

Fantasia Fiorentina  
program note

The first thing to say about this piece is that its relationship to its title is not completely straightforward. It was composed in Peterborough, New Hampshire at the MacDowell Colony--not in Florence. And it is a Fantasy only in the sense that much of the music is exuberant and free-wheeling. Furthermore, the title is in Italian but (at least I feel that) this is the most "American"-sounding piece I have written so far. In spite of all of the above, however, the title has somehow made sense all along.

Fantasia Fiorentina is both an abstract musical statement as well as a story about a few characters, each of which freely transforms itself across the duration of the piece. These characters are recognizable through a fair degree of repetition and a great deal of cross-referencing or interplay--in other words, a state of affairs similar to that of a long, involved late-night conversation between two old friends. And in fact the old friends are the violin and the piano--the two instruments that have remained central to my connection with music.

Fantasia Fiorentina was written over a concentrated three-week period of work in the summer of 1988. The MacDowell Colony is a truly wonderful place where composers, writers and visual artists are given a studio and time to do their work. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to write music there, and I think this piece reflects some of the joy in being part of such a stimulating environment.

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