

**Viols of Houston
Fall 2014 Newsletter**



President's Message

I hope everyone has had a good start to the fall season. Many things are happening with Viols of Houston. One of the main things we seek to accomplish is to bring the reality of this magnificent instrument to the greater Houston community.

There are four Gambarambas scheduled this year. The public is invited to attend, listen, and even try a hand at playing an instrument. Additionally, there will be four "Gamba Groves" for members to gather and play consorts together - the whole reason we found ourselves attracted to this instrument in the first place.

Sarah Mead is returning this year (Oct. 17-19) to teach lessons via the VdGSA's Circuit Rider program. I encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity. The availability of this fine instruction is dependent on our participation. We want to keep her coming back. Sign up for a lesson or group coaching. It's not too late.

Finally, this newsletter contains the latest on Les Touches, Brady Lanier's first year at Indiana University, Eric Fisher's participation in the Venice Opera Project, minutes from the VoH August meeting, and a *Calendar of Upcoming Events*. Visit the website for updates on events for Viols of Houston: www.HoustonViols.com. Happy Reading!

- Pedro Funes



Barrett Sill, Jordan Witherspoon and Matthew Dirst in recital at The Musuem of Fine Arts (8/17)



“Fearless”, Official Mascot of Viols of Houston

LES TOUCHES- Stephanie Raby

It's been a few weeks since Les Touches had its Texas debut and we couldn't be more excited! Our first concert in Texas, and consequently our first concert not doing viol consort music, went well. Not only did we have a full house (quite literally), and get to collaborate with two wonderful musicians, Bryan Kennard, traverso and Molly Hammond, harpsichord, we really enjoyed our program. It was full of pieces by Biber, Buxtehude, Bach and Telemann that we loved more each time we played them - and it seemed our audience was equally enthused.

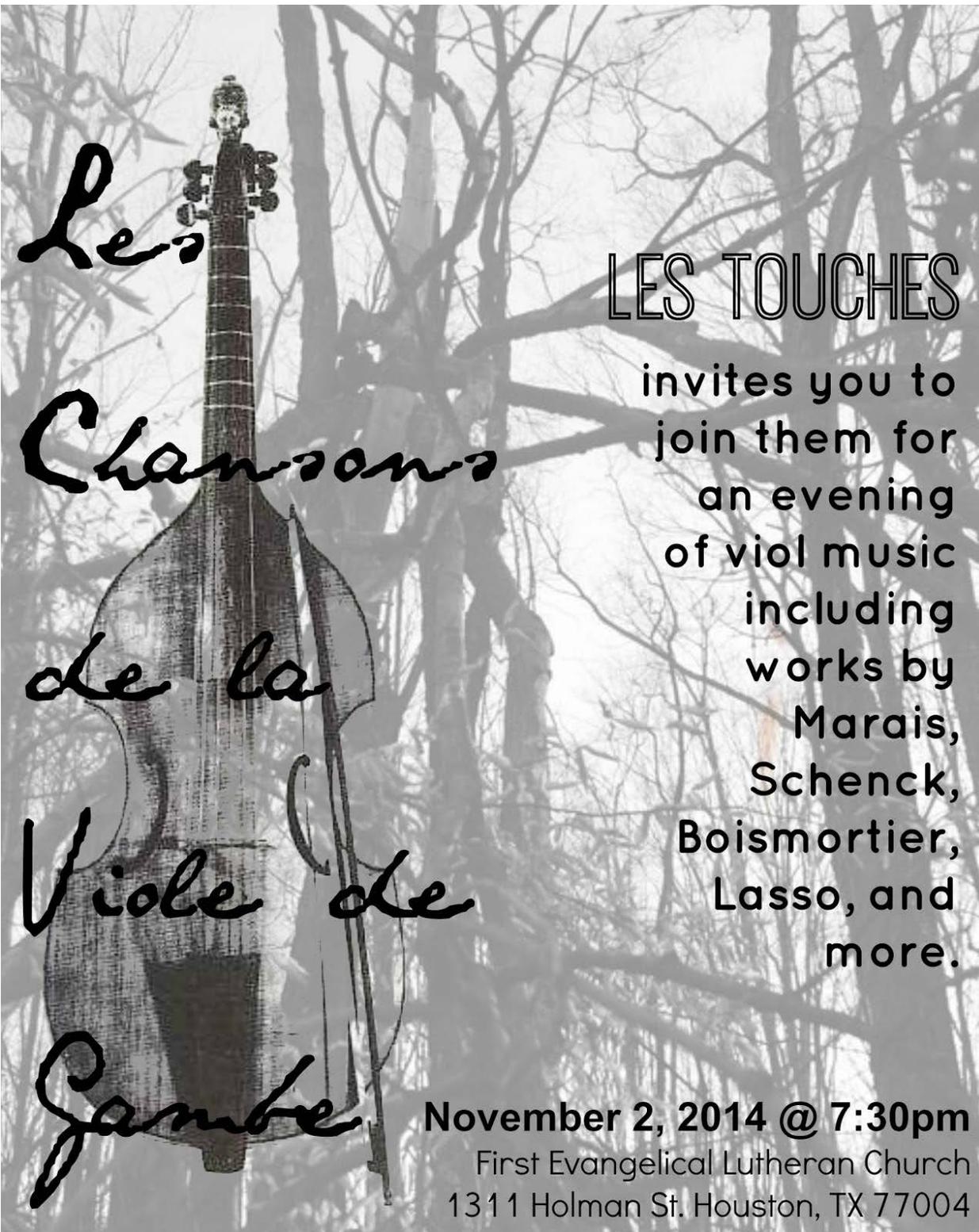
We are already approaching our second concert on November 2. This performance will be of a different nature in that it will be only viol consort music. We will play a collection of duos and trios including Marais' 32 variation Folies - so much fun! Joining us on our second Texas concert will be Erika Lawson playing the treble viol. She has been working with us since Les Touches relocated to Texas in 2013 and we are really excited to have her with us on this concert.

