

Dithyramb *for oboe and clarinet* by Richard Wilson

A dithyramb is a song in honor of the god of fertility, wine, and drama: Dionysus. It dates back at least to the 7th century B.C. From the 5th century B.C. it was commonly accompanied by the most important of ancient Greek instruments, the aulos. About the aulos we know that it had at least one reed and may have had two, and that it is nearly always pictured being played in pairs by one player. The ancient dithyramb was evidently not especially wild or frenzied but rather hymnic and invocalional.

In my own Dithyramb, I have written for a pair of reed instruments, one single and one double, which are played by two players instead of one--certain ancient secrets being lost forever. I would describe the piece as ceremonial, lyrical, and only mildly 'Dionysian' at one point: a passage near the end in which the instruments alternate in rapid succession a short grace-note figure.

The work was composed in 1983 at the request of Meyer Kupferman, who programmed and performed in the première.

--RW