



GAMBA WATCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MARAIS PROJECT & SOUNDS BAROQUE
15TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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15 YEARS: 2000 - 2014

I never thought we would reach this our "Crystal" Anniversary. The Marais Project's first concert took place in July 2000 at St Scholastica's Chapel, Glebe. The performers were Catherine Upex (nee Tabrett), Monika Kornel, The Early Dance Consort (Fiona Garlick and John Barnard) and myself. Marin Marais was the only composer featured that afternoon.

This inaugural concert set the platform for what we believe to be Australia's longest continuously running viola da gamba recital series. We estimate that the ensemble has performed well over 120 concerts in the past 15 years in a very broad range of venues.

Our theme for 2014 is "Re-Imaginations" and that is what we are trying to do: to re-imagine the viola da gamba in a range of settings in conjunction with a broad range of talented musical colleagues. Thank you for your support over the years, I hope you will continue to support us in the future.

Jenny Eriksson, Founder and Director

"Happy 15th Anniversary Marais Project! Thank you for the opportunities, to improvise with you on the harpsichord and to compose a couple of works for you, both which I love to this day! It was incredible to be involved through composition, in a creative circle of such fine dedicated musicians through composition with James McAuley and JS Bach, all interacting via Jenny's impassioned direction." (Kevin Hunt, jazz pianist and composer)

Q&A

Over the past 15 years have you ever cancelled a concert?

No, although a few years back soprano Belinda Montgomery became ill just a few days before a concert and we also found out our venue that day was to be across the road from a once-off outdoor rock concert. We had to find a new venue AND a new soprano in about 48hs! (Josie Ryan kindly stepped into the soprano role and did a great job)

"As a former President of the Australian Viola da Gamba Society I would like to express my appreciation to The Marais Project for their promotion of the viola da gamba over the past 15 years. Their programs have been of a consistent high musical quality and have embraced many other players and singers thus ensuring a wide variety of excellent music. Marais has found worthy champions for his music 'down under.'" (Dr Richard Millner)

"The Marais Project was the first professional ensemble to perform one of my pieces when I was only 18 years old. At the same time as they have opened the ears of many listeners to the wonders of the French Baroque they have encouraged people like me to write for them. Happy birthday!" (Alice Chance, viola da gambist and composer)

Why did you start The Marais Project?

I needed a major challenge. Back in 2000 there was very little work for a solo gambist so I decided I needed to "make things happen". It was the year of the Sydney Olympics.

I came up with the idea of playing all of Marais and just started doing it. Colleagues such as pianist Gerard Willems were a great inspiration. If I knew then how difficult it was going to be to keep it going, I probably would have finished after the first year!

Did you have any government funding or corporate support?

"I enjoy Marais' music and often play the film of his life, "Tous les matins du monde", to my piano students. I admire Jenny's mission to transform Marais into a household name: it's well overdue." (Gerard Willems, pianist)

No, and we still don't although many businesses give us discounts and Father Arthur Bridge has kindly sponsored several commissions by Australian composers. The performers are incredibly generous in at times accepting a more modest fee than they may get elsewhere – although every performer always gets paid.

Do you think Marais is a great composer at the level of baroque colleagues such as Bach, Handel or Rameau?

No I don't, although like many composers of so-called lesser rank, his music is too easily dismissed by critics and concert promoters who virtually don't know his output. Often I find that it is musicians from other genres



"I have been constantly impressed by the high level of musical scholarship that is central to every concert related to the Marais Project. The Project demonstrates an intense musical knowledge delivered with verve, enthusiasm and humor." (Professor Anna Reid, Associate Dean, Sydney Conservatorium)

such as jazz or World Music who are most open to engaging with Marais on his own terms. For a gambist Marais remains the technical pinnacle but also very satisfying musically to play.

"We love working with Jenny and the Marais Project. Apart from their consummate musicianship and dedication to detail in their craft as early musicians, they are always trying out new ideas, taking on new challenges, inspiring and supporting fellow musicians and fearlessly taking risks, always with brilliant results. We look forward to the next 15 years!" (Llew and Mara Kiek, *World Music Legends and founders of the "Mara!" band*)



What other music do you like?

We specialise in the French baroque period, the great era of the viola da gamba. Alongside the viol composers of that time I love Couperin, Rameau, Bach and Dowland. I also enjoy CPE Bach and plan to learn at least one of his viola da gamba sonatas in the foreseeable future.

In recent years I've become increasingly fond of jazz and go to lots of live improvised music gigs around Sydney and even overseas. The standard of jazz musicianship in this country is very high. I've commissioned several jazz composers including Kevin Hunt, Paul Cutlan, Mat McMahon and more recently, my son, Siebe Pogson!

What happens when you've played all of Marais?

I imagine we will keep going. The Beethoven Quartet did not disband when they'd completed their first Beethoven cycle! There is lots of great viol music to play and we will keep creating new music as well...

Your favourite Marais work -

There is so much to choose from but "Tombeau de Mr. Meliton" which appears on our second CD, "Love Reconciled", must be up there.

All time favourite piece for viola da gamba -

Probably "It is finished" (Es ist vollbracht), the gamba aria from Bach's St John Passion but ask me tomorrow and I might give a different answer!

inspiration for The Marais Project and for viol players the world over.

"Writing for viols and hearing them together with my bass clarinet was a magical experience. I admire the inclusive outlook of the Marais Project and I loved working with them." (Paul Cutlan, horn player and composer)

- **Lady Sings the Viol** – the name of The Marais Project's 4th CD released in 2013. It features 600 years of music for viols and voice and includes some never before heard arrangements of unusual songs.
- **Swedish Roots** – Jenny and Tommie Andersson's latest project to bring to life their Swedish musical heritage.
- **80%** - how far we have progressed in performing all of Marais' works for viola da gamba
- **15** – the number of new Australian works commissioned and/or premiered by The Marais Project
- **100** – the average number of paid concerts Jenny gives each year!
- **15,000** – the number of individual views on our Marais Project YouTube Channel

QUICK QUIZ

- **The viola da gamba** – a 6 or 7 string instrument with fret about the size of a cello. It is held between the knees and the bow is played "underhand".
- **Theorbo** – a bass lute with long string extensions so it can play very low notes. A good friend of the viola da gamba and typically played by Tommie Andersson in The Marais Project.
- **Marin Marais (1656-1728)** – born the son of a Paris shoe maker he was employed at the court of Louis XIV. He wrote 600 works for the viola da gamba published in 5 books. He also composed operas.
- **Jordi Savall** – the great Spanish viola da gambist, conductor, arranger, musicologist, teacher and Festival director. An

SINGAPORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

"I have enjoyed composing for The Marais Project and it was great to have my piece "Love Reconciled" featured on their CD of the same name. Long may they continue to champion French music and the works of modern Australian composers". (Stephen Yates, composer)

In early April Jenny and lutenist Tommie Andersson joined the Singapore Symphony Orchestra for their inaugural performance of Bach's St John Passion. "It was a special privilege to be part of this concert", Jenny stated on her return, "It was the first time the SSO has performed this work and we were made very welcome." As well

as playing with the orchestra Jenny tutored and gave lecture demonstrations on the viola da gamba and baroque music in no less than three music schools and one University. "We've all heard how classical music is loved across Asia", Jenny said, "But you have to see it to believe it. The young people are very enthusiastic to learn and the standard is high. I hope to return to Singapore soon."

