

CONCERTO for violin and orchestra (1993)

Dan Welcher

This work is my fourth concerto, preceded by *concerti for flute* (1973), *bassoon* (1975) and *clarinet* (1989). It is intended to be a true vehicle for the soloist; the orchestration is spare whenever the violin is present, and the forms are clear and well-defined. But unlike any of my previous works in this medium, this concerto aims at a lighthearted spirit that is not tart or jazzy. In brief, I aimed to write a work that would stand alongside the first concerto of Prokofiev, the *Stravinsky concerto*, or the *G-major concerto* of Mozart: ebullient, sometimes playful, and more charming than profound. In choosing G major (both the first movement and the last movement end in this key) as a basic key-center, I was keenly aware of its "humoresque" quality, as exploited by Mahler in his *Fourth Symphony*, Dvorak in his *Eighth* (as well as in his own *Humoresque*), Mozart in his "*Papageno*" music and *G major Piano Concerto*. My music is not diatonic—there is a twelve-note row that binds all three movements—but more often polytonal, with the G-major material being supported by a pentatonic set founded on F#. The subtitles for the three movements gave me images from which to work. The first movement is called "*Games and Songs*", the second is "*March, Quickstep, and Duel*", and the finale is "*Lullabye and Tarantella*." All are themes from childhood and youth, but they are not programmatic in any sense. There is no real cadenza, except for a link between the first and second movements in which the violin moves from the innocence of children's games into the slightly more serious world of playing soldier. The final movement has an air of nostalgia, of knowing that innocence is being lost forever, but with the playful spirit still intact.

Formally, the three movements make a balanced whole. The first movement contains four sections in a modified (A-B-C-AB) sonata-allegro structure. A cadenza links the end of this movement to the beginning of the second movement (March), which follows a loosely interpreted march-with-trio format: March-Quickstep (dotted rhythms prevailing) - Duel/Cadenza (a sort of "trio", with pairs of snare drums and trumpets)-Retreat (recapitulation). The major/minor key juxtapositions throughout this movement offer a mood that is either sardonic or bluesy (take your pick), but at the climax of the Duel, a Mahlerian theme in D major appears in mock-grandiose plumage.

The third movement functions as both slow movement and rondo. It begins in B-flat, with a sweet, sad lullabye climbing ever higher in the solo part. At mid-point, a demonic tarantella begins; growing by degrees until the climactic theme from the March movement reappears. This precipitates a transitory passage for the orchestra that fulfills the unfinished prophecy of the second movement in glorious D-major, and eases the shift back to G. The work ends in a transcendent recapitulation of the lullabye, with soft, undulating chords in the upper strings supporting the soloist's stratospheric song. The Concerto for Violin and Orchestra was commissioned by the Aspen Music Festival, in honor of Dorothy DeLay's 75th birthday. It is dedicated to my longtime friend and Chamber Symphony alumnus, Paul Kantor.

— Dan Welcher

FIRST SONATA for violin and piano (1956/1984) William Bolcom
I Legend, II Nocturne, III Quasi-Variations: Scenes From a Young Life

Ever since I was small I have been fascinated by two musical sounds more than any other: the voice and the violin. I cannot sing—although I have “perfect pitch,” a gift that is more a curse than a blessing. I cannot seem to get my voice to agree with what my ear tells me is right – and I have never shown aptitude for any other instrument than the piano. When I was about 10 we trundled out my grandfather’s imitation Stradivarius (made in Czechoslovakia, I believe) and I took a few not-very-successful lessons; when the violin was stolen out of the back seat of my father’s Buick, that was the end of that.

However, I had the wonderful luck about that time to get to know a practicing violinist well and, through him, the violin literature intimately. Gene Nastri, who was then string and orchestral director for the schools of Everett, Washington, where we then lived, was kind enough to play through the little violin-and-piano tunes I wrote for him, interspersed with long reading sessions of the Beethoven and Mozart violin sonatas and much else. I can’t think of a better way for a non-player to find out about the history and psychology of that instrument than what Gene afforded me, and I shall always be in his debt.

