

# HOT OFF THE PRESS! 2010 Edition

NEW MUSIC FOR VIOLS

BY

FROMM FOUNDATION AWARD WINNERS

FRANCES WHITE

*A flower on the farther side (2010)*

DAVID GLASER

*Predellae (2010)*

A CONCERT AND DISCUSSION  
ILLUSTRATING  
PUBLISHING TECHNOLOGIES AND  
THE FORTUNES OF THE VIOLA DA GAMBA

Thursday, May 6 at 8 pm

Forchheimer Auditorium  
The Center for Jewish History  
15 W. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City

Moderator: Harold Rosenbaum, conductor of the New York Virtuoso Singers

Composers: Frances White and David Glaser

Performers: Parthenia (Beverly Au, Lawrence Lipnik, Rosamund Morley, Lisa Terry)

*A multi-media look at innovations from the viol's 500-year history that produced flowerings of viol playing or composition; performances of two works Hot off the Press!; audience Q&A and reception close a delightful evening*

*The concert will be preceded by a free tour at of the current collection of illuminated manuscripts at Yeshiva University Museum.*

## **Program Notes:**

### **Frances White *A flower on the farther side* (2010)**

An ongoing concern of mine is the application of classical and ancient compositional techniques to the creation of music for instruments with electronic sound. I have always been particularly interested in the technique of cantus firmus, where a pre-existing melody is used as the basis of a polyphonic composition.

My original plan for this work was to use the beautiful chant *Alleluia, O virga mediatrix* by Hildegard von Bingen as a cantus over which I would compose the music. But as I worked, the piece evolved in a somewhat different direction. Although there are passages where the chant is indeed treated as a cantus, they alternate with freer, more fantasy-like reflections on and excursions from the melody. But the entire piece is haunted by the phrygian twilight of the original chant, and by Hildegard's ecstatic upward leaping fifths.

The electronic sound acts in two ways. First, I transformed recorded viol sounds to create a kind of enlargement of the viols. Second, I used the sound of recorded wind to make an aeolian harp texture that emerges and recedes from the music - a sonic space that suggests the mysterious "farther side of death" referred to in Hildegard's text for the chant.

By working in this way, I felt I was able to listen deeply and profoundly to this beautiful *Alleluia*, and that it transformed me and the sounds that I created. It is my hope that the finished composition will communicate this experience of transformation to the performers and listeners.

*A flower on the farther side* was commissioned by the Fromm Foundation for Parthenia. A large part of the piece was completed during a residency at The Djerassi Resident Artists Program.

### **David Glaser *Predellae* (2010)**

At the base of altarpieces dating from the late Middle Ages through the Renaissance it was common to have a predella, a frame enclosing a series of small paintings. These paintings often depict episodes from the life of a saint. I have taken this idea of narrative vignettes as the inspiration for my piece *Predellae*.

My "saints" are not religious figures, but exponents of Modernism; composers, painters and writers who were in the vanguard of the arts in the twentieth-century and whose works have in some way informed or inspired mine. Each movement is an homage to one of them. The music is not directly programmatic. It is a response to the works these artists created rather than a depiction of events in their lives.

I will identify only one of my "saints" in order to describe in brief one of the elements in the music. I have long admired the art of Joseph Cornell, *who in a small box could open a vast space in the imagination*. As he relied on previously made objects, prints and maps arranged in evocative combinations, I have used altered quotations from other composers in that movement. A piece by Hildegard of Bingen acts as a cantus firmus, recalling the English *In Nomine* repertoire of viol music. This use of historical reference occurs in other movements as well as a way to integrate the viol's past into the world of contemporary music.

Among the modern elements in the piece are the exploration of tone color and texture. The second movement uses *col legno battuto*, where the notes are produced by the striking the string with the wood of the bow, a technique first used by Tobias Hume in his solo viol music.

I make no distinction in composing for modern or "ancient" instruments as each has its unique sonic fingerprint and I tailor my musical materials accordingly.

I would like to thank the Fromm Music Foundation for their commissioning of *Predellae*. And my special thanks to the members of Parthenia - teachers and friends for their patience and assistance in the creation of this piece.

### **Info on museum tour:**

A Journey **Through** Jewish Worlds:  
Highlights from the **Braginsky** Collection of Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books  
March 21, 2010 - July 11, 2010

A Journey Through Jewish Worlds offers museum visitors a first-time glimpse at the rare treasures inside a world-class private collection. This exceptional collection of manuscripts and printed books provides an overview of seven centuries of Jewish creativity and artistry, and features beautifully ornamented legal and liturgical manuscripts, decorated marriage contracts and illustrated scrolls of the Book of Esther, many with richly crafted cases made from precious metals or carved wood. Exhibition highlights include a manuscript written in Germany in 1288, an illustrated Italian marriage contract on parchment with unique cuttings from 1741, and Esther scrolls from Holland, Italy, Greece and India. See: <http://yumuseum.org/index.php?pg=3&time=upcoming>