curriculum, a move he has been fighting vigorously. As he said, the listening, spatial and many other skills that music develops in small children are underpinning skills for drama and many other disciplines.

But the most interesting was his proposal that ASME become an umbrella organisation for corporate membership to create a very large voting membership. He suggested that ASME create a membership for other organisations – large and small – to join so that when it comes to elections and budgets, ministers are listening not to one or two organisations or individuals, but the Australian music industry as a whole. In no way would it affect how each organisation runs. All that has to have something to recommend it in my opinion, and may have other benefits as yet unforeseen.

After ASME, I spent a wonderful Saturday running a workshop for AUSTA SA. There is no early music society in South Australia. There used to be, but it was shut down in the 80s, and now there's a recorder society, but no central focus for early music. I've been talking to a lot of people about setting up another early music society.

But back to viols. I ran an intro to viol day for some lovely people. There are fewer than few viol players currently in Adelaide, but great enthusiasm from the participants, with one already deciding to buy one of the bass viols I have for sale.

Baroque violinist/violist Agnes Weinstein is the AUSTA SA Secretary, and she was a fantastic organiser. I had great trouble getting enough instruments for the group to try, and was resigned to only having one or two, when she teamed up with Lynton Rivers, a recorder teacher at the Con and in a dawn ram-raid, they discovered a room full of very

good viols which had been forgotten, including two by Michael Heale. Even the Head of Strings had no idea they existed. With a few string replacements and some disparaging remarks about the state of the bows, we sallied forth with two trebles, a tenor and a bass to add to the other few viols from local players. The workshop ran from 10 – 4, but we could have gone on for a few hours longer. The enthusiasm was there. So, Adelaide has a new bass viol player-elect, and another very good cellist who is going to borrow one of the Con's viols until she can buy a viol. Two of the four local players were there and getting phone numbers for future reference, and I'm still hoping Agnes can also find time to take up one of the Con's trebles. I had a ball!

So I'm home again, and while I've lost count, I think I've just published my 200th music edition. Recent editions include Clair-Nicolas Roget's *6 Sonatas*, Op. 1 (1739) which I've done in the original treble clef edition for violins, flutes, oboes etc., a transposition for two violas, and another transposition for two bass viols. I followed that with *Five Ricercari* (1577) by Cristofano Malvezzi for four viols, and have just completed my *Intermediate Consorts in three parts*, which is the first of a series to follow my *Easy Consorts* series from some years ago.

I'm always interested in what people want from Saraband Music, so if you have bright ideas, please let me know. That could be running workshops and teaching, editions to fill a need, products that you can't find or other topics.

The new Saraband website is JUST loaded. The new website is mobile-friendly, and it was a massive job for Tony, who started it in July. Look for new pages, improved galleries and more printer-friendly listings as well as the new design.

So, as Saraband Music's 20th year is coming to a close, loads of things are happening, and the business comes of age next year. I'm looking forward hearing from you and working on much more in 2016.

— Patrice Connelly
Saraband Music – 07 5496 3439
www.saraband.com.au
patrice@saraband.com.au

VIOLS AT PRESBYTERIAN LADIES' COLLEGE — END OF AN ERA

The viol programme at Presbyterian Ladies College is an aspect of my teaching life that I have greatly enjoyed. As a result of my time at PLC, the viol has become a well-known quantity in both the Junior and Senior Schools. This is a timely point for me to reminisce as I have just passed the programme over into the capable hands of John Weretka.

Numbers have fluctuated from four to ten students, with many carrying through from the Junior School and continuing until Year 12. In one instance, a student who began in Year 7 has just completed the Diploma of Music at the University of Melbourne. The girls have a half hour lesson and meet once a week for viol ensemble during lunchtime. I am indebted to Patrice Connelly for her *Easy Viol Consort Series* that has been enjoyed by all. PLC is fortunate to own a variety of viols, some made by the late Peter Kempster, others by Paul Cavell and four German viols from the early part of the last century.