The First Sonata for Violin and Piano was composed in 1956 during my freshman year at the University of Washington in Seattle. It was written for Peter Marsh and his then wife Joanna, who never did perform the piece; the next spring the violinist Joy Aarset and I premiered the sonata at a university concert. The present revised version was requested by the Hanley Daws – Katherine Faricy Duo of Saint Paul, who premiered it there in 1984.

I have mostly tightened the piece from the first version – over 200 measures of repetitious passages have been excised, as well as a figure in the last movement – but I rewrote only slightly, trying to keep the youthful energy of the piece. Only three measures have been added, in the second movement, to fill in a link I always felt missing. I’ve always had an affection for this sonata and am glad for the opportunity to present it in this new version.

— William Bolcom
May 14, 2002

ANOTHER RAG FOR RAGS **for violin and piano** (2001)

Dan Welcher

This little piece is a transcription, (and to some extent a re-composition) , of a work I composed in 1981. Jorge Mester, the longtime Music Director of the Aspen Music Festival, used to have an Old English Sheepdog named Rags. The dog was, for all practical purposes, the mascot of the entire Festival: Rags would attend rehearsals and sometimes concerts, and even sat on Jan DeGaetani's foot during a memorable performance of the Vaughan Williams *SONGS OF INNOCENCE*. When this beloved pet passed on, Jorge asked me to write a "Requiem for Rags". I thought about it, and decided that a "Rag for Rags" was a better idea. The first version was for piano solo, then I arranged it for brass sextet and percussion in the style of a New Orleans funeral piece: the piece begins slowly, then (at the Trio section, marked "Rags trots into Heaven"), ends joyfully at a faster clip. This was the version that was played, as an intermission feature between the halves of an Aspen Festival Orchestra concert that summer, as a memorial to the dog.

I made the violin and piano version at the request of Paul Kantor especially for this CD, and while it follows the original in terms of notes, it adds several elements for the solo violin. Most notable among these is a literal transcription of the special whistle that Jorge used to call his dog, rendered in harmonic glissandi.

— Dan Welcher

GRACEFUL GHOST RAG:

William Bolcom

Concert Variation for violin and piano (1979)

I suppose it is no longer respectable to like those violin-and-piano bonbons of Fritz Kreisler – the Caprice Viennois et al—but I am afraid I developed a taste for them in my early days, playing with Gene Nastro in grange halls and women's musical clubs all over Washington State. When the Murray Louis Dance Company asked me in 1979 for a rag suite for Murray's dance piece, *Afternoon*, I incorporated rags by Scott Joplin, James Scott, Joseph Lamb, and myself into a suite for clarinet, violin, and piano. David Shifrin, Sergiu Luca and I played the premiere with the dance company at the New York City Center that fall. One of the two rags I used for the *Afternoon Cakewalk suite* was my Graceful Ghost rag, written in 1970 in memory of my father, Robert Samuel Bolcom.

Later in 1983 I extracted my arrangement of my own rag, Graceful Ghost for solo piano, and reworked it for violin and piano as a wedding present for Sergiu and Ann Luca. As might be imagined, this Concert-Variation for Violin and Piano is written almost as if designed for Kreisler himself, with a sly intimation of Venuti surfacing here and there. Joe Venuti was incontestably the greatest jazz violinist of his and our time, who coupled an extremely developed technique with a wonderful, nuanced, swinging style that was copied by everyone else in detail. I am glad that, finally, classically-trained violinist have begun to appreciate the contributions of Venuti, "Stuff" Smith and others to American violin repertoire, and my Graceful Ghost concert variation is an homage to their rich tradition.

