

PARTHENIA

Lawrence Lipnik, vielle, tenor viol
Rosamund Morley, vielle, tenor viol
Beverly Au, vielle, bass viol
Lisa Terry, vielle, bass viol
with
Shira Kammen, vielle, renaissance violin
Robert Mealy, vielle renaissance violin

MUSICAL GAMES

In seculum viellatoris

Petrone

Lamento di tristano – La Rotta

Anonymous *Bamberg Codex*, 13th c.

Anon. *Robertsbridge Codex*, 14th c.

Anon. Italian 14th c.

Vray dieu d'amours

Fors seulement

La rousée du mois de May – En despit des faulx

Anton Brumel c. 1460-c. 1520

Brumel

Pierre Moulu c. 1485-c. 1550

La cara cosa

La Gamba

Cecus non judicat de coloribus

Anon. *Intabolatura nova*, 1551

Vincenzo Ruffo c. 1510-1587

Alexander Agricola c. 1445-1506

The Song called Trumpets

Quemadmodum

Fantasia

Robert Parsons c. 1535-1572

John Taverner 1490-1545

William Byrd 1543-1623

INTERMISSION

Suite of Dances

Paduana

Galliard

Allemand

William Brade 1560-1630

Canzon à 5 voc. Super Cantionem Gallicam

Samuel Scheidt 1587-1654

Set a6 in g

Paven

Fantazy

Aire

William Lawes 1602-1645

Church of Saint Luke in the Fields
Saturday, May 17, 2014, 8 p.m.

PROGRAM NOTES

Tonight's program charts a whirlwind tour through 300 years of music, moving from improvisational medieval genres to the more modern Baroque aesthetic of increasing compositional control, and through various incarnations of bowed string instruments, from vielles to viols to violins. The common thread uniting the various selections is the theme of "Musical Games," a title that takes its inspiration from Samuel Scheidt's 1621 collection of the same name.

In the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, the word "fiddle," or *vielle* in Old French, encompassed a wide variety of instruments that were precursors to the viol. Unlike the viol, the *vielle* typically had a flat soundboard and back, as well as a flat bridge that enabled all the strings to be played at once, creating a drone effect. The generic term "fiddle" could equally have applied to a number of regional variants including the *rebec*, which had a pear-shaped or tapered body and a vaulted back, and the *crowd*, a type of bowed lyre popular in northern Europe that developed into the Welsh *crwth* and Scandinavian *joubikantele*. One particular form of the fiddle, known today as the "figure-of-eight fiddle," was played downwards in the lap, yet this playing style eventually went out of fashion and was replaced by the practice of holding the instrument at shoulder height, a method that allowed the performer to play while walking or on horseback.

Our knowledge of the methods of construction and performance practice of the *vielle* is mostly limited to what we may glean from visual and literary sources, since very few bowed instruments from the medieval period have survived to the present day. These sources themselves, however, often betray a certain playfulness that resonates well with the "Musical Games" theme of this program. Northern European devotional manuscripts dating from the late 13th century, most often Psalters and Books of Hours, are full of fanciful and obscene drawings sketched in the margins. The pages of these sacred texts teem with imaginative creatures such as lion-reptiles and dragons with monk's heads, alongside scores of figures from daily life including peasants, shepherds, knights, jugglers, and musicians with their instruments.

Many representations of *vielle*-playing, like the image below, were intended as moral lessons. In other words, they show exactly how *not* to play the *vielle*: here, the illuminator substitutes a goat in place of a human musician, a jawbone in place of a *vielle*, and a garden rake in place of a bow. This illustration, one of nearly 700 such stunning images, was taken from the richly decorated Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, queen of France, a Book of Hours created between 1324 and 1328 by the eminent Parisian artist Jean Pucelle (active c. 1320–1334).



As Emma Dillon has reminded us, medieval reading was an oral/aural activity; words and prayers were meant to be read aloud from the page. By this logic, images of obscene sound thus suggest real, sounding events, in this case a parody of a performance on the *vielle*, a performance that would have been common in the everyday, secular soundscape of medieval Europe. Even though this representation of musical obscenity remains materially silent, its presence nonetheless challenges the text of the prayer at the center of the page. In Dillon's words, the soundworld represented in obscene marginalia "threatens to interfere with, or intrude upon, the real voice of the supplicants uttering their prayers," voicing what she terms an "oral counter-code" to the prayer itself. But there is also a second, more whimsical interpretation of the function of these images: the beautiful *grisaille* illuminations knowingly wink at us from the margins, just as they may have distracted Jeanne d'Evreux from her daily devotions, prompting contemporary and modern readers alike to recall the magic and mystery of everyday life.

