
THE COMMISSION

The premiere of Vasulka's long-awaited video opera is presented as a special benefit for Tone Roads West. Inspired by an historical event, the 60-minute exploration of light/sound/actor/theatrical space deals with the commissioning of Hector Berlioz to write a new work for violinist Niccolo Paganini. The commission later proved to be fraudulent. Noted composer Robert Ashley portrays Berlioz, and internationally video artist Ernest Gusella appears as Paganini. Local actor Cosimo Corsano is the Mortician, with Ben Harris as Paganini's son and Andrea Harris as the Voice. Steina Vasulka is the camera operator and sets are by sculptor Bradford Smith. This event is ticketed separately as a fund-raising event for **TONE ROADS WEST**.

Internationally-acclaimed video artist **WOODY VASULKA** was born in Czechoslovakia and now lives in Santa Fe with his wife and co-worker Steina. In the 1960s they moved to New York, where they founded The Kitchen, one of the

THE VASULKAS

Woody Vasulka

Issues of memory, history, and narrative, and their relationship to electronic imaging have been central concerns of Woody's work.

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1983; camera Steina Vasulka; with Robert Ashley and Ernest Gusella; 45 min.; color

"The Commission represents Woody's initial foray into narrative structure, and his first experiment with anti-narrative strategies. He chose the story of two romantic and legendary artists—composers Hector Berlioz and Niccolò Paganini—to experiment with the concept of producing imaging effects with specific narrative meaning. The story of this "electronic opera" centers on a commission a patron wanted the violinist Paganini to present to his rival Berlioz. Paganini represents the flamboyant yet eventually destitute artistic genius, rejected by the church and unknown, whereas Berlioz is the pompous, egocentric artist. Woody's central purpose in this tape is to subvert the narrative and produce narrative elements through video effects; in each of the tape's eleven segments a different effect is employed for specific narrative meaning: Paganini's frenzied violin playing is echoed in shadows of image movement; the exchange of the commission is made tense by a constant flip/flop technique between the two men; and Paganini's embalming is given an ethereal and deathlike quality by the characteristic skeletal effect of the scan processor." — *Marita Sturken*