

The Commission

Woody Vasulka
45 min.
1983

Text and character of Paganini by Ernest Gusella;
Text and character of Berlioz by Robert Ashley;
With Cosimo Corsano, Ben Harris, Andrea Harris, and
Davis Ossman; Staging by Bradford Smith;
Camera by Steina Vasulka; Videotape editing by Peter
Kirby.

In operatic form, this episodic narrative revolves around an incident between the 19th century virtuoso violinist Niccolò Paganini and his contemporary, Hector Berlioz. The anecdote concerns a gift of 20,000 francs which Berlioz offers to the destitute Paganini as commission for a piece of music – an extraordinary event between artists. The romantic myth of 'the genius' is given full attention by **Woody Vasulka**. Specialized digital techniques allow his images to transcend video with multiple representations and aural mutations.

