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.