



Spring 2022 Newsletter

Dear Viols of Houston members,

Hope you are all doing well!

Reading sessions are resuming. An email will be sent out Sunday to see how many people will participate. They will usually start at 6:30pm on Wednesday at the Home of William Pannill and Molly Hammond followed by Molly's Wine Bar at 8pm.

We have a plan to have a workshop with Sarah Mead this Spring and if you are interested please find more information in the newsletter and select a time that will work best for it to happen. We need participants to have this workshop. We can open to other instruments that will tune to 415!

A few weeks ago, Viols of the Creek performed at the Texas Music Education Association on February 11, 2022 and also performed at Humble ISD Board Meeting on February 15, 2022. The gospel of the viol is being spread in the community and in the state of Texas.

All instruments are currently rented out. If anyone has a bass viol they want to rent out please let me know, I have a few people who are wanting to rent a bass viol.

We also welcome 3 new members to Viols of Houston, Jocelyn D, Kirk C, and Dr. Linda K. Pics and bios are attached to this newsletter.

If you have any questions or concerns please email me at pafunes@me.com.

I hope we can meet soon and play some viol consorts!

Pedro Funes-Whittington, President
Viols of Houston

ORCHESTRA STUDENTS PLAYING HISTORIC INSTRUMENTS SELECTED TO PERFORM AT TEXAS MUSIC EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION CONVENTION



Woodcreek Middle School's Viols of the Creek was one of only two Texas middle school string ensembles selected to perform at the 2022 Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) convention.

Pictured are front row (from left): Carly Thompson, Vanessa Solache, Meredith Arechiga, Kylie Currie, and Allison Wood, Woodcreek Middle School; David Ammon Gutke, McRayner Gomez, and Grace Fusco, Summer Creek High School; Jacob Ortiz, Woodcreek Middle School. Back row (from left): Emoni Cooper, Marc Anthony Blades, Woodcreek Middle School; Mr. Pedro Funes, Woodcreek Middle School Assistant Orchestra Director; Taj O'Neal, Woodcreek Middle School; Kendall Coverson, Summer Creek High School.

By Christopher Guillory | February 15, 2022

Woodcreek Middle School's Viols of the Creek was one of only two Texas middle school string ensembles selected to perform at the 2022 Texas Music Educators Association's (TMEA) annual convention. Thousands of music educators from across the state attended the convention in San Antonio.

The Viols of the Creek is an ensemble of viola da gamba historic musical string instruments that is based at Woodcreek Middle School and is the only program of its kind in any Texas public school. The ensemble is made up of 15 students and is open to students at Woodcreek Middle School. Woodcreek Middle School students who have gone on to Summer Creek High School can remain with the ensemble.

The viola da gamba used by the ensemble is a bowed six-stringed instrument with frets that was popular from the 16th to 18th centuries in Europe. It was most popular during the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

“The different materials used to manufacture strings, use of frets, and differently shaped bow are the new concepts for traditional orchestra students to learn when they begin learning viol,” Mr. Pedro Funes, Assistant Orchestra Director at Woodcreek Middle School, said.

Mr. Funes directs the ensemble. He wanted to give students a unique opportunity to encounter historic orchestra instruments.

“I wanted to give younger students experience on the viol,” Mr. Funes said. As he introduces students to viol, it is generally their first time to encounter these obscure instruments. However, the students’ curiosity was piqued. “Students would always ask where they could find a viola da gamba, but there were no options.”



Woodcreek Middle School students Kylie Curry, Allison Wood, Marc Anthony Blades, and Assistant Orchestra Director Mr. Pedro Funes test their instruments during a Viols of the Creek practice session.

The Viola da Gamba Society of America helped Mr. Funes fill this void by providing him with six instruments in 2015 through a grant. His collection of instruments has grown to 18.

“Viols of the Creek offers an opportunity to play chamber music in a different setting without the pressure of competitions,” Mr. Funes said. “It teaches them to be independent without relying on a conductor.”

