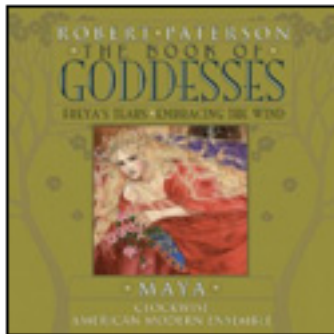


## **ROBERT PATERSON: The Book of Goddesses; Freya's Tears; Embracing the Wind – MAYA trio/Clockwise duo/American Modern Ens. – American Modern**

December 30, 2011  
By Daniel Coombs



Book of Goddesses' = ROBERT PATERSON: The Book of Goddesses for flute, harp and percussion; Freya's Tears for violin and harp; Embracing the Wind for flute, viola and harp – MAYA trio/Clockwise duo/Members of American Modern Ens. – American Modern Recordings AMR1034, 61:23 \*\*\*\*:

I first became familiar with Robert Paterson's music through his Star Crossings album on AMR and found the New Yorker's melodic, fluid and accessible style quite enjoyable. This new AMR release, based on a very interesting thematic concept, does not disappoint. Paterson has a gift for melody and his music blurs the lines between concert hall contemporary, easy listening and even New Age in a most appealing way!

The concept here begins with Paterson's admitted interest in writing a work based on various goddesses from an assortment of cultures, religions and ethnography. So a commission from the flute, harp and percussion trio, MAYA, presented the opportunity to write a series of small works based on individual goddesses as indicated. The Book of Goddesses, therefore, exists in the present form – as a nine movement work – or may be performed in separate pieces. The overall sound here is beautiful, relaxing and does not present as typical contemporary music. The sonic connections to the implied cultures is direct, purposeful and – predictably – the very sultry combination of flutes of various timbres, harp and ethnic percussion lends itself to a “world music” feel. Each movement is based on a particular goddess and the sound one usually associates with the culture and region that begat her. They are as follows: Sarasvati (Hindu), Xi Wang Mu (Chinese), Aphrodite (ancient Greek), Brigit (Celtic), Estsanatlehi (Navajo), Xochiquetzal (Aztec), Oya (Yoruba), Yemaya (Santeria/Cuban), The Muses (Greek). The last movement is interesting unto itself; the nine muses are here represented by a group of three – the trio – playing ancient modes associated with the instruments with which the individual goddess is traditionally depicted; Terpsichore and Erato (lyre) and Euterpe (flute). The piece(s) vary their timbral interest with the use of different flutes—such as the bass flute in Estsanatlehi and piccolo in Xochiquetzal. The performers, Sato Moughalian, flutes, Jacqueline Kerrod, harp, and John Hadfield, percussion, are all wonderful. I cannot honestly say that hearing this work without any knowledge of its source would cause me to think “contemporary classical” right away, but I loved it!

Paterson's Freya's Tears is intended as a sort of companion piece to The Book of Goddesses. In this case, violin and harp portray aspects of three different goddesses; again from three different cultures. They are, in order, Iris—who in Greek mythology communicates messages by traveling in rainbows, Freyja—from the Norse mythology, who sheds tears of gold in mourning for her lost love, the god Odur. Lastly, the goddess Sekhmet is a product of ancient Egypt, who – as half human female and half lioness figure – was a fierce hunter and protector of the pharaohs. Each section in this piece, too, has a certain ethnic or

indigenous feel to it and I found it quite attractive! The Clockwise Duo of Marc Uys, violin, and Jacqueline Kerrod, harp, plays very well throughout.

This fascinating collection closes with Embracing the Wind, a trio for flute, viola and harp. This fairly short propulsive work has a thematic connection to the others in that Paterson envisioned an Olympic athlete (perhaps one of the first) running against the wind. Paterson's own notes point out that the music has a wind-like flexibility to it with fluctuations in tempo and dynamic throughout. A bit more minimalist-inspired than the Goddess works, this is a charming and pleasant work making good use of the darker qualities of the viola and makes a terrific entry to the fairly sparse catalog of new works involving viola. Flutist Moughalian and harpist Kerrod are joined here by violist Danielle Farina and the ensemble does a great job!

It needs to be mentioned that this album is packaged in some of the most beautifully illustrated manner I have ever seen. Big kudos to artist/illustrator Kris Waldherr for her depictions of the goddesses. The package itself is a form of "book of goddesses". Her own work, The Book of Goddesses, is a well known example of her work which is available in many forms, including greeting cards. She is a major talent.

I am officially a fan of Robert Paterson's work. His music is clean, clear, easy to follow, emotive and accessible to any audience. I think his music from this work as well as Star Crossings really does appeal to a crossover listening market and it should. I also think Robert would write terrific film music and I would love to hear his music live sometime.

I strongly recommend you study these goddesses. It may lead to adulation.

<http://audaud.com/2011/12/robert-paterson-the-book-of-goddesses-freyas-tears-embracing-the-wind-maya-trioclockwise-duoamerican-modern-ens-american-modern/>