

Upstream (2006)

For solo violin and string orchestra or string quintet

By Abigail Richardson

Duration: 24 minutes. The piece requires contrabass with C extension.

This piece was written for my husband, violinist Michael Schulte.

It was commissioned by *New Music Concerts* with the assistance of Gabriel and Cary Jeremias and Arthur Weisz of Effort Trust.

Abigail Richardson was born in Oxford, England and moved to Canada as a child. Ironically, she was diagnosed completely and incurably deaf at the age of five. Upon moving to Canada, her hearing was fully intact within months. She received her *Bachelor of Music* from the University of Calgary and her *Masters* and *Doctorate* degrees from the University of Toronto. Her music has been played at the Festival Présences of Paris, Winnipeg New Music Festival, Newfoundland Sound Symposium, Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, Festival of the Sound, etc. Abigail won the first Karen Kieser Prize for Canadian music and the Canadian Music Centre Prairie Region award. Most significantly, she was awarded the top prize for composers under 30 at the prestigious International Rostrum of Composers in Paris. Her music is now being broadcast in 35 countries. She has been commissioned by such groups as the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Victoria Symphony, Radio France, Tapestry New Opera, New Music Concerts, Theatre Direct Canada, Southern Ontario Chamber Music Institute, Talisker Players, Festival Winds, etc. Abigail is affiliate composer with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Violinist Michael Schulte began serious study in Lübeck, Germany. He performs as soloist at venues such as the Toronto Arts Centre, Glenn Gould Studio, Roy Thompson Hall, at private concert series and music festivals. Aside from solo activities, he is an avid chamber musician on both violin and viola and a regular teacher at the Southern Ontario Chamber Music Institute. Michael enjoys performing his wife Abigail Richardson's work and regularly performs, records, or conducts it for national radio broadcast. He held nine concertmasterships in his orchestra days and currently plays with the Turini, Schulte, Bloemendal Trio in addition to a busy teaching schedule. Critic Hugh Fraser comments on "the smooth virtuosity of this elegantly accomplished violinist..."

Upstream, my first concerto for my first (and hopefully last) husband, violinist Michael Schulte, may be performed with soloist and string orchestra or string quintet. It represents many driving or reflective tendencies of an individual's existence with many varied switches, often sudden, ranging from serious to outright goofy in one section. Bob Aitken says of it, "It's a Liebestraum, you can tell." With this piece I have, for the first time, not followed through on my original concept. I intended for each movement to be built around a different programmatic idea but the piece didn't listen to me. It took on a direction of its own once I started writing. It still has three movements and several themes from the first two movements return in the last. I think of *Upstream* in several different ways: the individual moves against a current, sometimes with the current, sometimes faster. Sometimes the individual (being the violinist, of course) is witnessed from a different perspective, upstream - visible from a distance and getting gradually closer until arriving and suddenly disappearing. The violin actively fuels the current or flows along with it. Michael premiered this piece with New Music Concerts at the Glenn Gould Studio, in Toronto, and has played it numerous times since. It has also been adapted for full orchestra.

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