

PARTHENIA

Rosamund Morley, treble viol

Lawrence Lipnik, tenor viol

Lisa Terry, tenor viol

Beverly Au, bass viol

with special guests

David Morris, treble viol

Brent Wissick, bass viol

Chloe Holgate & Adrienne Lotto, sopranos

Ashley Mulcahy, alto

Garrett Eucker & Corey Shotwell, tenors

Chris Talbot, bass

“IT IS TIME TO DIE”

Music of Giovanni Coprario for Viols and Voices

Fantasia a6 No. 2 (untitled)

Giovanni Coprario (1575-1626)

Al folgorante sguardo

Su quella labra

Fantasia a2

Fantasia a3

Sospirando

Gray's Inn a6

INTERMISSION

Udite, lagrimosi spirti (with voices)

Luca Marenzio (1538-1612)

Udite (instrumental)

Coprario

Che mi consigli, Amore (instrumental)

Che mi consigli (with voices)

Sunday, April 2, 2023 at 4:00 pm
Corpus Christi Catholic Church, New York City

Parthenia is represented by Summerell Arts and records for MSR Classics

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Giovanni Coprario (1570-1626) started out as John Cooper, but Italianized his name to strengthen his credentials at a time when England was obsessed with Italian musicians. Starting out in a cathedral choir as a boy, he became one of the most important composers and teachers of the Jacobean era, admired for his vocal music, viol consorts and other instrumental pieces. While he did travel on the continent, he probably did not go to Italy until later in his career, but he clearly knew Italian music early on. He was well connected to important families and eventually became a teacher to the Prince of Wales and the future King Charles I. With them in that classroom was the talented William Lawes, who eventually became an important composer himself and remained a loyal friend to the doomed King Charles. O, to be a fly on the wall during viol consort lessons run by Coprario with the young princes and their talented classmates in the 1620s, before the Civil War.

This program is mainly built around Coprario's six part music that clearly started out as either Italian madrigals, or fantasias in madrigal style. The second half of the program will include singers in texted pieces based on two major poets, and those pieces will in turn help make sense of some of the music on the first half. The pieces on the second half with the titles "Udite" come from the famous pastoral play in verse "Il pastor fido" (The loyal shepherd) by G.B. Guarini (1538-1612) that took Europe by storm, and was well known in England in both the original Italian and in translation. Two of the Italian titles on the first half, "Al folgarante" and "Su quella" also come from this large dramatic poem, although it appears that Coprario never carefully underlayed the words with his music except in the opening lines. But I do think these "instrumental-madrigals" still convey the narrative of the poetry: they tell a story of the lives and loves of the shepherds and shepherdesses in the mythical land of Arcadia.

Guarini's play ends with the wedding of the key characters, Mirtillo and Amarilli. I believe that the "untitled" viol piece we play to open

this concert might have been a setting of this wedding chorus. It is in the key of F, the pastoral key (even into the time of Beethoven) and tracks the language of the poem, starting with "O Fortunata Coppia" (O fortunate couple) all the way through several moralizing lines about love and learning from it, a sort of wedding sermon. It ends with a passage of almost liturgical beauty and serenity, a sort of benediction. But we can't know for sure if this is what Coprario intended here.

Next we play the two pieces that are titled with lines from "Il pastor fido" but contain no other text beyond the titles. "Al folgarante sguardo" comes from a scene where the shepherd Mirtillo is telling his friend Ergasto how he lost his heart to Amarilli: it was her flashing glance followed by a look at her majestic face and serene smile. The final lines are more sensuous, as is much of the poem, referring to love hiding in her lips like a "mysterious bee" nestled between two roses. "Su quella labra" is from the following section of the poem and is even more explicit, describing the nature of their kissing. Reading the poem has certainly revised my approach to playing this viol piece, and I cannot play it with academic severity ever again.

The next two pieces are examples of Coprario's skills in the discipline of counterpoint. He did after all write up a small treatise called "Rules on How to Compose" and would have taught these principles to the young men in his classroom. Royal or not, they were shown how music can be put together; and this duo and trio reveal that the results can be delightful.