The first piece on tonight's program, "In seculum viellatoris," literally "the fiddler's *In seculum*," also reflects the easy coexistence of the sacred and the secular in the medieval period. Drawn from the Bamberg Codex, the composition is built on an existing chant melody, the *In seculum* melisma from the Easter plainchant gradual *Haec dies*. This melody, in turn, provides the material for the tenor voice, accompanied by two newly composed upper voices in faster-moving rhythmic textures, like the other *In seculum* motets in the Bamberg Codex and countless other motets from the same era.

"In seculum viellatoris" is one of the few known surviving instrumental works from this period. More commonly, the titles of pieces made no reference to particular instruments, and practices of instrumental music were only preserved in the form of an unwritten pedagogical tradition passed down and maintained by professionals, since performers usually played from memory or improvised. On the other hand, there was no distinct separation between instrumental and vocal

music, as composers did not indicate specific instrumentation until well into the Baroque period. Therefore, in theory, even texted vocal music could take on multiple configurations in performance, realized for vocal ensemble, for voice with instrumental accompaniment, or for a purely instrumental ensemble. The most salient aspect of “In seculum viellatoris” is the hocketing, derived from the French word for “hiccup,” a process by which rests are creatively manipulated to produce a rhythmic patchwork that sounds like a musical hiccup. This distinctive feature earned these *In seculum* motets the moniker “hocket motets.” Extrapolating based on visual evidence from contemporary illuminations that show dancers and vielle players together, scholars have suggested that “In seculum viellatoris” was meant to accompany a springtime dance. Concordances with the Montpellier Codex, which also contains *pastourelles* and other cheerful songs that take place during the springtime or Eastertide, would seem to confirm this hypothesis. The anonymous songs from fourteenth-century codices, “Petronne,” “Saltarello,” and “Lamento di Tristano – La Rotta,” share the high-spirited, dance-like qualities of “In seculum viellatoris.” The three- and four-part songs attributed to Anton Brumel, and his contemporaries bring us into the mid-fifteenth century, when the viol was developed in Spain. By this time, composers had mostly abandoned the *formes fixes* that originally characterized the secular chanson genre in favor of simpler strophic forms and shorter poetic texts. The term “chanson” covered any polyphonic setting of a French secular poem, particularly highly elaborated love poems in courtly tradition of *fine amour*, which expressed desire for an unattainable female beloved of noble birth.

At the turn of the sixteenth century, instrumental music increasingly began to be appreciated for its own sake, fostered as a stand-alone genre by churches, patrons, and musical amateurs. In addition, the viol became the leading bowed string instrument of choice, definitively replacing the vielle. By the end of the century, instruments of the viol family would give way to those of the violin family, favored for their brighter timbre. Composers of the high Renaissance, in continental Europe as in England, delighted in the interplay between the symbolism of textual imagery and music. The

evocative titles of Robert Parsons’s “The Song Called Trumpets” and Vincenzo Ruffo’s “La Gamba in Basso e Soprano,” literally “The Leg in Bass and Soprano,” offer particularly vivid realizations of this kind of text-painting. “La Gamba,” for example, is full of witty musical puns in the form of ascending lines in stepwise motion and by ungainly leaps that mimic comically exaggerated footsteps, resulting in something akin to a sixteenth-century rendition of Monty Python’s Ministry of Silly Walks.

Yet another stylized walk of a different sort—that is, dancing—was no laughing matter. Social dancing was ingrained in the fabric of Renaissance life, and appropriate music to accompany it was indispensable. Dance music thus formed the backdrop of another musical game, during which women would screen for eligible marriage partners: the courtship game. Thoinot Arbeau wrote in his *Orchésographie* (1589), an influential Renaissance treatise on dance and manners, that dancing was the best means of evaluating a potential marriage prospect: “Dancing is essential in a well-ordered society, because it allows males and females to mingle and observe one another. How else does a lady decide whom to marry? Through dancing, she can tell whether someone is shapely and fit or unattractive and lame, whether he is in good health or has unpleasant breath, and whether he is graceful and attentive or clumsy and awkward.”

Renaissance musicians often assembled dances in pairs or groups of three. A popular combination was a slow dance in duple meter followed by a fast one in triple meter. William Brade’s *paduana* (*pavane*)–*galliard* represents a dance pair of this kind, a favorite in Italy, where both dances had originated, as well as England. Samuel Scheidt’s “Canzon à 5,” printed in a 1621 collection called “Musical Games,” from which this program takes its fanciful title, forms part of a series of dances and canzonas. William Lawes’s idiosyncratic Suite in G Minor, the latest and last selection on the program, rounds out the Baroque soundscape. In the music, Lawes revels in the compositional exercise of imagining ever more quirky, off-kilter harmonies that call to mind the original meaning of the term “Baroque,” “misshapen pearl.”