Highlights have included playing a variety of concerts with PLC choirs and giving demonstrations in school assemblies and classrooms. We have played in International Week to the whole school at which the viol players chose pieces and songs

from their own cultural backgrounds and, in some instances, arranged the music for voices and viols. We also played regularly for the dancers in the yearly Elizabethan Festival, sadly now discontinued, and appeared at a recent AUSTA Conference in Melbourne, creating considerable interest.

Thanks to Grahame Strahle, the programmes that I founded in the '80s at North Adelaide Primary School and Marryatville High School are still alive and well.

Long live the viol in the hands of youth!

— *Miriam Morris*

More new viol music is here ...

SM108-109 Clair-Nicolas Roget: 6 Sonatas, op. 1 (1739) in 2 volumes, transposed for 2 bass viols. 2 scores \$36.30 per book. The original was for flute/violin/oboe or pardessus de viole, and is also available (SM104-105) for \$26.40 per book (single score only). There's even a viola transposition (SM106-107), single score.

SM110 Cristofano Malvezzi: Five Ricercari (1577) for TrTTB / TrTBB viols. \$39.60 Score & parts. Some very satisfying 16th century Italian polyphony for you.

SM111 Intermediate consorts in 3 parts \$30. Score & parts. The first of a follow-on series to my Easy Consorts which have sold well. Locke, Lupo, Ferrabosco etc.

SM112 & 113 Intermediate consorts in 4 parts. \$33 per volume. Score & parts. Some great dances, an In nomine or two, madrigals and some polyphony.

Coming soon:

Intermediate consorts in 5 parts, some Purcell, and more consorts.

French Viol treatises translated

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

Saraband Music is now a local agent for **Charlie Ogle's viols**. Made in the Beijing workshop, they're quality viols at a good price. More on my website.

Saraband Music www.saraband.com.au



SARABAND
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Lots more Saraband Music viol editions available including many exciting solos, duos and consort editions. Plenty of viol music, consorts, voices and viols, and viol-related chamber music from other publishers, plus gut strings, rosins and now, affordable baroque bows for all sizes of viols, violins, violas & cellos.

See the website for sample pages, extensive catalogues, articles and free download viol pieces. Contact: 07 5496 3439 or patrice@saraband.com.au

BASS BOW FOR SALE

Bass bow by Solange Chivas, total length 80cm, weight c. 80g, white hair, excellent condition. \$900. Contact John Weretka, 0400909874 or john.weretka@gmail.com

BASS VIOL FOR SALE

Bass viol six string, in good condition
Made by Ronald Prentice 1969 String length 63 cms (suit small hand)
Includes bass bow by Mettal and soft case. Price \$5000 or nearest offer
Enquiries: Sarah King (03) 52217115
email - sarah.king38@gmail.com

JENNY ERIKSSON'S ELECTRIC GAMBA!

It's not often that a totally new instrument enters the Sydney improvised music scene but in what is believed to be a local and a national first, Jenny Eriksson is proud to announce the launch of *Elysian Fields*, a band featuring the electric viola da gamba. Eriksson is widely recognised as one of Australia's leading acoustic viola da gambists – a seven-string, bowed instrument with frets - and one of her instrument's great risk-takers. She has collaborated with jazz and world music artists for many years alongside, and as a part of, her highly regarded classical chamber music performances.

Taking up the electric viola da gamba is a move she has long contemplated. 'A few years ago a Dutch instrument maker, who is also a gamba player, starting work on an electric viola da gamba. I listened to it on-line and struck up a conversation with him for some months before ordering one. I then had to learn to play it', Eriksson related. 'It's a very different instrument from my acoustic gamba of course and up to then I'd had very limited experience working with amplification. But I now have a set up I am very happy with, particularly in regard to the sound I make, which is very important to me.' But why the new band? 'Baroque music, which is my main area of expertise, has a tradition of improvisation', says Eriksson, 'And I've always loved jazz and have many good friends who are jazz and world music artists. I just feel I am at the stage of life that I am ready now to give this a go.'

