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VIOLET’S INVENTION: A PIANO PIECE FOR VIOLET ARCHER IN HER SEVENTY-FIFTH YEAR

Larry Austin

During Violet Archer’s tenure at the University of North Texas, Denton, from 1950 to 1952, I was her student in private composition and piano lessons. As my first real composition teacher, Violet was perfect. She enthusiastically encouraged and guided my efforts, from my *Sonatina* for violin and piano (1950) to my *Concertino* for flute, trumpet, and string orchestra (1952) four pieces later: five bit pieces in two years! Yes, she instilled in me, early on, a passion to invent, to explore, and to be creatively productive. What fluency and invention I have sustained through the years since then was first nurtured by her challenging model as a prolific and ingeniously inventive composer. This piano piece, *Violet’s Invention*, is composed for her as a small token of thanks to and admiration for her in this, her seventy-fifth year. (Note: The premiere performance of *Violet’s Invention* was presented on 7 March 1991, in Concert II of the Society of Composers, Inc., 1991 Region VI Conference, Adam Wodnicki, pianist, in Irons Recital Hall, University of Texas, Arlington, Texas.)

*Violet’s Invention* is a canon whose pitches derive from anagrammatic extrapolations of the letters in Violet Archer’s name. Form, rhythmic design and melodic/harmonic continuity were created through a “Violet Archer ordering” of virtually all of the metaphorically appropriate anagrams that can be made with the two words of her name, themselves metaphors for what I sense as the Apollonian and Dionysian sides of her nature and her music.

The indication “chromatics exclusive” means that all chromatic alterations affect only the immediate pitch; “col pedale” indicates the pianist’s use of the sustaining pedal through the course of the piece to enhance the resonance and contrapuntal quality of the presto sections, contrasted with the quietly ringing sonorities of the subito adagio sections. Only the topmost pitch of the “tr” three-note clusters in the first part of the piece is to be trilled, a half-step higher.

Larry Austin
Denton, Texas
22 August 1988

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