

*Concerto for Violin and Chamber Orchestra* by Richard Wilson

Given the extraordinary array of already-existing masterpieces in the genre, it is hard to think of a more intimidating assignment than to write a violin concerto. I have been haunted by a long list of favorites: several by Bach, several by Mozart, the Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Dvorak, Bartok, Berg, two by Prokofiev, and--ultimately--the Stravinsky. What have these masters left unsaid, unbowed, and unsung?

I have chosen the format of three connected movements the last of which, a moto perpetuo, shows the soloist finally assuming a dominant role. Until this assertion of authority, with the exception of a few cadenza-like passages, the violin shares in the discourse, sometimes leading, sometimes following, after the fashion of chamber music. This plan, by which the solo gains in confidence and assertiveness, has a two-fold purpose: to give a sense of organic growth to that part and to insure sufficient contrast between the outer movements. The middle movement is perhaps the most unusual of the three in its use of tuneable tom-toms and certain aleatoric devices that cause the tempo to be temporarily suspended.

By coloring the string orchestra with oboes, horns and drums, and omitting flutes, clarinets, bassoons and brasses, I hoped to arrive at a distinctive character in the accompaniment to support and complement the plaintive, rhapsodic, somewhat hebraic manner of much of the solo part.

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