

*Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* by Richard Wilson

During our association of more than twenty years, I have heard Blanca Uribe play--live or on tape--the following concertos: Bach, in D minor, Mozart, in C major (nos. 13 and 21), Beethoven, numbers two through five, the Schumann, Liszt, in E-flat, Brahms, in D minor, Tchaikovsky, in B-flat minor, Stravinsky, the Capriccio and the Concerto with winds, and Ginastera, his first. Without its having been deliberate, I believe that each of these works has influenced my concerto to one extent or another although it would be foolish to try to list all of the ways in which this is true. Among the important relationships are: thematic transformation in the first movement of the Schumann and in my finale; the timbral affinity between clarinet and piano exploited by Schumann and Liszt and which I favor throughout; bell sounds interacting with the piano, made famous by Liszt, and which figure in my second and third movements; harp figuration taken up by the piano, found especially in Beethoven's Fourth as well as in Schumann, Liszt and Brahms, and which I cannot seem to do without; passages in double octaves, from Tchaikovsky and Brahms, appearing in my first movement; and an extended orchestral exposition upon which the piano later comments, found in all Mozarts, Beethovens, and the Brahms D-minor, which is central to my first movement.

Of course I hope that there is something of me in this work as well. I have written two large--and complex--solo piano works for Ms. Uribe in the past, and I believe that the concerto is an extension of these pieces, which I regarded as explorations of the rich potential of the instrument. I wanted my concerto not to be an orchestral work with piano obbligato--which is how a number of recent concertos strike me--but rather a very pianistic statement set against the orchestra, which always contents itself with a simpler and more direct language.

This concerto, written especially for Blanca Uribe, is dedicated to the memory of Jack Romann, who was for years director of the Concert and Artist Department of the Baldwin Piano Company. A much-admired figure among pianists and other musicians, Jack was a close friend of Blanca's. I got to know him through her. His untimely death in May, 1987 left everyone who knew him deeply saddened. Blanca and I thought that at least one piano concerto should be written in his memory. This is the result. Though some might find it jarring to have a movement entitled Capriccio directly follow one entitled Threnody, I feel this to be a juxtaposition that Jack would have understood, appreciated, and thought appropriate.

The premiere performance of this work took place at Bard College, Vassar College, and Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, on May 3,4,5 of 1991. Blanca Uribe was the soloist and Leon Botstein conducted the Hudson Valley Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra.

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