



**2026 AUSTRALIAN VIOLA DA GAMBA SOCIETY ANNUAL VIOL SCHOOL
SEMPER DOWLAND - Celebrating 400 years since John Dowland's death.**

Saturday 7 to Monday 9, March 2026

The 2026 AVdGS annual viol school will be held in the beautiful bush setting of the Castlemaine Steiner School on Djaara country. Viol players of all levels, including beginners, are welcome.

Our theme is the music of John Dowland, one of England's most expressive and influential composers.

Across the weekend we will explore Dowland's world of songs and consort music.

But don't fret - we will still save time to indulge in our beloved fantasias!

TUTORS

LAURA MOORE – *Artistic Director 2026* – is a baroque cello and viola da gamba player based in Melbourne, Australia.

In 2010, Laura completed her Bachelor of Music Performance (Cello) at the Victorian College of the Arts under the direction of Josephine Vains. During this time, she also studied viola da gamba with Miriam Morris. Since then, Laura has participated in lessons and masterclasses with experts such as Wieland Kuijken, Paolo Pandolfo, Les Voix Humaine, Jordi Savall and Vittorio Ghielmi. Laura is a member of Consortium and has made guest appearances with The Australian Chamber Orchestra, Ironwood Chamber Ensemble, Latitude 37, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Camerata Antica, The Orchestra of Antipodes, and numerous other early music ensembles. She has participated in many ABC recordings with ensembles such as Consort Eclectus, Josie and the Emeralds, and Latitude 37. Laura is a passionate music educator, working as a classroom and instrumental specialist. She has also worked with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra as a workshop leader to classroom and instrumental music teachers.

RUTH WILKINSON – Ruth's love of early music began during her studies at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Switzerland, where she was inspired by two remarkable teachers: Hans Martin Linde, with whom she studied recorder, and Jordi Savall, who introduced her to the rich world of the viola da gamba. Her first lessons with Savall were on the violone, before she happily expanded her playing to include bass and tenor viols. Ruth was part of the newly formed Schola Baroque Orchestra, directed by Dutch violinist Jaap Schroeder. After returning to Australia, she soon found herself in demand as a violone player, performing with many ensembles. She is especially proud of her long involvement with the viol consort Consortium, whose repertoire stretches from 16th-century English consort music to new and contemporary works. Alongside performing, Ruth enjoys teaching at the University of Melbourne, where she works with colleague and fellow viol player John Weretka, leading Medieval and Renaissance ensemble classes.

BROOKE GREEN – Brooke was first captivated by the viol after seeing Jordi Savall perform in St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. Through secret connections, she had scored a space to watch from the Bell tower stairs. A few days later she started teaching herself with Rosemary Parle's treble viol. Two weeks later at an AVdGS Easter Viol School, she tried to keep breathing while tackling Lawes. Later she studied with Wendy Gillespie who taught her to question everything.

Brooke is artistic director of *Josie and the Emeralds* and a prize-winning composer. In 2025, four of Brooke's compositions were performed at the Limerick Early Music Festival, Ireland and *Make Your Entrance* was premiered by *The Gryphon Baryton Trio*, with repeat performances in 2026. Brooke is past President of the Australian Viola da Gamba Society and has directed and tutored at several workshops.

LIZZY WELSH – Based on Djaara country in Central Victoria, Lizzy Welsh is internationally renowned as a music-maker and performer of early music, new music and experimental improvisation. With her “characterful virtuosity” she has performed with most of Australia’s leading early- and new-music ensembles and has appeared on both early- and new-instruments in leading festivals across the country, as well as in Europe, the UK, Asia, and the USA.

An advocate for creating new music for early instruments, Lizzy has a Doctor of Musical Arts in this field. She has developed one of the world’s largest repertoires of new music for the baroque violin and viola d’amore, premiering many of these works at leading international festivals including the Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (Germany) and Sacrum Profanum Festival (Poland). Her debut solo album "The Target Has Disappeared" was released on Swiss label Discreet Editions in 2023 to critical acclaim.

JOHN WERETKA - John is a multi-instrumentalist, having studied viola da gamba with Ruth Wilkinson and Laura Vaughan, harpsichord with Linda Kent and Ann Murphy, organ with David Agg, and singing with Stephen Grant. He has appeared as a solo and ensemble singer, viol player, harpsichord, and organist in Australia and overseas, in festivals including the Melbourne International Festival, MIFOH/MAMF, Organs of the Ballarat Goldfields, and the Castlemaine State Festival. He is a foundation member of vocal ensemble e21 and has a specific interest in music of the medieval period, especially the chant repertoire. John has had a long and varied academic career that has seen stints as a teacher of art history and musicology. He currently co-teaches the medieval and renaissance ensemble in the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music at the University of Melbourne with Ruth Wilkinson although he just fulfilled a long-held dream and graduated with a Masters degree in Viking Studies!

TIMETABLE

The draft timetable, below, will be finalised when enrolments are confirmed.

FRIDAY 6 March

Evening welcome dinner in Castlemaine
- details to follow.