The piece "Sospirando" takes us back to the madrigal style, but now we have only the word for "Sighing" with no clear text from Guarini or anyone else. But Coprario would have been acquainted with numerous Italian texts about "sighs", and this piece uses many conventions of their musical settings. Even right at the start, the two treble viols seem to "sigh" at each other, intertwining like lovers through much of the piece. Sometimes the viols seem to depict birds and bees, and at the end of the piece there is even triple repetition of rhythm (a name?) and a surprising

dissonance called a “cross relation” that could suggest a little death, the standard metaphor for (gasp!) an orgasm. There will be plenty more of this sort of thing in the fully texted madrigals of the second part of the program. But before that, we will play a tuneful piece from a masque to which Coprario contributed music. The court masques were extravagant affairs involving verse, dance, elaborate stage sets, comedy, expensive costumes, and of course music. Coprario made several settings of his tune “Gray’s Inn” which is quite catchy, and which was sometimes known as “Coprario” because it was so associated with him. Not bad when you consider that some of the Jacobean and Caroline masques included verse by Ben Jonson and sets by Inigo Jones. Distinguished company that could easily upstage a musician, but John Cooper held his own. I love all the Coprario pieces on this concert, but the tune I go home humming is Gray’s Inn.

The second half of our program brings 6 singers on stage with us to perform madrigals with text. First is Marenzio’s 5 part setting of “Udite, lagrimosi Spiriti” from “Il pastor fido”. Guarini’s tragicomedy is from 1590, and Marenzio’s setting dating from 1594 is the first of 22 based on this particular text.

*Hear, mournful Spirits of the Underworld
Hear of a new fate of pain and torment, look at a
cruel love in piteous guise:
My lady is more cruel than the inferno, since one death
only cannot satisfy her greedy desire (and my life is
almost a perpetual death),
She commands me to live so that my life receives a
thousand deaths a day.*

This text is one of many that present the idea of a “little death” that I referred to earlier, and Guarini is far from the first to suggest a thousand deaths a day. Famous madrigals from the 16th century by Arcadelt and Rore attempt to depict this hyperbole in musical terms. I invite you to listen for any obvious word-painting when you hear the singers repeat the words “Mille morti” in Marenzio and in Coprario’s version. Coprario’s was probably composed around 1610, and I am certain that he honored Marenzio, one of the most admired madrigalists of the era, in his version in 6 parts.

The final piece on the program is based on one of the most venerated poets of the renaissance, Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374), who was still very much read in Elizabethan England. But for years it was not easy to discern who wrote the text for Coprario’s “Che mi consigli” because he omitted the opening words of Petrarch’s poem: “Che debbio far” (What shall I do?), starting instead with the second phrase “Che mi consigli, Amore” (What do you advise me, Love?) And the answer appears to be “Tempo e ben di morire” (It is time to die.) Here is the English translation of the words that Coprario selected from Petrarch’s poem, having left out quite a few lines.

*What do you counsel, Love? It is the right time to die,
and I have delayed longer than I would.
My lady is dead, and she has my heart with her; all
my joy through her departure is turned into weeping.
Every sweetness of my life if taken away.*

Petrarch’s original long canzone is clearly about his beloved Laura who died of the plague, inspiring many poems about his loss. But Coprario’s selective omissions suggest that his madrigal is not about Laura, but employing images of the “little death”. There is considerable anguish depicted in the middle of the piece that might be about “male difficulty” in joining the lady already “dead”. But there is a very happy moment around the words “all of my joy is turned into weeping”, and from there to the end, the upper parts are quite beautifully intertwined, with the whole consort in shimmering harmony. This music is emphasizing sweetness far more than loss, confirming for me that Coprario was not paying any attention to Petrarch and Laura in using this text.

There are numerous Coprario fantasias in 5 parts with Italian titles, but I think the ones in 6 parts we perform today are especially wonderful examples of the ways that renaissance courtiers, poets and musicians communicated in subtle metaphors. One can enjoy performing and hearing this music without them, but the experience is even richer when you consider them as well.