The concert is at First Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1311 Holman St. Houston, TX 77004, on November 2 at **7:30pm**. We hope you (and your curious friends) will join us.

For more information and to contact Les Touches please visit www.lestouches.org



Bryan Kennard, Molly Hammond, Pedro Funes in a House Concert, 3709 Piping Rock (9/27)



Les

Chansons

de la

Viola de

Gambe

LES TOUCHES

invites you to
join them for
an evening
of viol music
including
works by
Marais,
Schenck,
Boismortier,
Lasso, and
more.

November 2, 2014 @ 7:30pm

First Evangelical Lutheran Church
1311 Holman St. Houston, TX 77004

Life at Indiana University -Brady Lanier

Greetings everyone! I can't believe it's been more than a year since I left you all to come to Bloomington! I miss the Houston viol community and think of you often.

Life here at IU is nonstop action! A typical week consists of:

- A private lesson with Wendy (or, since she's on sabbatical this semester, Joanna Blendulff). Her favorite question is "What do you need to know to be able to play this piece?" She really makes you think about the complete historical context of the piece, and the composer's intentions behind every gesture.
- Viol masterclass for the three gamba majors (our buddy Eric and Sarah Lodico are the other two). We get to know our fingerboard through cycling through the circle of fifths (Pedro can tell you about this), improv exercises, the Simspon exercises, discussing treatises, and more.
- Large ensemble ("Concentus") rehearsals. Concentus can consist of voices, viols, sackbuts, lutes, organ, hurdy-gurdy, vielles, or whatever the repertoire we're playing demands. This semester we're doing a program of 17th c. Latin American music by composers such as Francisco Capillas and Fernando Guerrero. We're playing on IU's set of Renaissance viols by Michael Heale – tenors tuned in A, basses with five strings and a great bass tuned in A. We are doing a recording project in a few weeks to be broadcast on PRI (like NPR) during the holiday season.
- Chamber music – a great way to get to know your peers. Last semester I got to play Telemann's Paris Quartet in B Minor, a fun and challenging piece. This semester it's more Telemann, a trio sonata with traverso, baroque oboe & lute. I've also played several cantatas of dubious quality with ambitious singers.
- Performance Practice classes. This semester I'm taking the Baroque class with Nigel North, the dry, witty, British lutenist. We're discussing treatises on ornamentation and rhetoric, and perform almost daily in class, getting excellent feedback from Nigel and our peers.
- History classes – not taking one this semester, but my first semester took an excellent Medieval class, focusing initially on the troubadour rep, which I didn't know and fell in love with.
- Early Music Seminar – topics vary weekly, last week was a master class with Nigel – I played Marais' "Labyrinth" along with Eric on continuo, harpsichord and lute. Getting ready for my recital on Thursday!!
- Composition lessons – I have the privilege of taking lessons with Sweden's most famous and prolific composer, Sven-David Sandstrom, an inspiring figure whose music I actually really like. Quite a contrast from the early rep I spend the rest of my time studying!
- Composition seminar – this week featured a presentation by a film score composer. I'm doing composition as my "outside area", 6 credits in the field. Composed a work for two viola da gambas last year – Eric and I performed it on a student composer recital.
- Posture for Musicians – a class that combines Alexander technique, Feldenkreis, body mapping, and general study of how our skeletal & muscular systems work & how we can use them more efficiently.

Right now I'm in recital prep mode – it's in three days! I'm playing the period transcription of the Corelli Violin Sonata Op. 5 No. 1 (I copied the book from Carter Crawford years ago and am finally using it!); Marais "Labyrinth"; Rognoni Divisions on "Anchor che col partire"; Bach "Komm, Susses Kreuz" from the St. Matthew Passion; and the Bach G minor sonata. Way too many notes – what was I thinking??? J I'm really looking forward to it!

Fall is well underway here – the leaves are turning red & yellow and there's a nip in the air. I hope you all are having a lovely fall as well, and look forward to the next time we meet – hopefully during the holiday season. Take care. I hope to hear from you!

Summer in Italy- Eric Fisher

This summer I had the wonderful opportunity to participate in the Venice Opera Project. This was a month-long music festival focusing on early Baroque music in Venice, culminating in the full production of Francesco Cavalli's second opera, *Gil amori d'Apollo e di Dafne*. I attended the festival playing lirone as a member of the continuo fellowship team. This was a fantastic chance for me to spend more time learning to play the instrument better, as that would be all I would play for an entire month. At first it was a little overwhelming because the music director had all of the continuo players playing the entire opera for the first week of rehearsals. After the continuo assignments were set, rehearsals got much easier to handle. It was quite a fascinating experience to sit in on the staging rehearsals for an opera. Usually only a harpsichord player attends those rehearsals, but the director wanted the entire continuo team there. It was a great way to really get to know the opera and for the singers to be able to learn their parts with the correct continuo accompaniment.

One of the highlights was getting to spend three days working with the viola da gamba and lirone player, Rodney Prada. Rodney came up from Cremona for a little while to work with me and the viol player, Amy Domingues. I had never had actual lessons on the lirone before and it was so inspiring to hear and watch Rodney play. He showed me some technical things that made life so much easier on the instrument. Navigating around 12 strings is a challenge sometimes, so anything to make things a little bit more manageable is always welcome! It was a joy to work with such a fantastic player. Of course the greatest part about all of this was that we were living and working in Venice for the month! We stayed on the Giudecca island just across the canal from San Marco on the south side of Venice. It was such a wonderful walk each morning down the fondamenta to get to the church where we had rehearsal, stopping of course for an espresso and usually something delicious for breakfast. We had one full day off each week, and sometimes during the week we were finished early and could spend the rest of the day roaming around the city getting lost and enjoying the splendors of Venice. We performed in some marvelous churches, San Giovanni Evangelista being the location for all of the opera concerts. Over the course of the month I met a lot of great musicians, learned more about playing a beautiful instrument and had a wonderful time making music in such a magical city.