Her past collaborators include Kevin Hunt, Llew and Mara Kiek and Steve Elphick from the *Mara!* band, horn player and composer, Paul Cutlan, Matt

McMahon, Matt Keegan and her son, Siebe Pogson, who is bassist in the band. In 2014 Jenny even appeared with the Matt Keegan Band at a SIMA gig! 'I was somewhat terrified being up there with Matt K's wonderful band,' Eriksson recalled, 'but they were very encouraging and Matt wrote me some great lines. When I got home I needed a large glass of wine to calm my nerves!'

The set list for *Elysian Fields* has built up over time with new works from Matt McMahon, Siebe Pogson, Eriksson herself and a major new piece by Matt Keegan which will be premiered at the band's launch on November 25 at Foundry 616. Arrangements of charts by local artists Guy Strazz and Steve Hunter also feature along with a ballad by legendary Swedish jazz/fusion guitarist, Mats Norrefalk, that Eriksson and her son Siebe discovered on a recent trip to Sweden. 'My grandfather was Swedish and on this visit I found that Norrefalk is my cousin's brother-in-law. She introduced me to one of Mats' songs called *Southern Cross* which he wrote while doing his national service on a Swedish naval ship in the Southern Hemisphere. I knew as soon as I heard it that it would work on the electric gamba and Mats kindly sent me the chart.'

How did the band get its name? 'I was arranging a piece for electric gamba while visiting my sister-in-law's north coast property which is called *Elysian Fields*. I love the property and the name so I called both the arrangement and the band after her place! A final comment? 'Thanks to Peter R and Foundry 616 for giving us a chance to play this fantastic music!'

— Jenny Eriksson and Philip Pogson

MINKOFF FACSIMILIES

For those of us who play bowed and fretted stringed instruments of the Baroque, Minkoff Facsimiles have been for some time an extremely valuable resource. These publications have gone through their troubles, and — if memory serves correctly — the family administering Minkoff went bankrupt and, for what has now been a long time, the publications have been almost entirely unobtainable. The publications ended up being placed in storage.

Dr Joachim Lüdtke, based in Fürth, Germany, has recently brought to my attention that he is in a position to offer the remaining publications for sale. Below is a list of the publications available for the viol family and for the pardessus. These may be of interest to members.

On the following page is a PDF announcement of the sale. The PDF can also be used as an order form if you wish to order the publications.

BARRIÈRE, Jean (1705 – 1747) *Sonates pour le pardessus de viole avec la basse continue*. [...] *Livre Ve*. (after 1740), Facsimile, Geneva 1986. € 17,70

BOISMORTIER, J.B. Bodin de (1691 – 1755) *Sonates à deux violes, Œuvre dixième*. Paris 1725, Facsimile, Geneva 1986. € 17,70

BOISMORTIER, J.B. Bodin de (1691 – 1755) *Œuvre soixante-unième contenant VI sonates pour le pardessus de viole avec la basse*. 1736, Facsimile (Introduction in French and in English by Hazelle Miloradovitch) Geneva 1996. € 17,70

COUPERIN, François (1668 – 1733): *Pièces de violes avec la basse chiffrée*. Paris 1728, Facsimile, Geneva 1986. 2 vols. (Gamba and Bass) € 22,10

DANOVILLE (17th century): *L'art de toucher le dessus et basse de viole*. 1687, Facsimile, Geneva 1986. € 13,30

FORQUERAY, Antoine (1672 – 1745) *Pièces de viole avec la basse continue. Livre Ier*. Paris 1747, Facsimile, Geneva 1976. € 17,70

HUGARD, Pierre (18th century) *La toilette. Pièces nouvelles pour le pardessus de viole à cinq cordes* [...] *Gravées par Mlle. Vendôme*. Paris c. 1760, Facsimile, Geneva 1984. € 13,30

