Il Prete Rosso
for amplified violin, motion sensor, and interactive computer music

Charles Nichols
Il Prete Rosso, for amplified violin, motion sensor, and interactive computer music, was inspired by the violin concertos of Italian Baroque composer and virtuoso violinist Antonio Vivaldi, who was nicknamed The Red Priest, because of his red hair and Catholic ordination. In the piece, the amplified violin is recorded live and played back in four parts, spatialized around the audience, as an accompaniment with itself. Following the violinist, a computer musician triggers wah, phaser, and delay effects, that process the amplified violin. A motion sensor on the wrist of the violinist tracks bow arm performance gesture, to interactively control the frequency sweep of the wah effect. The full premiere at Virginia Tech was performed with the 124.4 channel 3D surround-sound system, installed in the Cube of the Moss Arts Center.

Composer, violinist, and computer music researcher, Charles Nichols explores the expressive potential of instrumental ensembles, computer music systems, and combinations of the two, for the concert stage, and collaborations with dance and video. He teaches Composition and Computer Music at Virginia Tech, and has earned degrees from Eastman, Yale, and Stanford. He has received support from the NEA, NSF, New Music USA, and Prop Foundation, and recognition from the National Academy of Music, La Fundación Destellos, Bourges, ASCAP, and the Montana Arts Council. He was a visiting scholar, at the Sonic Arts Research Centre at Queen's University Belfast, N. Ireland, a visiting composer, with the Namaste Ensemble in Città di Castello and Rome, Italy, and a resident, at the Ucross and Brush Creek Foundations, in Wyoming. His recent premieres include Nicolo, Jimi, and John, a concerto, for amplified viola, interactive computer processing, and orchestra, three movements, inspired by the virtuosity of Paganini, Hendrix, and Coltrane, and Sound of Rivers: Stone Drum, a multimedia collaboration, with sonified data, electric violin, and computer-processed sound, accompanying narrated poetry, dance, animation, and computer-processed video, based on scientific research into how stoneflies navigate throughout their lifecycles, by the sound of rivers.