Duo for Violin and Cello (1964) is published by C. F. Peters © 1967.

The Duo for violin and cello dates from 1964 and is demanding both musically and technically. For all its atonal leanings, the first movement has a religious (cosmic) feeling. The second movement is virtuosic in every sense (including the page turns), but well worth the effort. It is one of the more demanding duos in the literature. It has been recently beautifully recorded by San Francisco's Hannah Addario-Berry and Gloria Justen, indicating it has survived the test of time. The second movement in particular fully explores many interesting string textures. It was recently played on the radio and I got a call from a cellist (apparently retired opera singer turned stringy), who wanted the score, saying it was as mighty as Wagner, but she liked the tunes better.

– W. Jay Sydeman, April 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: I. Largo religioso – circa 4:00
II. Allegro – circa 5:00

To contact the composer:
(707) 937-1658
jaysyde@gmail.com
www.williamjaysydeman.com