Mr. Funes discovered the viola da gamba when he was a junior at the University of Houston. After graduating, he went on to Indiana University where he received a master's in early music performance.

"Mr. Funes is an expert in viola da gamba, which is not the case with most string educators," Ms. Jenni Olges, Humble ISD Assistant Director of Fine Arts, said. "These instruments are very different from violins, violas, celli, and basses."

Unlike other string instruments, the viola da gamba has frets, a different bow and bow technique, and it has six strings instead of four. The instrument is also held in a vertical position between the legs with the musician seated.

Bringing new life to an instrument is an enticing experience for the students at Woodcreek Middle School. "I love being a part of Viols of the Creek because it gives me an opportunity to learn a new instrument with my friends and perform at the TMEA conference," Kylie Currie, Woodcreek Middle School eighth grader, said.

Meredith Arechiga, also an eighth grade student at Woodcreek, said the experience of being a member of Viols of the Creek is about more than music. "Viols of the Creek provides me with a deeper understanding of how to take responsibility for my actions and how to manage my time more wisely," Arechiga said.



Woodcreek Middle School eighth grade student Meredith Arechiga practices during a session with the Viols of the Creek ensemble.

This is Mr. Funes' seventh year to direct a viol program. He grew up in Pasadena and attended Pasadena ISD schools. He began teaching at Parkview Middle School in Pasadena in 2007 upon graduating from the University of Houston. He left his first teaching job to pursue his master's from Indiana University where he graduated in 2013. From there, he moved back to the Houston area

and taught at Oak Ridge High School in Conroe ISD where he directed the Aguila di Guerra music ensemble. His ensemble played at the Boston Early Music Festival in 2017 and 2019. Mr. Funes has been teaching music for the past three years in Humble ISD, all at Woodcreek Middle School.

This is the third year that the Viols of the Creek ensemble has been active in Humble ISD. Students are given the chance to pick a treble, tenor, or bass viol and they focus on music from the Renaissance to now.

Playing at TMEA is significant for any student musical group. Considering the Viols of the Creek ensemble has existed for only three years makes it all the more impressive. The TMEA represents 17,000 current and future music educators from across Texas. The organization works to support the future of music education in the Lone Star State.

For more information about Viols of the Creek, contact Mr. Pedro Funes:
Pedro.Funes@humbleisd.net

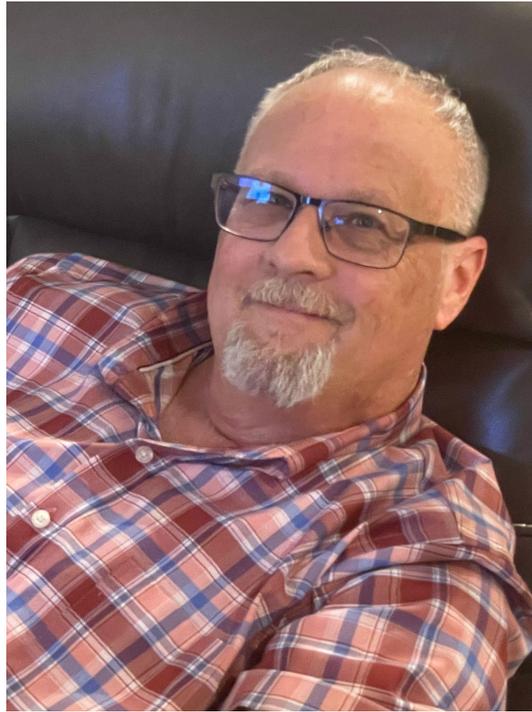


Woodcreek Middle School's Viols of the Creek perform at a preview concert before the Texas Music Educator Association's annual convention. Pictured are front row (from left): Kendall Coverson of Summer Creek High School; Jacob Ortiz of Woodcreek Middle School. Back row (from left): Grace Fusco of Summer Creek High School; and Kate Williams of Woodcreek Middle School.