~ Brent Wissick

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The viol quartet PARTHENIA brings early music into the present with its repertoire that animates ancient and fresh-commissioned contemporary works with a ravishing sound and a remarkable sense of ensemble. These “local early-music stars,” hailed by *The New Yorker* and music critics throughout the world, are “one of the brightest lights in New York’s early-music scene.” Parthenia is presented in concerts across America, and produces its own series in New York City, collaborating regularly with the world’s foremost early music specialists. The quartet has been featured in prestigious festivals and series as wide-ranging as Music Before 1800, the Harriman-Jewell Series, Maverick Concerts, the Regensburg Tage Alter Musik, the Shalin Lui Performing Arts Center, the Pierpont Morgan Library, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Yale Center for British Art, Columbia University’s Miller Theatre, and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Parthenia’s most recent tour was to Venice, Italy, with soprano Sherezade Panthaki, to perform at The Brooklyn Rail’s collateral event at the 2019 Venice Biennale. Parthenia’s repertoire ranges from the golden age of the viol in Elizabethan England, to the complete viol fantasies of Henry Purcell, to *Al Naharot Bavel* which features works by Jewish Renaissance composers, and the ensemble commissions and premieres new works regularly.

Parthenia has recorded *As it Fell on a Holie Eve - Music for an Elizabethan Christmas*, with soprano Julianne Baird, *Les Amours de Mai*, with Ms. Baird and violinist Robert Mealy, *A Reliquary for William Blake*, *Within the Labyrinth*, and *The Flaming Fire*, with vocalist Ryland Angel and keyboard player Dongsok Shin. Parthenia’s newest CD release features composers Kristin Norderval, Frances White, and Tawnie Olson: *Nothing Proved: New works for viols, voice, and electronics*.

More information about Parthenia is available at parthenia.org.
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BRENT WISSICK has taught cello, chamber music, and viola da gamba at UNC since 1982. In addition to teaching cello and coaching chamber music at UNC, he directs the Baroque Ensemble, which frequently collaborates with UNC Opera; and runs the Viol Consort. He also teaches a First-Year Seminar on the Physics of Music with Laurie McNeil of the Physics faculty, a course they developed in 1999 and have taught regularly since. He was Associate Chair for PCME from 2017-20, served as Kenan Music Scholars mentor at the start of the program; and was String Area Chair for many years. His current research and performance interests include 19th-century music with period instruments, 17th-century music for viols and voices; and cello music of Britten. A graduate of the Crane School of Music at Potsdam College in New York (1976), he received his MM in cello from Penn State in 1978 and was awarded an Alum Award in 2014. Additional studies were with John Hsu at Cornell and as an NEH Fellow at Harvard in the 1993 Beethoven Quartet Seminar. His lectures and master class teaching have taken him to colleges and universities on four continents including four summers at Tokai University in Japan, and he served as an adjudicator in the 2017 Aiqin Cup Cello Competition sponsored by Central Conservatory Beijing.

DAVID MORRIS is a member of The King’s Noyse, the Galax Quartet, Quicksilver and NYS Baroque. He has performed with the Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, Tragicomedia, Tafelmusik, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Musica Pacifica, American Bach Soloists, Musica Angelica, Seattle Baroque Orchestra, the Mark Morris Dance Company, and Seattle’s Pacific Musicworks. He was the founder and musical director of the Bay Area baroque opera ensemble Teatro Bacchino, and has produced operas for the Berkeley Early Music Festival and the San Francisco Early Music Society series. David received his B.A. and M.A. in Music from U.C. Berkeley, and has been a guest instructor in early music performance-practice at UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Mills College, Oberlin College, the Madison Early Music Festival and Cornell University. He has recorded for Harmonia Mundi, New Albion, Dorian, New World Records, Drag City Records (with Joanna Newsom) and New Line Cinema.

A versatile ensemble singer and soloist, CHLOE HOLGATE recently made her soloist debut at Alice Tally Hall with the *American Classical Orchestra*. This past summer Chloe joined the *American Soloist Ensemble* on a tour of South Korea alongside the National Chorus of Korea. In recent seasons she has performed with Ensemble Échappé, Melius Consort, Chatham Baroque, Folger Consort and the Prototype Festival. A member of trio Modern Medieval, she can be heard on their newly released debut album, *The Living Word*, pairing chants by Hildegard von Bingen with new works by Caleb Burhans, Daniel Thomas Davis, Jacqueline Horner-Kwiatiek and Caroline Shaw. On April 23 Chloe will perform Mendelssohn’s oratorio, *St. Paul*, with the Saint Andrew Music Society chorale and orchestra. In addition to performing, Chloe writes and records intricate and colorful vocal arrangements and composes original music for the duo Sibyl with her sister, violinist Lily Holgate.

