

The Missing Pen

I stand in the kitchen, conducting an octet
for chicken, onions, mushrooms, carrots,
tomatoes, wine, garlic, and herbs. There is
a recipe somewhere, but like any musician
who has played the same piece often enough
I have no need to look at written notes.
And as I wave my baton I find myself
imagining this same time spent
on a different composition—one
more like the octet by Mendellsohn
presently competing for my attention.
I have studied enough music, after all,
recall aspiring to such a life not long ago.

I force myself to push the pangs aside, return
to the world in which I actually reside where
consolation is available in the form of a truth,
threadbare from repeating: Our musical octets
most often end up like just some random poem—
imagined, perhaps even written down, but
never heard by another's ears. (What right
have we to dream of practiced, or learned
by heart?) I can, on the other hand, know
with some reasonable certainty
who is likely to consume this pot of stew.

Steve Bloom
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