LENDORMY, N.-G. (18th century) *Premier [-second] livre de pièces pour le pardessus de viole ou le violon à cinq cordes avec la basse*. c. 1760, Facsimile, Geneva

1984 € 13,30

MARC, Thomas (fl. 1720 – 1735) *Suite de pièces de dessus et de pardessus de viole et trois sonates avec les basses-continüe, qui se peuvent joüer sur la viole, la flûte traversière et autres instruments*. Paris 1724, Facsimile, Geneva 1987 € 22,10

NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

Concerto for Viola da Gamba

Berlin-based composer Flint Juventino Beppe recently brought to my attention his new concerto for viola da gamba:

'I have been living in Berlin since 2013. I am a member of Deutscher Komponistenverband. I take the liberty to contact you regarding a new work for viola da gamba. I have a special relationship to this instrument, being very fascinated by its unique sound characteristics. I am happy to contribute to expanding the repertoire for this instrument. I have written *Remote Galaxy* Op.81, a symphonic poem for solo viola da gamba and large symphony orchestra. This work is featured on the Grammy-nominated album *Remote Galaxy*, performed by Ralph Rousseau (viola da gamba) and Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy. Here is a link to the work page, which includes a full-length performance of *Remote Galaxy* Op.81 <<http://fjbfingerprint.com/publishing/remotegalaxy81.html>> On this page, a solo piece for viola da gamba *Lying on a Ledge* Op.29b is also featured.'

We might seek an interview with Flint in coming editions of the newsletter.

Brooke Green's new publication with PRB

PRB has recently published Brooke Green's settings of seven poems by Dorothy Porter for four/five-part viol consort and soprano. For further information, see <http://www.prbmusic.com/item215494.ctlg>

Baroque Music for Viola da Gamba in Facsimile

Publications of Éditions Minkoff Special Prices

PIECES
DE VIOLES
AVEC LA BASSE CHIFFRÉE
PAR M.^R F. C.
Se Vend en blanc 6^{tt}
Gravé par L. Ruc
A PARIS .
Chez } *Le Sieur Boivin rue S.^t Honoré* } 1728
 } *a La Règle d'Or.* }
 } *AVEC PRIVILEGE DU ROY.* }

PIECES DE VIOLES 11.

2^{me} Suite
Prelude



Couperin, *Pièces de violes avec la basse chiffrée*: Title page and Gamba part of the second suite's Prelude.

The facsimiles of Couperin's *Pièces de violes*, Paris 1728, and of other prints with music from the French Baroque for Gamba instruments (see p. 2) can be offered in limited numbers and at favorable prices. Send orders to:

Dr. Joachim Luedtke, Lektorat & Korrektorat, Blumenstrasse 20, D-90762 Fuerth, Germany. E-Mail: Jo.Luedtke@t-online.de Tel.: ++49 +911 / 976 45 20



AN INTERVIEW WITH MATT MCMAHON

When nationally renowned viola da gambist Jenny Eriksson formed Australia's first electric viola da gamba band, *Elysian Fields*, she had one pianist in mind: Matt McMahon. Jenny and Matt's friendship had developed for several years at jazz gigs. In 2014 their relationship culminated in her inviting him to write for, and appear with, her chamber music ensemble, *The Marais Project*. Matt wrote and arranged several new works for electric viola da gamba for that initial collaboration that have now entered *Elysian Field's* set list.

Philip Pogson: Matt, you always seem to 'turn up' in interesting musical situations, whether it be working with oud player Joseph Tawadros, creating a jazz homage to Peter Sculthorpe or any number of inspired collaborations. How did you come to work with Jenny Eriksson?

Matt McMahon: I've known Jenny as a jazz fan as well (as a wonderful musician in her own field) and seen her at various jazz gigs I've done - with Steve

Hunter or Vince Jones for example. Jenny asked if I would be interested in composing for the electric viola da gamba and I thought it would be a great challenge.

Philip: You and Jenny have been exploring the very new tone world of the electric viola da gamba. How would you describe the music you have written for her?

