The SoundArt Foundation presents the11th Season of the

Flexible Orchestra

October 9th, 2014, Ukrainian Restaurant, New York City

**~VIOLAS PLUS~**

**Voyage for Aviva and Piano Daniel Goode**

Kamala Sankaram, soprano, playing Aviva, and then

her mother.

**Eight Patterns for Eight Instruments** (1979) **Tom Johnson**

**Brown Kamala Sankaram**

*For Ferguson*

**Viola Voila Alvin Curran**

***Flexible Orchestra 2014***

*Violas:*

Stephanie Griffin\*, Sarah Adams\*, Lois Martin\*, Adam Matthes\*,

Caroline M. Johnston, Lev 'Ljova' Zhurbin\* ,Gillian Gallagher

Jen Herman\*, Ji Hyun Son\*,Victor Lowrie\*

\* = violists in the Tom Johnson piece

*Flutes:* Karl F. Kraber

*Clarinets:* Joshua Sinton, Bohdan Hilash

*Saxophone*: Jeff Hudgins

*Percussion:* Chris Nappi

*Voice:* Kamala Sankaram

*Conductor:* Tara Simoncic

**Voyage for Aviva and Piano** by Daniel Goode

That is the title of a teaching piece I wrote for my niece when she was about six. It’s all hand-drawn and uses magic markers of various colors—the original is getting faded now. The events she sings of here happened about a year before when she was five. Around the same time as “Voyage,” I had written a piano solo called “Paths.” The repeated progression of six chords which underlies this short opera also appeared in the piano piece for Aviva. The very ending of the events described is remembered differently by different family members. I went with Aviva’s, though both could have happened. [DG]

**Daniel Goode**, composer and clarinetist,is founder and artistic director of the Flexible Orchestra. All recordings, programs, scores and pictures of the orchestra are at: <http://eamusic.dartmouth.edu/~larry/flexible_orchestra>

Daniel Goode’s blog is <http://danielgoode.com/>

**Brown** by Kamala Sankaram

"Brown" was written in response to the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO. The piece is based on the Abel Meeropol song, "Strange Fruit," as performed by Billie Holiday.

**Kamala Sankaram**. Praised as “strikingly original” (*NY Times*), Kamala Sankaram has received commissions from Beth Morrison Projects, HERE Arts Center, Anthony Braxton’s Tri-Centric Orchestra, and Opera on Tap, among others. Awards and grants include: Jonathan Larson Award, NEA ArtWorks, MAP Fund, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Meet the Composer, and the Asian Women’s Giving Circle. Residencies: HERE Artist Residency Program, the MacDowell Colony, the Watermill Center, the Hermitage, Con Edison/Exploring the Metropolis, and American Lyric Theater’s Composer Librettist Development Program. Her second opera, THUMBPRINT, premiered in the 2014 PROTOTYPE Festival, and was featured on NPR, as well as media outlets around the world. Also a performer, Kamala has performed with and premiered pieces by the Philip Glass Ensemble, the Wooster Group, Anthony Braxton, John Zorn, and eighth blackbird, among others.  She is the frontwoman of world music ensemble Bombay Rickey, which just released its debut album, "Cinefonia." She also holds a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology.

**Eight Patterns for Eight Instruments** by Tom Johnson

“Composed in the summer of 1979, as a commission from the San Francisco Conservatory New Music Ensemble, and was premiered by that group under its director, John Adams…. I had been reading some books about decorative design and tiling patterns... Two years after the premier I was working with an ensemble of eight violas for a recording of some of my *Symmetries*… and I asked the violists to read through a couple of movements of the *Eight Patterns…* It was a much more subtle kind of counterpoint than with a diverse ensemble, but it was clearly counterpoint. Sometime later Ulrich Ludat directed the piece in Germany with an ensemble of recorders… As in much of my music, I have not indicated dynamics and tempos. The music is concerned with pure forms and structures.” [TJ]

**Tom Johnson**, born in Colorado in 1939, received B.A. and M.Mus degrees from Yale University and studied composition privately with Morton Feldman.  From 1973 to 1982 he was an influential music critic for The Village Voice. Since 1983 he has lived in Paris.

He is considered a minimalist, since he works with simple forms, limited scales, and generally reduced materials, but he proceeds in a more logical way than most minimalists, often using formulas, permutations, predictable sequences and various mathematical models.