SATURDAY 7 March

9.00-10.30: Consorts
10.30-11.00: MORNING TEA
11.00-12.30: Consorts in key groups
12.30-1.15: LUNCH
1.15-2.00: Talk - Extended Techniques on the Viol (Lizzy Welsh and John Weretka)
2.00-3.30: Themed sessions
3.30-4.00: AFTERNOON TEA
4.00-5.00: Consorts
5.00-6.30: Self-managed consorts if desired

SUNDAY 8 March

9.00-10.30: Consorts in key groups
10.30-11.00: MORNING TEA
11.00-12.30: Themed sessions
12.30-1.15: LUNCH
1.15-2.15: Talk - William Turner and the English Viol Consort (Ian Watchorn)
2.15-3.30: Consorts
3.30-4.00: AFTERNOON TEA
4.00-5.30: Untutored consorts
6.00-7:00: Tutors concert

MONDAY 9 March

9.00-10.00: Consorts/Themed sessions
10.00-10.30 MORNING TEA
10:30-11:30: Consorts in key groups
11:30-12:30: Student consort concert
12:30-1:30: LUNCH
1:30-2:30: Consorts
2:30-4:00 Tidy up farewells

THEMED SESSIONS

These choices will be determined by enrolments and your choices will be confirmed prior to the school.

- 1. Lyra viol:** A beginner class to learn the basics of reading in tablature and a more advanced class exploring different lyra viol tunings.
- 2. Technique:** improve your sound, fast passages, string crossings, left hand holds, shifts and intonation, technique for trebles, smooth bowing/shaping phrases and more!
- 3. How do I play that?:** A great chance to bring those ‘tricky’ passages and discuss technical considerations and effective practice techniques to get it under your fingers. Discuss as a group the psychological and physical considerations in the practice room.
- 4. Masterclass:** prepare your solo repertoire.
- 5. Contemporary consorts:** New works for old instruments.
- 6. Broken Consorts:** a chance to dust off any interesting historical instruments (or vocal cords!) you may have at home, or play your viol alongside other instruments. We will contact you prior to the school to help plan repertoire and tuning requirements.
- 7. Diminutions:** look at different examples of diminutions and apply to some repertoire.
- 8. Dowland Lachrimae:** More Dowland!
- 9. No trebles allowed:** Exploring low consort repertoire.
- 10. Early Madrigals:** Explore the 4-part madrigals of Philippe Verdot from 1536
- 11. Juan Bermudo: Tientos and Hymns (1555):** Step away from England for a moment.
- 12. Dance with William Brade:** Enjoy a selection of pavans, galliards, canzonas, allmandes and coranten.
- 13. Untutored Consorts:** Tutor free zone.

DEADLINE FOR ENROLMENTS – 5pm FRIDAY 20 FEB

WORKSHOP FEES & ENROLMENT

\$470 full & \$370 concession

Enrol via the link below

<https://events.humanitix.com/workshop-2026>

Beginners and part-time participants by request.

All attendees of the Annual Workshop need to be current financial members of the AVdGS.

Join via this link -

<https://events.humanitix.com/membership-avdgs-2026>

When you enrol and pay your fee, you will be asked a series of questions at checkout. These questions will assist us to place you in groups and help us with other stuff.

Please answer as well as you can and if you have any questions... info.avdgs@gmail.com

DEADLINE FOR ENROLMENTS – 5pm FRIDAY 20 FEB

PRACTICALITIES

- The pitch of the school is A=415.
- Please ensure you bring: your instrument (fully insured), a music stand, extra strings, a tuner, and any music you would like to play.
- Ensure you have your name on everything you bring!
- Please contact us if you need assistance with local transportation or accommodation.
- Remember to let us know who will be in your *Key Group* if you have requested this when enrolling.
- Beginners can be accommodated by special arrangement. Contact the AVdGS with your request.
- Do you need to borrow an instrument? Or perhaps you can lend an instrument for use during the School. We would love to hear from you.

ANY QUESTIONS OR REQUESTS –

Who you gonna call...

Team Castlemaine is ready to help!

Please contact us via info.avdgs@gmail.com

or call Vic Watts on 0412681689

and we will put you in touch with someone in our wonderful team 🎵🎵

KEY GROUPS

Intermediate and advanced players can request allocation into a key group ie. the same consort for an allocated daily session. This can include pre-formed ensembles or groups just for the school.

TUTORS CONCERT

The Tutors concert will be held on Sunday 9 March at 6pm in the Hall at Castlemaine Steiner School.

This concert is free entry and is primarily for Workshop participants. However, if you have a host, partner or friend you would like to invite please feel free to encourage them to attend.

VIOL DOCTOR

Ian Watchorn will be attending the Workshop on Sunday 8th. If you would like to be in touch with him to discuss any issues or requests prior to the school, please email ian@ianwatchorn.com.au

FOOD

Morning, afternoon tea and lunch are *all* provided and included in your fee.

Please advise us if you have any dietary requirements. The email for all and any requests is info.avdgs@gmail.com

GETTING HERE

Castlemaine is only 1.5 hours from Melbourne via Vline train or car.

If you are arriving by train please let us know so that we can arrange for someone to meet you if needed.

If you need assistance with timetables please email.

ACCOMMODATION

Castlemaine is a popular tourist destination. If you are planning to attend for the weekend, we strongly recommend you book accommodation early!

If you require billet accommodation, please get in touch.

DEADLINE FOR ENROLMENTS – 5pm FRIDAY 20 FEB



The AVdGS acknowledge the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the land where we will meet for our Workshop. We recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.