**Viols of Houston
August 18, 2014
Piping Rock**

Members present: Carter Crawford, Pedro Funes, Erika Lawson, Bill Pannill, Ed Rinehart.

Pedro Funes called the meeting to order at 5:05pm.

I. Rentals

Ed received a reply from Ken Perlow from VDGSA confirming that two bass viols, one treble viol, and a snakewood bow purchased by a VOH member (and reimbursed by VDGSA) are for the use of VOH members and are now the property of VOH. No mention was made of a tenor viol that VOH has.

Bill will look into the matter to see if VDGSA has mislaid records concerning said tenor viol.

Carter reported that he had sent an email to renters whose instruments have not been seen for a long time. There was discussion concerning having viols available for new people interested in renting an instrument. The discussion centered on the idea of putting a time limit on rentals, perhaps a limit of one year. We decided that if an instrument already rented was needed for someone new, we would prioritize who would return an instrument (1) if the renter was behind on payments (2) if the renter had the instrument for over a year. The question whether renters of our viols should, besides being members of the Houston chapter, be members of the VDGSA. It was also brought up that present renters could later rent an instrument from the VDGSA.

II. Outreach

A. Gambarambas

Pedro suggested we have 4 gambarambas/year, on Saturday mornings.

B. Group Sessions

Pedro suggested that we have them 1x/most months, Sunday late afternoons. Music will be sent ahead of time to participants. It was suggested that we concentrate on one composer per year.
music

C. Newsletter

All members will receive a newsletter. Pedro suggests we have 2 per year - a fall and a spring issue. It will contain general information, a treasury report. It may contain music reviews and ads for smaller early music ensembles.

D. Advertisements

Pedro will explore the cost of advertising in Ars Lyrica and Houston Early Music concert programs. We also will explore the possibility of putting promotions for VOH on the table where tickets are sold at HEM concerts.

III. Concerts

A. Sponsorship

VOH will sponsor recitals by teachers like Sarah Mead, as well as helping sponsor groups like Les Touches.

B. Annual Recital

A House Recital will be scheduled. VOH will look into asking Barry to (1)host and (2) play a solo. VOH may approach Bill too.

C. Sarah Mead Concert

Pedro will look into the possibility of Sara giving a concert. Venues like Rienzi and the Museum of Fine Arts will be explored.

IV. Website

Pedro has updated the Website and needs feedback.

V. Finance Report

Ed reported that at the end of the fiscal year of July 1, 2013-June 30th, 2014, VOH had a balance of \$4058.27. There are 3 viol rentals for which payments are coming in. One rental is behind on payments. Dues are due.

Meeting Recap

VOH is scheduling more Gambarambas, Group Gropes, and is energized by our president, Pedro. Our goal is to have a more visible presence in Houston, and to attract new members.

Respectfully submitted,
Erika C Lawson

Calendar of Upcoming Events:

I Correnti Ensemble

October 22, 7:30pm

First Evangelical Lutheran Church

Music of Bach, Biber, Schmelzer and Telemann

with Carole Harris, Violin, Megan Stapleton, Soprano, Deborah Dunham, Violone and Sigurd Ogaard, Keyboards

Outreach Event

Les Touches

Pedro Funes and Stephanie Raby with Molly Hammond
at Oak Ridge HS in Conroe ISD

Chamber Music

Music of Biber, Bach, Buxtehude

Oct. 30 8:45am

Les Touches Viol Consort Concert

“Les Chansons de la viole de gambe “

November 2, 7:30pm

First Evangelical Lutheran Church

1311 Holman St, Houston, TX 77004

Stephanie Raby, Pedro Funes, Erika Lawson, viola da gamba

www.lestouches.org

Gamba Grope

Home of Jordan & Nadia Witherspoon

Nov. 16, 2pm

Gambaramba

Looscan Library

Dec. 6, 10am-12:30pm

Viols of Houston Christmas Party!! Dec. 21, Location TBD