

PARTHENIA	FARALLON
Beverly Au	Miyo Aoki
Lawrence Lipnik	Letitia Berlin
Rosamund Morley	Frances Blaker
Lisa Terry	Vicki Boeckman

ANTIQUÆ / NOVÆ

Early and New Works for Recorders and Viols

O che felice giorno		Giovanni Gabrieli (1557-1612)
Sonata Prima		Giovanni Priuli (c.1575-1626)

Tutti

Christe Op. 59/D (2006)		Fulvio Caldini (b.1959)
Hugh Ashton's Maske		Hugh Ashton (c.1485-c.1558)
Sicut Cervus		Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c.1525-1594)

Farallon

Vezzosi augelli		Luca Marenzio (1553-1599)
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Tutti

Canzon quinta		Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643)
Ricercar "la fa sol la re"		Frescobaldi
Canzona seconda		Giovanni Gabrieli (1554-1612)

Parthenia

Sinfonia "La Bolognese"		Ludovico Grossi da Viadana (c.1560-1627)
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Tutti

~ INTERMISSION ~

Hexagram (2010)		Kai Stensgaard (b.1952)
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Farallon

Such Deep Sea Sailors are We		Frances Blaker (b.1960)
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Parthenia

Crossing (2023)		Blaker
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Tutti

Singet dem Herren ein neues Lied, SWV 35		Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672)
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Tutti

Saturday, May 6, 2023 at 7:00 pm

The Church of Saint Luke in the Fields, New York City

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

ANTIQUÆ

A few times in the history of Western music has musical style undergone such rapid and thorough changes as it did during the years around 1600. The works comprising the “antiquæ” portion of tonight’s program showcase these shifts and the brilliant range of genres and styles they generated, with particular focus on the development of the Venetian polychoral style of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Although it had precedents in many Northern Italian courts and churches, the style is particularly closely associated with the Basilica San Marco in Venice, where two *chori spezzati*—literally, “broken choruses”—performed successive, and often contrasting, strains of music from opposing organ galleries before uniting in blazing eight-part polyphony. Composers working in this idiom and its related genres were able to produce magnificent and unprecedented sounds not only through contrasting polyphonic textures but also through an expanded palette of instrumental timbres, combining families of instruments that more often played separately to brilliant and striking effect.

The program opens with a pair of double-chorus works by two composers closely associated with the Venetian Basilica. Giovanni Gabrieli (c.1557–1612), after a youth spent traveling and studying with his musician uncle, settled in Venice, where he took a position as principal organist and composer of ceremonial music at San Marco. Gabrieli quickly became one of the most noted and influential composers in Europe, thanks both to the extensive dissemination of his works in printed publications and to the legacy of his widely-traveled students, including Giovanni Priuli (c.1575–1626). “O che felice giorno,” first published in 1590 in the compendium *Diagloghi musicali* (which also included works by Luca Marenzio, Orlando di Lasso, and Giaches de Wert), takes the madrigal, a form of polyphonic secular song synonymous with the Italian Renaissance, and applies a polychoral treatment to it. Gabrieli would eventually repurpose the madrigal as a sacred polychoral motet, which likely would have been performed in San Marco’s famous antiphonal galleries.

Little is known of Priuli’s early life; starting in his twenties, however, his career was dominated by his association with Gabrieli, whom he assisted both at San Marco and at the Scola Grande di San Rocco, a confraternity second only to the Basilica as an institution of musical opulence in the Venetian Republic. Priuli worked in a number of instrumental idioms, writing music for up to twelve parts. The luscious sounds and marked rhythms of the alternating strains in his *Sonata Prima*, published in Venice in 1618, clearly show the influence of his teacher. After Gabrieli’s death, Priuli would leave Italy to pursue a career at the Hapsburg court in Austria, serving as *Hofkapellmeister*

to the Catholic Archduke Ferdinand II (1578–1637) at Graz and eventually following him to Vienna to preside over the musical establishment of the Holy Roman Empire, where he filled the Austrian court with echoes of the Venetian style.

Following a new composition by Fulvio Caldini, the second set takes us further back in time, with a pair of works by major Catholic composers of the earlier part of the sixteenth century. Tudor composer Hugh Ashton (c.1485–c.1558) for much of his life held a lucrative appointment in Leicester as *Keeper of the Organs and Master of the Choristers* at the Hospital and College of St Mary of the Annunciation, an institution whose prestige entitled it to recruit outstanding singers and instrumentalists from other musical establishments without their consent, in effect poaching the best musicians in the country. “Hugh Ashton’s Maske” is an example of the virtuosic music—both improvised and composed—that was possible in such an environment. The Maske is built on a ground bass, a simple melodic pattern that repeats in the bass part, with three complex, interweaving melodies above. The composition as a whole can be reconstructed using two original sources. One source (a keyboard version by William Byrd) provides the bass line, and the other (the Baldwin Partbooks) provides the three top voices, one of which is attributed to a “Mr. Whytbrooke.” Above the regal bass pattern, the three melodies chase one another, sometimes in close canon and sometimes in bursts of exuberant, flowing lines that cross one another. Due to the work’s complex provenance, some scholars have speculated that it may have had an earlier existence as a liturgical work.