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Multi-instrumentalist and occasional vocalist **SHIRA KAMMEN** has spent well over half her life exploring the worlds of early and traditional music. A member for many years of the early music Ensembles Alcatraz and Project Ars Nova, and Medieval Strings, she has also worked with Sequentia, Hesperion XX, the Boston Camerata, the Balkan group Kitka, Anonymous IV, the King’s Noyse, the Newberry and Folger Consorts, the Oregon, California and San Francisco Shakespeare Festivals, and is the founder of Class V Music, an

ensemble dedicated to providing music on river rafting trips. She has performed and taught in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Europe, Israel, Morocco, Latvia, Russia and Japan, and on the Colorado, Rogue, Green, Grande Ronde, East Carson and Klamath Rivers.

Shira happily collaborated with singer/storyteller John Fleagle for fifteen years, and performs now with several groups: a medieval ensemble, Fortune’s Wheel: a new music group, Ephemeros; an eclectic ethnic band,

Panacea, the early music ensembles Sitka Trio, Calestone, Cançonier and In Bocca al Lupo; as well as frequent collaborations with performers such as storyteller/harpist Patrick Ball, medieval music expert Margriet Tindemans, singer Anne Azema, fiddler Kaila Flexer, and in many theatrical and dance productions, including the California Revels and The American Repertory Ballet Company. She has worked with students in many different settings, among them teaching summer music workshops in the woods, coaching students of early music in such schools as Yale University, Case Western, the University of Oregon at Eugene, and working at specialized seminars at the Fondazione Cini in Venice, Italy and the Scuola Cantorum Basiliensis in Switzerland. She has played on several television and movie soundtracks, including 'O', a modern high school-setting of Othello and "The Nativity Story", and has accompanied many diverse artists in recording projects, among them singers Azam Ali and Joanna Newsom. Some of her original music can be heard in an independent film about fans of the work of JRR Tolkien. The strangest place Shira has played is in the elephant pit of the Jerusalem Zoo. She has recently taken courses in Taiko drumming and voiceover acting.

ROBERT MEALY is one of America's leading historical string players. He has been praised for his "imagination, taste, subtlety, and daring" by the Boston Globe; the New Yorker called him "New York's world-class early music violinist."

Mr. Mealy began exploring early music in high school, first with the collegium of UC Berkeley and then at the Royal College of Music in London, where he studied harpsichord and baroque violin. While still an undergraduate at Harvard College, he was asked to join the distinguished Canadian baroque orchestra Tafelmusik. Since then, he has recorded and toured with many early music ensembles both here and in Europe, including Les Arts Florissants, the American Bach Soloists, Tragicomedia, Sequentia, the Newberry Consort, the Folger Consort, Seattle Baroque, Boston Baroque, and the Handel and Haydn Society. He has led the Mark Morris Dance Company at festivals in New York, Moscow, and New Haven, and accompanied Renée Fleming on the David Letterman Show. A frequent leader and soloist here in New York, Mr. Mealy is concertmaster at Trinity Wall Street, as they embark on a complete series of Bach cantata performances. Mr. Mealy is Orchestral Director of the internationally-acclaimed Boston Early Music Festival, and has led them in many festival performances, including a special performance at Versailles in 2009. Three of his recordings with BEMF have received

Grammy nominations. A devoted chamber musician, he directs the seventeenth-century ensemble Quicksilver, whose debut recording, *Stile Moderno*, was hailed as "breakthrough recording of the year" by the Huffington Post. He is also a member of the Renaissance violin band The King's Noyse, which has made eleven recordings for harmonia mundi usa. Through his interest in earlier repertoires, he co-founded the medieval ensemble Fortune's Wheel, which has appeared at early music festivals throughout the Americas, and at the Cloisters and the Frick Museum here in New York. A keen scholar as well as a performer, Mr. Mealy has been on the faculty of the distinguished Historical Performance graduate program at The Juilliard School since its inception, and became Director of the program in July 2012. In 2009 he was appointed Professor (Adjunct) at Yale University, where he directs the postgraduate Yale Baroque Ensemble. In 2004, he received EMA's Binkley Award for outstanding teaching and scholarship. He has recorded over eighty CDs on most major labels.

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 and Columbia University's Miller Theatre. Parthenia's performances range from its popular touring program, *When Music & Sweet Poetry Agree*, a celebration of Elizabethan poetry and music with actor Paul Hecht, to the complete viol fantasies of Henry Purcell, as well as the complete instrumental works of Robert Parsons, and commissions and premieres of new works annually. 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*, and *Within the Labyrinth*. The ensemble's 4th CD with MSR Classics will be released later in 2014: *The Flaming Fire - Royal Music from the Tudor and Stuart Courts*, with Ryland Angel, countertenor, and Dongsok Shin, virginal.