

**Younger Players' Perspective**, edited by Chrissy Spencer  
*Searching for the Perfect Balance*



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I discovered musicology during my undergraduate years at Penn State where I was studying cello. During my second year, I was required to take the music history sequence beginning with a course in music from antiquity through 1750. I was unexpectedly captivated by the subject and also by the excellent teaching of Dr. Marica Tacconi who later became my advisor and mentor.

I soon learned that not only was music before 1750 beautiful and interesting, but it was also possible to go to graduate school and become a musicologist. My thirst for knowledge increased as my time at Penn State went on. I ended up in a musicology graduate program at Brandeis University. Little did I know I would be distracted from musicology by the viol and early music performance.

It was Sarah Mead, the director of Brandeis University's early music ensemble, who convinced me that I should give playing the viol a try. From the first time I picked it up, I was enthralled. This new instrument would give me the opportunity to play the music I was reading about. My musicology classes were satisfactory but something was missing. There were entire weeks when we only talked about music. Once I asked a professor if the class could sing through a movement of a Victoria mass before we analyzed it. Not only was the professor doubtful that the class could do it, he questioned the usefulness of the activity. After completing my Masters degree at Brandeis, I questioned how I was going to find a career path in which both musicology and performance were equally important.

A bit discouraged, I decided to try the performance route and began a Graduate Performance Diploma in viol at the Longy School of Music where I will be finishing this coming May 2008. My intense study of viol has been quite a contrast to my previous study of musicology, but the two are never separated in my mind. I have learned that although many historically informed performers are not quite as involved in research related to their instruments as I am, there is definitely room for all of us in the early music performance community.

Today, viol players have access to a great deal of information from both the scholarly and performing worlds: musicological

literature provides access to manuscripts and treatises on playing while the great pedagogues of this century teach us how to master our instruments. Sometimes these two perspectives conflict, and in these cases, it boils down to an issue of historical evidence verses practicality.

One example of this is the subject of reading and performing from original notation. Should we, as educated viol players, throw away our modern editions in favor of facsimiles? Unfortunately, musicology tells us that we can't always trust these sources in regard to their accuracy. We should all at least attempt to be proficient in reading 16th and early 17th century notation, especially if we find a piece we want to play that has not yet been transcribed. However, our colleagues, both performers and musicologists, have done some of the work for us by correcting notational errors and generally making the notes easier to read. So, use your own judgment. Not all modern editions are created equal. When in doubt, do everything you can to check the original source and then use what you have learned to inform your performance from a modern edition.

In closing, it seems inevitable to me that early music performers and musicologists will some day learn to meet somewhere in the middle. Some of us already have. Recently, I attended the 2007 American Musicological Society meeting in Quebec City. Most of the musicologists studying earlier topics were quite happy to "talk shop" with a performer like myself. I even ran into some of our colleagues, including our own Loren Ludwig, who presented a paper on the social context of the English viol consort tradition.

I challenge young viol players to embrace musicological approaches and blend them into your daily routine of practicing and rehearsing. Read treatises, look at facsimiles, spend time in libraries and write program notes for every performance you can. Let's open our minds and learn as much as we can about the past. By doing so we will ultimately preserve our beloved instrument for the future.

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