Matt: I've brought my influences and history to this project. I grew up with a love of traditional Irish music in my family and this reveals itself sometimes in my composing. I have my background in jazz of course too. Composing for the electric viola da gamba opens possibilities for the use of piano rather than theorbo (bass lute) or harpsichord because of the gamba's extra projection. This allows for some pieces that take the gamba out of its more expected setting. I've really tried to compose music that makes use of the natural qualities of the instrument but with a different sound world as its frame.

Philip: You've also arranged some tracks from one

of your previous CDs and a gorgeous ballad by legendary Australian bass guitarist, Steve Hunter, who you also play with. Can you give a brief overview of your arrangements?

Matt: Guy Strazz's piece *Zawi* is a tribute to keyboardist Joe Zawinul. It is a lyrical reflective piece - perfect for the gamba I've really tried to showcase the melody and let it be the focus with a little shading here and there. Steve Hunter's piece contains a lot of rich jazz harmony and I've tried to accentuate the harmony in this piece, creating a sound that is quite new for the gamba I think. I have to say though these processes are intuitive and I don't really have an agenda beyond making music that appeals to me from moment to moment: an improviser's approach I guess.

Philip: As with a number of Australian jazz musicians, you've formally studied composition. In your case, with no less than Peter Sculthorpe. How does the interplay work between classical music, which is almost always fully notated and jazz, which tends to be far less written down?

Matt: The improvised part of jazz performance has important throughout its history but there have always been composers who wrote fully or

mostly notated music while still trying to capture a 'spontaneous quality' as Bill Evans calls it. When I'm composing I try to start from a position of no rules or stylistic boundaries and just create something that appeals to me and utilises the sonic options in front of me. Each piece becomes like a mini-genre that has its own parameters - ones that reveal themselves as the work takes shape. I try to leave the work alone without imposing expectations on what it might be.

Philip: What do you hope audiences will take away from *Elysian Fields*?

Matt: I hope they hear the sound of the viola da gamba presented in a fresh way, with a unique instrumentation, but one which is natural. The use of the electric gamba opens up some possibilities which I've exploited in these works. I've tried to compose and arrange music which is direct and to the point and clear. I've enjoyed composing melodic lines for the gamba and I feel personally close to these pieces. I find myself humming them around the house and I hope other people enjoy these quite intimate works.

— Philip Pogson



**ELYSIAN
FIELDS**

**WED 25
NOV** **FOUNDRY616**
616 HARRIS ST ULTIMO

\$20 FULL / \$15 CONC

JENNY ERIKSSON ELECTRIC VIOLA DA GAMBA
MATT MCMAHON PIANO
MATT KEEGAN SAXOPHONES
SIEBE POGSON ELECTRIC BASS
FINN RYAN DRUMS
WITH GUESTS STEVE ELPHICK BASS
& SARAH BELKNER VOCALS

8.30PM TO 11.00PM

CONCERT DIARY

Sydney

22 November 2015, 1600

St Cecilia 2015

Glebe Town Hall, 160 St John's Road, Glebe, Sydney

Josie and the Emeralds Brooke Green (dir.), Laura Moore, Fiona Ziegler, Catherine Upex, Imogen Granwall (viols), Nicole Johnson, (marimba), Jacques Emery (double bass and percussion)

Tickets: \$35/\$25 at the door

25 November 2015, 2030

Elysian Fields

Foundry 616, 616 Harris Street, Ultimo, Sydney

Elysian Fields' debut concert – Jenny Eriksson, Matt McMahon, Matt Keegan, Siebe Pogson, Finn Ryan and guests

Tickets: \$20/\$15

Information: foundry616.com.au

Melbourne

28 and 29 November 2015

Newman College Advent Festival

Newman College, University of Melbourne

Largely focussed on plainchant, there is also plenty of French Baroque music and one event featuring Laura Vaughan playing bass viol and lirone

Information: newman.unimelb.edu.au/calendar-events-and-alumni/2015-advent-festival-event-details



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