— William Bolcom

May 14, 2002

Critic Royal S. Brown, writing in High Fidelity magazine in 1974, called **Dan Welcher** (b. 1948 in Rochester, New York): "one of the most promising American composers I have heard". Welcher, now fifty-five, has been steadily fulfilling that promise ever since. With over ninety works to his credit, more than half of which are published, Welcher has written in virtually every medium, including opera, concerto, symphony, wind ensemble, vocal literature, piano solos, and various kinds of chamber music. Also a highly respected conductor, Welcher has made guest appearances with a number of leading professional orchestras and ensembles in the US, and was for ten years Assistant Conductor of the Austin Symphony Orchestra.

Dan Welcher has won numerous awards and prizes from institutions such as the Guggenheim Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The Reader's Digest/Lila Wallace foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, Meet The Composer, the MacDowell Colony, The Corporation at Yaddo, The Atlantic Center for the Arts, the American Music Center, and ASCAP. From 1990 to 1993, he was Composer in Residence with the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra (Donald Johanos, Music Director). His orchestral music has been performed by more than fifty orchestras, including the Chicago Symphony, the St. Louis Symphony, and the Dallas Symphony. His recent large works include commissions from the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, and two consortia of wind ensembles from prominent music schools. His largest recent work is *JFK: THE VOICE OF PEACE*, an hour-long oratorio for narrator, solo cello, chorus and orchestra, premiered by the Handel & Haydn Society Orchestra and Chorus, with cellist Paul Tobias and narrator David McCullough, in March 1999. In 2002, his opera *DELLA'S GIFT* was presented by the New York City Opera.

His works for wind ensemble have opened an entirely new avenue of expression for him: since 1994 he has written six new works for that medium, which have won him an Ostwald Prize and made him one of the most-performed composers for wind ensemble in the USA. There are more than fifteen commercial recordings of his music on various labels, and his music is published by Theodore Presser Company. Dan Welcher holds the Lee Hage Jarnail Regents Professorship in Composition at The University of Texas at Austin.

Larry Rachleff has been Music Director and Principal Conductor of Symphony II in Chicago since 1992 and Music Director of the Rhode Island Philharmonic since 1996. In the fall of 2002, he was appointed Music Director of the San Antonio Symphony. Meanwhile, he is Professor of Conducting and Music Director of the orchestra at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music in Houston, a position he has held since 1990.

Rachleff has appeared as guest conductor with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Seattle Symphony, the Houston Symphony and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. In 1993 he was selected as one of four American conductors to lead the Cleveland Orchestra at Carnegie Hall under the mentorship of Maestro Pierre Boulez.

William Bolcom (b. May 26, 1938 in Seattle, Washington, now residing in Ann Arbor, Michigan) entered the University of Washington at age 11 to study composition privately with John Verrall. Later he studied extensively with Darius Milhaud, both in California and Paris. He received a Master's Degree from Mills College and was the first conferee of a Doctor of Music Degree from Stanford University. Among other honors are the 1988 Pulitzer Prize in Music for his 12 New Etudes for Piano, two Guggenheim fellowships, two Koussevitzky Foundation grants and an award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Other awards include the Marc Blitzstein Award for Musical Theater, the Henry Russel Award (the University of Michigan's highest academic prize) and Lectureship, and in 1994 the University named him Ross Lee Finney Distinguished University Professor of Music. Notable is his 1992 investiture in the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Bolcom has been commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Saint Louis Symphony, the Vienna Philharmonic, the Baltimore Symphony, the National Symphony, the Seattle Symphony, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, The Boston "Pops" Orchestra, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the American Composers Orchestra, the Orpheus Ensemble, Yo-yo Ma and Emanuel Ax, and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra among others. Other commissions have involved the Carnegie Hall Centennial, the 50th Anniversary celebrating the UN Charter, the Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum, the Library of Congress, the Tenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, the 80th birthday of Isaac Stern, and the centennial of the invention of flight. The Lyric Opera of Chicago engaged Bolcom to compose four operas. McTeague (1992) and A View From the Bridge (1999) were highly praised, and the latter is being performed by the Metropolitan Opera, Opera Hagen (Germany), and the Portland Opera (Oregon). His third opera for the Lyric will be produced in their 2004 season.

