

RICHARD WILSON



Persuasions
Lord Chesterfield
To His Son
Fixations
Sonata for
Viola & Piano

Persuasions is a solo cantata with instrumental interludes. There are six sections, three of which (sections 2, 4, and 6) involve settings of love poems by Thomas Carew (c. 1595-c. 1639). Four players employ a total of six instruments—alto flute, oboe, English horn, bassoon, contrabassoon, and harpsichord—but in ensembles of different size and makeup, ranging from solo harpsichord in part 5, to a quartet of alto flute, oboe, bassoon and harpsichord in part 6. No two sections have the same instrumentation. The purely instrumental portions provide contrast of mood and style but are not explicitly related to each other or to the vocal settings.

Despite the chromatic melodic and harmonic idiom, listeners may notice several distinctly baroque features: the melismatic treatment of salient words and syllables in the vocal line, the ornamented reprise within the harpsichord solo, toccata-like keyboard figuration in sections 3 and 5, as well as the use of harpsichord in the first place. These features seemed appropriate to the setting of texts from what might be considered the early baroque.

With respect to the poetry of Thomas Carew, it is well to refer to Henry Lawes (1596-1662), court composer to Charles I, whose oeuvre includes over 400 songs, and who seems to have had a special sympathy for the poetry of Carew. Nearly forty of Lawes' songs are settings of poems by Carew. These settings, such as I have been able to see, are largely homophonic and extremely clear in their declamation. They show a loving concern for weighting and nuance, for the telling communication of the subtleties and ironies of the text. John Milton, in a well-known sonnet "To My Friend Mr. Henry Lawes," praised this composer, who "First taught out English Music how to span Words with just note and accent." Advertisements for books of poems by Milton, Suckling, and many other poets of the time make clear that collaboration with Lawes was a point of prestige. Charles Burney, on the other hand, found it suspicious that Lawes was so well regarded by literary figures, evidently thinking this to be a sign of weak musical content. In any event, I have tried to bear in mind the model of Lawes—his lucidity—despite the melismas and considerably more complex textures of my settings.

The voice of the poet is, presumably, masculine directed toward a feminine object ('Celia'). But these matters may not have been any simpler in the 1600's than they are now. My setting, while singable by a tenor, is intended for a soprano because of the registration and timbral affinity with the winds. I am counting on the enlightened listener to set aside gender stereotypes.

Persuasions was commissioned by the Library of Congress under the auspices of the Mae and Irving Jurow Fund. It was premiered by Judith Nelson, Colin Tilney and others, at the National Academy of Sciences, November 30, 1990. The dedication is to my wife, Adene, on the occasion of our twentieth anniversary.

Lord Chesterfield To His Son is my second extended work for solo cello. The first, *Music for Solo Cello*, was written in 1971, the year of my marriage, at the request of Fred Sherry. *Lord Chesterfield* is intended for my son, Jamie, who at age 12 is a budding cellist. Knowing that he may doubt *my* counsel, I have arranged that he receive an abundance of solemn advice from an 18th-century gentleman.

Lord Chesterfield To His son was premiered by Fred Sherry at the Greenwich House Music School, New York City, on November 14, 1991.

Fixations. Among the older meanings of *fixation* is: the process of reducing a volatile spirit or essence to a permanent bodily form, such as the conversion of mercury into a solid. This seemed to me an appropriate way to describe a composer's effort to give shape to musical ideas that are amorphous and fleeting in their incipient state. "Bird in Space" was inspired by certain Brancusi sculptures by that name. "Shadowings" and "Flashback" take their titles largely because of musical procedures employed: parallel motion in the former, a parenthetical structure in the latter.

Fixations is dedicated to Blanca Uribe, who gave the premiere on January 28, 1986, in Skinner Hall, Vassar College.

Sonata for Viola and Piano was written in 1989 at the suggestion of Rudolf Firkusny—a musician I have long admired—for a recital he was planning with Walter Trampler—another musician I have long admired. After the piece was written, circumstances prevented the concert from taking place. The premiere was thus postponed until November 14, 1991, where it was given by Mr. Trampler

and Blanca Uribe, with Mr. Firkusny's blessings. In four reasonably short movements, the work exhibits piano figuration possibly inspired by Mr. Firkusny's memorable playing of a Martinu concerto in London. Improbably, the ghost of Hindemith, a famous violist, hovers some distance in the background, influencing mainly the final movement.

Richard Wilson

Persuasions, Lord Chesterfield To His Son, Fixations, and Sonata for Viola and Piano are all published by Southern Music Publishers Inc. (ASCAP).

Texts for Poems by Thomas Carew

Lips and Eyes

In Celia's face a question did arise,
Which were more beautiful, her lips or eyes?
"We," said the eyes, "send forth those pointed darts
Which pierce the hardest adamantine hearts."
"From us," repli'd the lips, "proceed those blisses
Which lovers reap by kind words and sweet kisses."
Then wept the eyes, and from their springs did pour
Of liquid oriental pearl a shower;
Whereat the lips, moved with delight and pleasure,
Through a sweet smile unlock'd their pearly treasure
And bade Love judge, whether did add more grace
Weeping or smiling pearls to Celia's face.

