

All-State: Style and Ornamentation in Renaissance and Baroque Music

presented by Julie Elhard
reported by Mary Ann Bashaw and Betsy Neil

Julie Elhard is the viola da gamba instructor and performer from Carleton College. She and her ensemble (composed of a treble, two tenor and a bass viola da gamba) presented a very entertaining and informative session about the interpretation and ornamentation of the Renaissance and Baroque music. Most of the dances were quite short in duration and of a very light, sweet quality.

Renaissance and Baroque music in many cases is written as a simple ground

bass with a melody; the musicians of the time needed to fill in the other parts by improvising. The aristocrats and intellectuals of the time played the music of the viola da gamba ensemble while the working class people played in violin bands.

There were two styles: the French versus the Italian. The French music was the most frilly with lots of trills and ornamentations. The use of the bow in interpretation is of extreme importance, determining the phras-

ing and emphasis or attacks; the up-bow was stronger than the down-bow.

The tempo of most of the dances such as the March, Gavotte and Courante were generally that of a "heart beat", the pulse of life. Dance steps were never on dissonant notes and extra notes were often added at the end of a piece for dancers. Most of the music and cadences ended on a major chord with the major third in honor of the belief in the triune god. †