As a solo pianist and concert artist with his wife, mezzo-soprano Joan Morris, Bolcom has recorded and performed widely. His music, from ragtime to theater and from chamber to symphonic works, has gained worldwide prominence. As a pianist (with Joan Morris) Bolcom is represented by ICM Artists. William Bolcom's publisher is Edward B. Marks Music Company.

Chicago's **Symphony II** was founded in 1991 by members of the Lyric Opera Orchestra. The first concert, on March 17 of that year, featured Larry Rachleff as conductor. Mr. Rachleff, now serves as Music Director and Principal Conductor. Symphony II offers four concerts annually. Symphony II also provides the musicians for the Ravinia Festival Orchestra in the summer and has a significant outreach program under the auspices of Ravinia Festival led by Symphony II's Director of Educational Projects, Lawrence Rapchak.

Guest conductors and soloists have included such musical luminaries as Zubin Mehta, John Browning, Jeffrey Siegel, Elmar Oliveira, Sharon Isbin, Rachel Barton and Elizabeth Futral. This recording is the Orchestra's second CD. Its first features two concertos by Pulitzer Prize winner Richard Wernick on the Bridge label. In 2002, Symphony II was named "Orchestra of the Year" by the Illinois Council of Orchestras. Symphony II has been hailed by critic John Von Rhein of the Chicago Tribune as "one of the finest symphonic orchestras in the Nation".



Since 1978, **Mr. Kantor** has combined a performance career with an intense commitment to teaching. He has served as concertmaster of six orchestral ensembles including the New Haven Symphony, the Aspen Chamber Symphony, the Aspen Festival Orchestra and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. An avid chamber music devotee, he has performed extensively as a member of the New York, Lenox and New Haven String Quartets, the Berkshire Chamber players, National Musical Arts and the Michigan Chamber Players. In the summer of 1994 Mr. Kantor gave the world premiere performance of Dan Welcher's *Violin Concerto*, commissioned by the Aspen Music Festival in honor of his teacher and mentor, Dorothy DeLay. In the 2002 season,

Mr. Kantor presented the first public performance of John Corigliano's "*Red Violin Caprices*" in Washington, D.C. Mr. Kantor can be heard on three recordings of chamber music of the twentieth century on C.R.I., Delos and Mark Records.

Recognized as one of the principal violin pedagogues of his generation, Mr Kantor held concurrent appointments at the Yale University School of Music, the New England Conservatory, and the Juilliard School. Since 1980, he has spent summers as an artist/faculty member at the Aspen Music Festival & School.

For fourteen years Mr. Kantor taught at the University of Michigan School of Music in Ann Arbor. In 2002 he was appointed to the faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music as Eleanor H. Biggs Distinguished Professor of Violin.

Music of William Bolcom and Dan Welcher

PAUL KANTOR, Violin • WILLIAM BOLCOM, Piano Symphony II - Larry Rachleff, conductor

CONCERTO for violin and orchestra (1993) ASCAP

Dan Welcher 26:43

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|----|-------------------------------|------|
| 1. | I. Games and Songs | 8:15 |
| 2. | II. March, Quickstep and Duel | 9:25 |
| 3. | III. Lullabye and Tarantella | 9:03 |

FIRST SONATA for violin and piano (1956/84) BMI

William Bolcom 20:49

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| 4. | I Legend | 7:56 |
| 5. | II Nocturne | 3:27 |
| 6. | III Quasi-Variations: Scenes From a Young Life | 9:26 |

7. **ANOTHER RAG FOR RAGS** for violin and piano (2001) ASCAP Dan Welcher 4:04

8. GRACEFUL GHOST RAG:

William Bolcom 5:37

Concert Variation for violin and piano (1979) BMI

Total Time 57:13

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