

In Memoriam Dr. Ronald Cross

The Viola da Gamba Society of America mourns the loss of a viol pioneer, Dr. Ronald (Ron) Cross. From 1968 until his death on February 22, 2013, Dr. Cross was professor of music at Wagner College on New York City's Staten Island, where he thrived as an early music scholar, performer, and teacher. Although a musicologist and organist by discipline, he developed a love for early instruments, and in particular for the viola da gamba. His passion for early music led to the birth of the Collegium Musicum Wagneriensis, an early music ensemble for singers and instrumentalists. He dutifully acquired a collection of instruments, and provided lessons to undergraduates whom he personally encouraged and mentored to explore early repertoire. He was genuinely committed to infusing the same sense of passion in every one of his students.



Ron Cross was born on February 18, 1929 in Fort Worth Texas. He earned a B.A. *cum laude* from Centenary College of Louisiana, and an M.A. and Ph.D. from New York University. Dr. Cross taught at Notre Dame College on Staten Island from 1958 until 1968, when he joined the Wagner College music department as an associate professor. In 1975, he was promoted to full professor, and in 1984 was named Auguste Riemann Professor of Music by then President of the college Sam Frank.

Ron focused his scholarship on both early music and world music. An active member of the faculty, he directed the Wagner College Young Musicians Competition along with the Collegium. However, for those who were discovering early music in New York, it was the Collegium that put the College on the map in the 80s as one of the few institutions of higher learning where students had the opportunity to study historical instruments at the undergraduate level. Dr. Cross was known for presenting an annual Halloween concert entitled "Music from the Court of Vlad the Impaler" (Prince Dracula) that featured the Collegium Musicum Wagneriensis and Ron himself, in a black cape. A certified Associate of the American Guild of Organists, Dr. Cross was the former dean of the American Guild of Organists' Staten Island chapter. He won a post-graduate Fulbright Fellowship to support studies at the Conservatory of Venice, the Accademia Musicale Chigiana, and the universities of Siena, Vienna, and Florence. In 1966-67, Dr. Cross published the complete works of Matthaeus Pipelare, entitled *M. Pipelare: Opera Omnia*, as a three-volume set, through the American

Institute of Musicology. Future plans include a recording of these complete works.

For many years, Dr. Cross hosted the Wagner College Viol workshop featuring the members of the New York Consort of Viols. Thanks to Ron's generosity, I had the opportunity to teach viol at Wagner for several years, and marveled at his ability to encourage students to take up historical instruments. His enthusiasm and passion for creatively programming early repertoire was exceptional at a time when early music was just finding its footing in this country. Dr. Cross was able to inspire students at Wagner to share in his delight and his calling in life. He offered me a faculty position at Wagner teaching viol, and for several years I had the pleasure of watching his inspirational work with students. The music history award given to a deserving Wagner College graduate at the annual Senior Awards Banquet has been named the Ronald Cross Memorial Music History Award.

Patricia Neely
New York, NY

Early Tourin Instrument Search

I am assembling a list of instruments the Tourin Musica built from the mid 1970s up to the early 1990s, who they went to originally, and where they are now. I have good shop records for most viols, but there are about 20 for which I have no detailed records.

If you have a viol of ours or know someone else who does, I'd appreciate your sending me the information on the handwritten label—it will read like this:

PETER TOURIN
TOURIN MUSICA
JERICHO CENTER, VERMONT
NO. 93 1988

If the viol has changed hands, it would be nice to have some minimal information about the chain of ownership—when the viol was sold or bought, and the name and city and state of each owner.

Among the early viols was a set for the University of Connecticut. This was a very early set; it was ordered in 1977. If you know a contact for these viols, I would appreciate hearing.

Thank you,
Peter Tourin

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