Viola da Gamba Society of America
Revised Self-Rating Guide

How to rate yourself:

In each category, circle the number beside the description that fits you best. Try to be really honest with yourself (nobody is going to see your answers but you). The clearer you can be about your skills, the better your class placements will be—for you and for the rest of your class.

When you've finished, add up your scores and then compare that number to the Rating Chart at the end. That's the rating you should give yourself when you make your class selections. *Don't be surprised if your rating has changed slightly from where you have placed yourself in the past or at other workshops.* Everyone else is using the same criteria, so you should still be in classes with people whose skills and experience dovetail with your own. The hope is that the greater number of rating categories will help make this process even better.

Remember, no two people have the same skills, so you will never find a consort where everyone matches your level in everything. You will always have something to offer the group you play with and something to learn from every other member.

Playing Experience (circle the one number that fits you best)

0 – have never played the viol, or have tried it once or twice but haven't kept it up
1 – fewer than three years on the viol, with no previous experience on a bowed string
2 – fairly new to the viol, but fluent on another stringed instrument OR many years of viol-playing, but not taking lessons
3 – three or more years on the viol, playing at least every 2 weeks with others, frequent coaching or lessons
4 – 2 or more years of lessons/coaching, practicing 2 or more times a week, regular consort playing, working on solo music
5 – many years of lessons & practice; experience performing consort, ensemble, or solo music in private or public setting

Sight-reading (circle one)

0 – cannot read music on the viol without a lot of help or writing in strings and fingerings for every note
1 – can read very simple music at a slow tempo, especially if doubled
2 – can read most homophonic music the first time through, and simple polyphony after a few tries
3 – can read easier consort music at a moderate tempo; can keep up with the group even if some notes are dropped
4 – can read most fantasia literature at sight and get back in if lost; comfortable playing through easier solo literature
5 – can sight-read all but the most tricky passages in consort music at tempo (and can fake those enough to keep going)

Rhythm (circle one)

0 – rhythmic notation is new or unfamiliar
1 – understand the notation, but need help being steady; get off easily; have trouble playing with a metronome
2 – can keep a steady beat and subdivide at slow tempos, but thrown if other parts have conflicting rhythms
3 – can keep a steady beat and subdivide at moderate tempos, but can be thrown by syncopations, dots, or unfamiliar patterns
4 – able to maintain a steady pulse and subdivide at fast tempos and make smooth transitions at proportional changes
5 – a strong leader who can start a piece and clearly communicate the pulse even in rhythmically complex passages

Tuning (circle one)

0 – cannot tune the strings to a tuner or another player
1 – need help tuning the strings, knowing which way and how much to turn the pegs; difficulty keeping the pegs from slipping
2 – can tune each string to a tuner or another player, but not skilled at tuning the frets or adjusting intonation while playing
3 – can tune each string quickly and accurately and keep frets in tune with a tuner
4 – tune efficiently, aware of tuning of perfect intervals within the ensemble
5 – understand and apply concepts of tuning and temperament, adjust intonation according to the context within the piece

Left Hand (circle one)

0 – hand position is still new or unfamiliar
1 – know how to find the notes in first position on each string, but need time to name each note
2 – comfortable with first position and first-finger extensions, but don't always find the frets accurately
3 – can play scales in most keys at a steady, slow tempo and shift up to fourth finger on the top fret
4 – can play scales and arpeggios in all keys, and play in all positions up to first finger on top fret
5 – can easily find a number of alternate fingerings in a variety of positions, comfortable beyond the frets

Bow-hand (circle one)

0 – unfamiliar with how to hold a bow underhand
1 – have trouble playing one string at a time, keeping the bow parallel to the bridge
2 – can bow steadily on one string, but string-crossings can be awkward; trouble keeping consistent contact-point
3 – make a consistently pleasant sound, but have difficulty with bow distribution, fast passages, large crossings, dotted figures
4 – can adjust the contact-point to vary the color; can employ a range of bow-speeds, articulations, and patterns
5 – use the bow expressively and intentionally for a wide range of colors and rhetorical affects

Versatility (circle one)

0 – not yet familiar with any of the viols
1 – play one size of viol in only one clef
2 – play one size of viol in two or more clefs
3 – at home on one size of viol, learning to play a second size
4 – comfortable on two or more sizes of viol, two or more clefs on each one
5 – can play three or more sizes of viol, any clef, and do simple transpositions at sight

Ensemble skills (circle one)

0 – cannot sing or play (on any instrument) a part different from other people's; cannot sing a round even doubled
1 – can play multi-part music with doubling, but have trouble telling if you're off; can sing a round when doubled
2 – can hold your own line and know when you're off; can sing a round without doubling or play two hands on a keyboard
3 – can hold your own line, correct when you're off; know who is playing a phrase or cadence with you
4 – are aware of and can imitate other people's phrasing; can hear the approach of a cadence
5 – share consistent eye-contact and non-verbal communication with other players; can sing simple line while playing another

Additional skills (circle as many as apply to you)

2 – experience playing the solo repertoire for viol
2 – regular performing experience on the viol in small ensembles
2 – advanced and/or professional experience on another instrument (or voice)
2 – broad familiarity with viol repertoire; study or extensive reading of music history
2 – ability to ornament appropriately and/or improvise on the viol

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Determining your level:

Add up all the circled numbers, and then compare your total to the chart below:

Rating Chart

0 – 7	**B**	Beginner
8 – 15	**B+**	Beginner Plus
16 – 19	**LI**	Lower Intermediate
20 – 23	**LI+**	Lower Intermediate Plus
24 – 27	**I**	Intermediate
28 – 31	**I+**	Intermediate Plus
32 – 35	**UI**	Upper Intermediate
36 – 39	**UI+**	Upper Intermediate Plus
40 – 44	**A**	Advanced
45 – 50	**A+**	Advanced Plus

Use these abbreviations (in bold type) to fill out your level on the Class-Selection form.
There is also space provided there for you to add any further details you think will be helpful.

This Guide is yours to keep for future reference.

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