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina’s (c.1525–1594) beautiful (and perhaps most famous) motet, “Sicut Cervus,” was published posthumously in 1604 in the composer’s *Motectorum Quator Vocibus Liber Secundus*. Its text is taken from the beginning of Psalm 42 and evokes a feeling of deep yearning, which is skillfully conveyed by the musical setting. The first section opens with a gentle melody introduced successively in each voice and then sweeps the four voices up into the ebb and flow of well-crafted polyphony. The second part begins with a more decisive motive but again portrays longing through suspensions and held-out notes. Palestrina masterfully expresses the text—a gorgeous falling melody on the word “lachrymae” evokes tears, for example—in such a way that the feeling of the text is moving and unmistakable.

Luca Marenzio (1553–1599) is one of the composers most closely associated with the madrigal. In his early life, Marenzio moved frequently and garnered a diverse sacred and secular musical education, serving prominent families including the Gonzaga, the Este, and the Medici, before settling in Rome. He wrote an astonishing seventeen

books of madrigals between 1580 and 1589, producing over 500 works that comprehensively demonstrate the rhetorical and technical range possible in the form. Marenzio's *Madrigali a quattro, cinque, e sei voci* of 1588 is a veritable manifesto of late Renaissance style, displaying text painting, chromaticism, quick textural contrasts, and other hallmarks of the late madrigal style to virtuosic effect. *Vezzosi angelli* sets a joyful poem by Torquato Tasso in four parts in typically evocative style, with musical depictions of "joyous birds" singing and whistling "merry notes" while accompanied by the rumbling of the wind that are legible even in a purely instrumental performance.

Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583–1643) was one of the first major Franco-Netherlandish-Italian tradition who chose to focus his creative energies principally on instrumental composition. An organist by trade, Frescobaldi was known as a singular talent in all contrapuntal genres, including the instrumental *canzona*, which he wrote in great quantity and for various and often novel configurations of instruments. The *canzon* on tonight's program makes use of the older, four-part SATB format, alternating homophonic and polyphonic textures and using suspensions to create achingly beautiful moments of dissonance and resolution. The *ricercar* (literally, "to seek out") is a learned contrapuntal genre *par excellence*. A generation before Frescobaldi, music theorist Pietro Pontio (1532–1596) noted the tendency of composers to repeat thematic material in such works, writing that in the *ricercar* "it is equally permitted to repeat two, three, four and more times the same idea [*inventione*], in various ways as will please you." Frescobaldi seems to have been particularly pleased by his five-note theme, since he repeats it in the top voice (often with rhythmic variation, augmentation, and diminution) no fewer than twenty-two times. The theme also haunts the other voices, appearing as a head motive in each voice at the start of the work and occasionally in fragments within the longer polyphonic

NOVÆ

Fulvio Caldini's *Christe* is a timeless piece that blurs boundaries between old and new. The title alone entreats a spiritual connection which can be interpreted in several ways. The bulk of Caldini's music is written in a minimalistic style using very few compositional ingredients, so in that regard one can categorize *Christe* as minimalistic, yet the listener is transported to another era by the sheer sonority of each phrase. Each new entrance adds one more beat until the climaxes are reached and held. We have chosen to look through the musical lens of the ordinary chant of the Roman mass (*Kyrie Eleison/Christe Eleison/Kyrie Eleison*), imagining Latin text guiding us along.

Kai Stensgaard is an internationally acclaimed Danish marimba player whose specialty is playing with six mallets.

lines of each voice. Although he is best known for polychoral works, Gabrieli also authored instrumental works for smaller ensembles, including *canzone* like the one on tonight's program. In contrast to Frescobaldi's *canzona*, Gabrieli's uses much stricter imitative techniques, with each short point of imitation drawing to a cadential close before the next is introduced.

Lodovico Grossi da Viadana (1560–1627), is perhaps best remembered as one of the first major composers to use figured bass notation in a publication. Having held a number of important cathedral positions during his lifetime, Viadana was a prolific composer of sacred vocal music, but also wrote several instrumental sinfonias, which often have titles indicating their affiliation with a particular region and the musical idioms of local dance forms. The sharp rhythmic profiles and rapacious resonances that characterize the alternating strains of this polychoral work show the prevalence of the style made most famous by Gabrieli at San Marco throughout Northern Italy.