Mediocrity in Love Rejected

Give me more love or more disdain;
 The torrid or the frozen zone
Bring equal ease unto my pain,
 The temperate affords me none;
Either extreme of love or hate,
Is sweeter than a calm estate.

Give me a storm; if it be love,
 Like Danaë in that golden shower,
I swim in pleasure; if it prove
 Disdain, that torrent will devour
My vulture-hopes; and he's possess'd
Of heaven, that's but from hell released.
 Then crown my joys or cure my pain;
 Give me more love or more disdain.

Secrecy Protested

Fear not, dear love, that I'll reveal
Those hours of pleasure we two steal;
No eye shall see, nor yet the sun
Descry, what thou and I have done.
No ear shall hear our love, but we
Silent as the night will be;
The god of love himself (whose dart
Did first wound mine and then thy heart),
Shall never know that we can tell
What sweets in stol'n embraces dwell.
This only means may find it out:
If, when I die, physicians doubt
What caused my death, and there to view
Of all their judgments which was true,
Rip up my heart, oh! then, I fear,
The world will see thy picture there.

Richard Wilson was born in Cleveland in 1941. He studied piano, cello, theory and composition at the Cleveland Music School Settlement. After graduation from Harvard in 1963, *magna cum laude* in music, he received the Frank Huntington Beebe Award for study in Europe. He took his master's degree in music composition at Rutgers in 1966, at which point he joined the Vassar faculty, where he is currently Mary Conover Mellon Professor of Music.

Mr. Wilson is the composer of some sixty works ranging in medium from solo flute to full orchestra. These have been performed in major halls in New York, Washington, Boston, Cleveland, San Francisco, London, Berlin, Frankfurt, Zürich, Milan, Graz, Stockholm, Leningrad, Tokyo, Bogota, and various cities in Australia. Among orchestras that have recently performed Mr. Wilson's work may be counted the San Francisco Symphony, the London Philharmonic, the Pro-Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, and the Orquesta Sinfonica de Colombia. In May, 1991, Blanca Uribe gave the premiere of Mr. Wilson's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra with the Hudson Valley Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, Leon Botstein, conducting.

Richard Wilson has been designated Composer-in-Residence with the American Symphony Orchestra beginning in 1992-93. In that same year he is also a Guggenheim Fellow.

Amy Burton has appeared in concert with the Israel Philharmonic, the National Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Houston Symphony, and Indianapolis Symphony. Among her operatic credits are performances with Zürich Opera, Scottish Opera, Washington Opera, and San Diego Opera. She has also been a frequent participant in the New York Festival of Song (NYFOS), where she has performed works by William Bolcom, Richard Wilson, and John Musto.

Gilbert Dejean free lances in the New York area, performing with such ensembles as the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, the Long Island Philharmonic, the Opera Orchestra of New York, the Northeast Pennsylvania Philharmonic, and the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players.

Marc Schachman performs frequently with the New York Chamber Soloists, the Orchestra of St. Luke, and the Festival Winds. An exponent of historical oboes, he is a founding member of the Aulos Ensemble and the Amadeus Winds. His many recordings appear on the Sony, EMI, L'Oiseau Lyre, Musical Heritage Society, and Harmonia Mundi labels.

Fred Sherry, just completing his term as Artistic Director of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, made his solo debut in Carnegie Recital Hall in 1969. A founding member of Speculum Musicae and Tashi, Mr. Sherry has appeared with the San Francisco Symphony, the American Composers Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the New Japan Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, and L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande.

John Solum is a founder and director of the Bath Summer School of Baroque Music in England as well as co-founder of the Connecticut Early Music Festival. He has performed in 37 countries on five continents. His many recordings include the Mozart flute concertos and Bach flute sonatas on period instruments.

Walter Trampler made his debut as a violist in Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* in Berlin in 1935. Upon coming to the USA he joined the New Music Quartet, later became a member of the Yale Quartet, and also played with the Budapest, Juilliard, Guarneri and Emerson quartets. He recorded the Mozart and Brahms quintets with the Budapest Quartet and the Brahms piano quartets with the Beaux Arts Trio. As a soloist, he has given first performances of works by Fortner, Henze, Perle, Persichetti, Berio, Neikrug, Bainbridge, Wernick and many others.

Blanca Uribe was a prize winner at the Beethoven Competition in Vienna, the Chopin International Competition in Warsaw and the Van Cliburn International Competition in Fort Worth, where she also won the Special Award for Romantic Music. Her repertoire includes the 32 Beethoven sonatas, which she performs in cycle, and the *Suite Iberia* of Albéniz, which she has recorded and performed many times in its entirety. In October, 1991, Ms. Uribe made her debut as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra in the Schumann Concerto.



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ALBANY RECORDS U.S.
P.O. Box 5011, Albany, NY 12205
Tel: 518.453.2203 FAX: 518.453.2205

ALBANY RECORDS U.K.
Box 12, Warton, Carnforth, Lancashire LA5 9PD
Tel: 0524 735873 FAX: 0524 736448

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