Johnson is well known for his operas: *The Four Note Opera* (1972) continues to be presented in many countries. *Riemannoper* has been staged more than 30 times in German-speaking countries since its premier in Bremen in 1988. Often played non-operatic works include *Bedtime Stories, Rational Melodies, Music and Questions, Counting Duets, Tango*, *Narayana's Cows*, and *Failing: a very difficult piece for solo string bass.* His largest composition, the *Bonhoeffer Oratorium,* a two-hour work in German for orchestra, chorus, and soloists, with text by the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, was premiered in Maastricht in 1996, and has since been presented in Berlin and New York."

**Viola Voila** by Alvin Curran

As far as the viola in my life goes, this is it… getting to write for a select 10 of them is surely enough but just imagine what 1000 violas would sound like—surely capable of a middle low vibration that could make Yankee Stadium levitate.

Joan Kalisch, since our fortuitous meeting in the class of ‘60 at the Yale School of Music remained a lifelong friend; with remarkable engagement she lived the contemporary like a natural. And so, after her violin studies, transferred most naturally to the viola with innate knowledge.

Daniel Goode’s inclusion of my new work in this program was for me, not only a special occasion to honor the memory of Joan but to embrace this underestimated instrument as composers have continued to do since Ravel’s times. The Viola in this sense is the most contemporary of all the string instruments… it automatically locates the music at hand in our time, and in our times. The Viola by definition is “far out” ne, conceptual—one could simply place these 10 violas on a table and the audience would instantaneously understand, even hear this gesture, -this “sound installation” as a piece of music for viola. Bill Viola himself would certainly understand this.

The music I wrote, like all of my work is autobiographical, it is a portrait of my self in the moment of creating a sequence of my numerous selves always different always the same—of composing pleasurable— sometimes “extreme” sounds at the very edges and capabilities of the instrument…. And hence my inclusion of the soprano clarinets and contrabass clarinets available for this concert.

The Viola itself opens in its very highest register – harsh imperfect unrewarding but supported by two equally screaming E-flat “piccolo” clarinets.

They are troping—as if blowing and scratching metaphors for something, an object, a memory, a lie, a dream, an illumination that had to do with Modugno’s unforgettable song “Nel Blu dipinto di Blu” (commonly known as ‘Volare’) which hit our shores in the late ‘50’s like everybody here, lived in Naples. I heard this for the first time while playing in a college dixieland band in a Barcelona nightclub. Thus the piece begins and my set of selfies leading to a near morbid chorale in F something (paraphrasing what Fritz Kraber said when I played a part of this for him in Rome last summer—his comments had much to do with the structure of this piece); Yes, and Fritz Kraber’s alto flute “obbligato” for the most part roams at will like a free spirit as I did on his Lambretta motor-scooter in Rome in the mid-60’s. Wanting to write slower than Feldman but with triadic longings that sound distinctly dysfuntional. but all along are the marvelous contrabass clarinets which root these chords in living coral reefs and underwater sub-woofer steam vents. Stuff happens along the way, for no reason, like the percussionist with a duck call in his mouth playing two flexitones like a clown at a birthday party. And some downtown seventies minimalism playing 16th notes on the back of a wooden drawer and a cardboard box… what else? Oh yes, this section for just the 10 violists who play a kind of written out improvisation in 5 quasi canonic groups of 2—is what gives each violist the role of prime soloist, in what probably sounds like a free-group improvisation—before receding into the collective sunset harmonies.

- Alvin Curran, Rome, Sept. 22, 2014

**Alvin Curran:** Very short Curriculum.

After some fifty years of professional activity, Curran continues to make music everywhere, with any one, with any thing, at any time and in any place. An exponent of his self-defined “New Common Practice,” his music is rooted equally in all forms of American popular music as well as in all forms of unpopular music.

For more detail, sounds, scores, writings and installations see: [www.alvincurran.com](http://www.alvincurran.com)

**The Flexible Orchestra** was formed in 2004 by Daniel Goode to create an orchestral sound from about fifteen (plus or minus) instruments by concentrating on one timbre or instrumental type plus several contrasting instruments. “Violas Plus” is the sixth version of the orchestra (cellos, trombones, flutes, accordions, clarinets were the earlier central choirs each with a different selection of contrasting instruments). And for each central choir alone a revival of a piece for that type is an historical look at “mono-timbral” ensemble pieces. The Tom Johnson piece is this year’s revival. Each orchestral array is kept for two seasons.

The Flexible Orchestra is recorded on “Annbling” by Daniel Goode (New World Records (80744-2), conducted by Tara Simoncic.

*This concert is dedicated to the memory of our dear friend, violist Joan Kalisch, who played in the Flexible Orchestra, and many other ensembles and orchestras.*

*Special thanks to Stephanie Griffin, Jody Oberfelder, and Ann Snitow*

*in the preparation of this concert.*