

**W. Jay Sydeman**

**Prelude**  
(1983)

&

**Duo No. 2**  
(c. 1986)

for Viola and Cello

The two-movement *Duo* for viola and cello dates from the mid-eighties. I was attending various string workshops as a born-again violist and made these small attempts to expand a very limited repertoire.

Movement 1 is lyric and extremely heartfelt while maintaining an imitative contrapuntal mode. Movement 2 starts out canonically, becomes more independently playful and ends in a sort of dual (duel) toccata. It is, actually, quite a showcase work for the two instruments.

*Prelude* for viola and cello is deeply meditative in character. The duo stays in the lowest portion of both instruments and creates the feeling of Gregorian chant while employing a contemporary vocabulary. It was incidental music to a play, around 1983 when I was teaching at the Steiner College in Fair Oaks, CA.

– W. Jay Sydeman, February-March 2011, March 2012

**W. Jay Sydeman's** life mirrors the breadth and variety of his music. Born in New York in 1928 and educated at Manhattan's Mannes School of Music, he quickly became one of the most sought-after and honored composers of his generation, receiving commissions from such prestigious groups as the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Tanglewood Music Center, and the Boston Symphony, which premiered his orchestral work in memory of John F. Kennedy in 1966. "Sydeman uses a whole battery of far out techniques," wrote the *New York Times*, "but he has an uncanny ability to throw in the whole avant-garde machinery as if it were the simplest, most normal way of making music in the world ... More than many of his colleagues, he seems to know what will sound well, and he works for some remarkably attractive, pure textures. His sounds seem to grow from a physical sense of exactly what material is right."

In 1970, after a heady period that included awards from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Library of Congress, Sydeman left New York – and composition – to begin a journey of personal and artistic exploration.

"Around 1980," he has written, "I returned to composition – at first a large number of choral works which reconnected me to the source of all music – the human voice. Out of this new lyric impulse have evolved all of my works since that time – more romantic, more accessible. I create music for the musician."

– Howard Hersh,  
Artistic Director of "Music Now"

Sydeman is part of a composers' group in Nevada City annually producing the "Wet Ink Festival of New Music." He now lives in Mendocino and hosts a bi-weekly program on KZYX, "The Mind of a Composer," 10 am to noon on Mondays, introducing and commenting on contemporary music.

**Duration:** Prelude – circa 1:15  
Duo No. 2 I. Andante – circa 1:40  
II. Poco allegro – circa 1:40

**To contact the composer:**

Jeanne Duncan, Sydeman Archive Publications  
707-962-0394  
[www.williamjaysydemman.com](http://www.williamjaysydemman.com)

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# Prelude

## for Viola and Cello

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(1983)

Edited by Gloria Justen and  
Hannah Addario-Berry

Rubato, with reverence ♩ = c. 60

Con sord. *mp*  
Con sord. *freely, as a meditative chant*

Vla

VC

5

A

*allarg.----- a tempo*

10

*allarg.----- a tempo*

*lunga* *p*

*lunga* *p*

B

14

*mp* *pp*

*p*