New Members



Jocelyn is one of the newest additions to VoH. Outside of her time as a resident physician, Jocelyn dedicates most of her time to music as a recreation. Her musical experience consists of years of Classical piano since early childhood and a brief trial with the violin in high school. Thanks to her more recent interest in the sounds of the viola da gamba, she decided to pick up the instrument in the middle of 2021 and has dedicated her time off work to learning the basics of the viol since then.



My name is Kirk Calma. I am a native Baytonian. I have been married 35 years to my high school sweetheart, Patti. We have 2 daughters, Samantha, 16, and Marisa, 14.

I work as a teacher at Peter Hyland Alternative in Baytown. I have loved music my whole life but really didn't get interested in classical music until I was 18 years old. I have played guitar for quite a few years, but don't feel like I've progressed very much. I am looking forward to learning a new instrument and starting a journey of discovery and inspiration.



Dr. Linda J. Kenney is the Tom and Kaye Arnold Professor of Gastroenterology in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at UTMB. She was raised in Iowa, attended the University of Iowa and then when to the University of Pennsylvania for graduate school. There she fell in love with Ricardo Muti and the Philadelphia Orchestra. She studied the Na,K-ATPase, an enzyme isolated from dog kidney and began studying the cello. Linda organized her PhD defense around the Dvorak cello concerto played by the late Lynn Harrell and directed by Maestro Muti. She moved to a post-doctoral fellowship at Yale University and was a student at the neighborhood music school. After her first lesson, she went to see the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson trio in New Haven. Linda then changed fields to work on bacteria at Princeton University. She became an Assistant Professor at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, where she enjoyed Monica Huggett and the Portland Baroque Orchestra. Unfortunately, the demands of academia were not compatible with playing the cello. In 2003, Dr. Kenney moved to the University of Illinois-Chicago and began working on Salmonella, a bacterium that causes food poisoning and was thrilled first by Daniel Barenboim and then by Ricardo Muti as Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which she still attends. From 2009-2019, she worked at the Mechanobiology Institute in Singapore before moving to UTMB. Dr. Kenney is exploring novel models for studying Salmonella using Zebrafish, the nematode *C. elegans* and chick embryos. Most recently, she has been working to develop Salmonella as an anti-tumor agent. In her spare time, Dr. Kenney enjoys hiking in the mountains of New Mexico, playing tennis, is a keen birdwatcher and participates in close-readings of Shakespeare and is now a budding gamba student. The pandemic has highlighted more than ever the importance of music and art in one's life.

Viols of Houston Presents: Psalms, Sonnets, and Songs Workshop with Sarah Mead

Viols of Houston received a grant to have a Workshop with Sarah Mead.

Please fill out the doodle to figure out a weekend for the weekend. [Click Here](#)

About Sarah Mead



Sarah teaches, performs, and proselytizes polyphony in the Boston area. She founded Nota Bene Viol Consort in 2012 with Wendy Gillespie, Emily Walhout, and Joanna Blendulf. With their matched set of Renaissance viols, they have pursued a number of projects focusing on 16th-c. polyphony, while in other programs they have explored repertoire from 17th-c. chromaticism to 20th-c. jazz. She has given solo concerts on the lyra-viol across the US and overseas, and has performed with some of this country's leading early music ensembles.

The 2007 recipient of the Thomas Binkley Award from Early Music America, Ms. Mead is currently Professor of the Practice of Music at Brandeis University. She has led immersive courses on 16th-c. theory at Oberlin, Juilliard, and the Longy School of Music. Her handbook on Renaissance Theory is used in historical music programs around the country. She has given master-classes, lectures, and workshops in Brazil, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the UK. For seven years she was Conclave Music Director for the Viola da Gamba Society of America, for which she has been a regular faculty-member since 1987.

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