ADRIENNE LOTTO is a soprano whose passion for early and contemporary music led her to the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, where she earned a Master's degree in 2020. After graduating from Carnegie Mellon University with a BFA in voice, she worked for two years as a costumed interpreter and singer for the Governor's Musick, Colonial Williamsburg's resident Baroque ensemble.

Mezzo-soprano ASHLEY MULCAHY is a recent graduate of the Voxtet Program at the Yale School of Music and Institute of Sacred Music. At Yale, Ashley had the opportunity to work with many internationally renowned conductors, including Nicholas McGegan, Masaaki Suzuki, and David Hill. Ashley has performed with numerous ensembles including Bach Collegium Japan, Theatre of Voices, The Newberry Consort, True Concord, Pegasus Early Music, New York State Baroque, Upper Valley Baroque, and the Handel and Haydn Society. Additionally, Ashley co-directs Lyraclé, an ensemble dedicated to exploring the art of accompanying the voice with the viol and to telling the stories of historic practitioners of this art. Ashley is the Alto Two Choral Scholar at Boston University's Marsh Chapel. She holds a BA in Italian and a BM in vocal performance from the University of Michigan. Ashley writes for Early Music America on a freelance basis.

GARRETT EUCKER is a tenor known for his light, silvery timbre and his versatility in both early and contemporary chamber music. Garrett's love for music began at a young age when he performed in his first opera at the Metropolitan Opera at the age of four. Garrett has since established himself on the early music scene, having performed with world-renowned ensembles. This season, he has appeared with The Choir of Trinity Wall St., The St. Thomas Church Choir, Incantare, La Grande Bande, Apollo's Fire, Piffaro, Elm City Consort, The New Consort, and Pomerium. In addition to these ensembles, he will workshop of Paola Prestini's "The Old Man and the Sea" with Beth Morrison Projects at MASS MoCA. He is thrilled to be joining Parthenia Viols for the first time in this concert!

Tenor COREY SHOTWELL specializes in the performance of music from the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries. His most frequent engagements include solo concert work from the Baroque period, including Handel's Messiah and the cantatas of J. S. Bach. Mr. Shotwell earned a Master of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music and a Bachelor of Music degree from Western Michigan University, and is pursuing an MMA from the Institute of Sacred Music at Yale University.

Bass-Baritone CHRISTOPHER TALBOT is a sought-after soloist and ensemble singer at home with a wide variety of repertoire, from medieval to the present day. Hailed for his "voice of warmth and strength" (Classical Review), Talbot's recent appearances include a vocal fellowship at the Internationale Bachakademie in Stuttgart, Germany, recording works of Josquin with Cut Circle, and Bach's *Magnificat* with The Thirteen. Highlights of his 2023 season include stints with The Crossing, Apollo's Fire, True Concord, Ensemble VIII, and a coveted spot in the Carmel Bach Festival's Virginia Best Adams Masterclass in California. Based in Philadelphia, he is a graduate of Yale's Institute of Sacred Music, where he studied with James Taylor and Bernarda Fink. A champion of performing lesser-known works, he is also involved with New Muses Project, a non-profit organization founded at Yale dedicated to the discovery and performance of music by under-represented composers.

ABOUT THE VIOL

The viol, or viola da gamba, is a family of stringed instruments celebrated in European music from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. Today on both sides of the Atlantic, soloists as well as viol groups—known as "consorts"—have rediscovered the lost repertoire and ethereal beauty of this early instrument. The viol was first known as the "bowed guitar" (vihuela da arco), a joint descendent of the medieval fiddle and the 15th-century Spanish guitar. Unlike its cousin, the arm-supported violin (viola da braccio), the viol is held upright on the leg (gamba) or between the legs; its bow is gripped underhand; and its body is made of bent or molded wood. These characteristics lend a distinctive lightness and resonance to viol sound that have inspired a wave of new works by 21st-century composers and a growing enthusiasm on the part of international audiences.

Parthenia acknowledges the following people and organizations for help in making this concert possible:

Father Peter A. Heasley, pastor, Louise Basbas, and the staff at Corpus Christi Catholic Church; John Thiessen, Steven Marquardt and Naomi Morse of Gotham Early Music Scene; GEMS volunteers Paul Arents, Kaitilin Bing, Margaret Hagen, Orly Krasner, Hara Reiser; Peter Karl, recording engineer; Asaf Blasberg, videographer; Colleen Cody, season graphics design; Dominic Giardino, Director of Digital Marketing.