

**Anything You Can Do . . .
For Violin and Vibraphone
(2006)
Program Note**

The mind searches for the oddest of couples.

Felix Unger and Oscar Madison.

Julia Roberts and Lyle Lovett.

The violin and the vibraphone.

Aside from the letter "V", the two instruments have almost nothing in common. We consider: the violin is the most aristocratic instrument in the Western musical tradition, the prima donna of the instrumental world, an instrument that has had, lavished upon it, more extraordinary music than any other since its invention roughly 475 years ago.

And then there's the vibraphone, a percussion instrument with pitched metal bars and motor-driven resonators that produce a vibrato. Invented around 1925, it's an instrument created for dance bands and popular music.

Anything You Can Do . . . is a confrontation between these two musical opposites. A sense of contest characterizes the entire piece, as the vibraphone seeks to establish its bona fides side by side with the violin, which in turn attempts to keep the vibraphone in its place by beating it at its own game.

The first movement is conceived as a race, in which each instrument acts like the other - the violin explosively and percussively, and the vibraphone with lengthy bowed passages - while seeking to shake off the other. The movement concludes with the violin paying a series of huge, chords and a long, sustained triple-stop that, much to its fury, the vibraphone manages to match with a sustained double-stop of its own. The movement ends in a draw.

The second movement begins with the violin doing its best to match the vibrato patterns of the vibraphone's variable motor. Ultimately, the

violin breaks free and plays a broad, arioso-styled melody. The vibraphone tries to match it, but cannot; try as it might, its fixed range cannot reach the stratospheric heights of the violin. Advantage violin.

The third movement is constructed in three sections. In the outer sections, rapidly rising and falling lines and counter rhythms pervade as each instrument seeks to gain an advantage over the other. In the middle section, alternating, hocket-like phrases give way to bent notes and glissandi in the vibraphone, which infuriates the violin ("how dare this upstart percussion instrument do something ordinarily associated with me?"). The movement concludes with the violin once again attempting to lord its greater range over the vibraphone by playing a long sustained F# - the same pitch that conquered the vibraphone at the end of the second movement - only to have the vibraphone top it by playing a harmonic a full seven notes above the F#. Game, set, match: vibraphone.

Some respect, please, for the new kid on the block.

Anything You Can Do . . . is dedicated, with a thousand and one thanks, to Victor Romasevich and Jack van Geem.