

Beginning Viol Class at BPI

for Mary Anne Ballard

Diamonds of early morning light enfold
The room. The chairs describe the curving top
Of a fermata sign. These are the newest crop
Of nervous students learning how to hold
These unfamiliar instruments. They're told
The mysteries of wood and gut. She drops
Her hints; bows touch the strings, caress, then stop.
Tentative tones begin to grow more bold.

The days advance. She teaches subtler tones,
More sprightly patterns of the bow. They learn
The frets, using the fine geometry of bones
To touch each string. They add (oh glorious!)
The harmonies, rehearse each line in turn. . . .
At last the consort plays Praetorius!

Nicholas Jones

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Befitting a poem about the viol, the form of this poem is an Italian sonnet.