

Commissioned by and dedicated to Gilda Lyons and the Phoenix Concerts

Written for entelechron: Roger Zahab, violin; David Russell, 'cello; Robert Frankenberry, piano

The Corporation of Yaddo is thanked for providing the ideal circumstances for the creation of this work.

Fragile Farewell is a brief fantasia on the folk song "The Parting Glass", a song I am ashamed that I did not know until Gilda Lyons directed me to it. It's suffused with poignant regret, bittersweet love, and drunken resignation: kind of like life itself. The text follows:

*Oh all the money that e'er I had, I spent it in good company,
And all the harm, that e'er I done, alas it was to none but me,
And all I've lost for want of wit to mem'ry now I can't recall;
So fill to me this parting glass, Good night and joy be with you all.*

*If I had money enough to spend, And leisure time to sit awhile,
There is a fair maid in this town, Who surely has my heart beguiled,
Her rosy cheeks and ruby lips, I own, she has my heart in thrall,
So fill to me this parting glass, Good night and joy be with you all.*

*Oh all the comrades e'er I had, They are sorry for my going away,
and all the sweethearts e'er I had, They'd wished me one more day to stay.
But since it fall unto my lot That I should rise and you should not,
I'll gently rise and I'll softly call, Good night and joy be with you all.*

The ambiguous but expansive harmonic world of the piece derives from the interplay of two "vertical overtone rows": one rooted in the low C of the cello, the other radiating up from F, the tonic of Gilda's arrangement of the song:

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Fragile Farewell". It features two vocal parts, Voice I and Voice II, and a piano accompaniment. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are: "Oh all the money that e'er I had, I spent it in good company, And all the harm, that e'er I done, alas it was to none but me, And all I've lost for want of wit to mem'ry now I can't recall; So fill to me this parting glass, Good night and joy be with you all." The score includes performance instructions such as "accel.", "rit.", "A tempo", "In time ♩ = 52", and "Freely again". The piano part features complex rhythmic patterns and triplets.

Timing: c. 5 minutes