The program closes with a glorious setting of Psalm 98 by German composer and organist Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672). Having studied with Gabrieli in Venice between 1609 and 1612, Schütz, often noted as the most important German composer before J.S. Bach, was an influential figure in bringing the new Italian polyphonic and polychoral "concertato" style to the German lands. By 1619, when he published this setting of "Singet dem Herrn" in *Psalmen Davids*, he was working as court composer to the Elector of Saxony in Dresden, a position he would hold for nearly sixty years. In the introduction to the collection, which was dedicated to the Elector, Schütz noted that he had "composed several German psalms in the Italian manner, to which he was introduced intensely by his dear preceptor Giovanni Gabrieli highly famous throughout the world".

~ Cat Slowik & Miyo Aoki

Hexagram was originally written as a solo work (for himself), and a simple You Tube search shows Kai performing in an impressive variety of settings: with string orchestra, with a wind band, with percussion, and with two marimbas. The version for four recorders that you will hear this evening was dedicated to his wife, who is a member of a recorder quartet in Denmark. Kai contacted Farallon to ask if we would be interested in playing his piece and we jumped at the opportunity.

~ Vicki Boeckman

Such Deep Sea Sailors are We was written with the Parthenia Viol Quartet in mind, although not at their request – I was just thinking of this ensemble with its particular members, most of whom I knew. "Such deep sea sailors are we" is a line I ran across in my varied reading. I wrote it on a Post-It Note and stuck it on my wall. When I thought of writing something for four viols,

that sentence came back to my mind. Each part of the piece reflects actual aspects of deep sea, as well as metaphorical deep-sea ideas from the human spirit. We steer through our lives like deep-sea sailors. We are the deep sea. The deep sea can sometimes swallow us, which is sometimes a good thing and sometimes a frightening thing. As is often the case, inspiration from earlier music forms and sonorities shows up in my pieces. I have used a repetitive form (so common in medieval music): three sections (A, B, and C) appear in the order ABABCABcoda. The opening section with its slow-moving notes and deep sonorities reflects floating on a calm, slowly rising and sinking sea surface above a dark and shadowy depth of water. The next section contrasts interweaving pizzicato bass lines against melodically comingling higher viols – lots of action, kinds of motion... The third section (C) evokes images of the strange movements and remarkable shapes of deep-sea creatures as they go about their business under vast layers of water.

Crossing was more difficult to write. When Larry Lipnik, Tish Berlin and I first talked about putting together a

concert with Parthenia and Farallon, I said (boldly) “I’ll write a piece for the 8 of us!” And then I had to actually sit down and write it. It took months. I thought a lot about the sound worlds of viols and recorders, how they differ, how they are similar. After many false starts, following ideas out into the sand, starting new ones and so on, I struck upon the piece you’ll hear tonight which I call “Crossing”. Our various sounds cross each other, merge together, separate. Again, there are more philosophical ideas about things, ideas, emotions crossing from here to there, and also real-world ideas such as crossing the country to play together. The opening “cross” theme of a low note, reaching up to a high note, then crossing down to a middle note, emerges from few instruments, growing to many, and is then transformed as recorders lines are both shadowed and picked out by pizzicato viols. New themes appear out of the texture; the various instrumental voices cross again and again, trade off, compliment one another.

~ Frances Blaker

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The FARALLON RECORDER QUARTET was founded in 1996 to explore the vast and varied repertoire for four recorders. The quartet presents concerts, including family and school concerts, and also teaches one-day and week-long workshops for amateur through young professional recorder players. The quartet has twice been awarded grants from the San Francisco Friends of Chamber Music (now called InterMusicSF) to develop programs with guest musicians.

Farallon’s current members are Letitia Berlin and Frances Blaker (founding members), Miyo Aoki and Vicki Boeckman. Since 2020 the four have performed in Portland OR, Berkeley CA, Washington D.C. on the Capitol Early Music Series, in Northampton PA on the Amherst Early Music Festival concert series, and Seattle WA, including teaching at Seattle’s Fall Fipple Flute Forum in 2021. Passionate about works from the 12th – 18th centuries, the quartet is equally eager to bring music from the 20th and 21st centuries to audiences.

Concert Programs, like bouquets of flowers from far and near, bring works of varied character and time period to audiences. The quartet uses spoken program notes – brief, informative and entertaining – to bring listeners with all levels of understanding along on enthralling musical journeys. Visit farallonrecorderquartet.com for more information.

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 Liu 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 Banel* 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.

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.

ABOUT THE RECORDER

The recorder is a family of woodwind musical instruments in the group known as internal duct flutes: flutes with a whistle mouthpiece, also known as fipple flutes. A recorder can be distinguished from other duct flutes by the presence of a thumb-hole for the upper hand and seven finger-holes: three for the upper hand and four for the lower. It is the most prominent duct flute in the western classical tradition. The recorder is first documented in Europe in the Middle Ages, and continued to enjoy wide popularity in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. The sound of the recorder is often described as clear and sweet, and has historically been associated with birds and shepherds. It is notable for its quick response and its corresponding ability to produce a wide variety of articulations. This ability, coupled with its open finger holes, allow it to produce a wide variety of tone colors and special effects.

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