

Colin Jeffrey, violin
Leslee Heyes, piano

Concerto in A minor, Opus 53

Allegro ma non troppo

Adagio ma non troppo

Allegro giocoso ma non troppo

Antonin Dvořák
(1841-1904)

Intermission

Sonata No. 2 in A minor, S.1003

Andante

Allegro

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Sonata, Opus 134

Allegretto

Dmitry Shostakovich
(1906-1975)

Presented in partial fulfilment for the requirements of Music 445B



Dvorak wrote his only violin concerto during the summer of 1879 after the idea had been suggested to him by the violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim. The idiomatic violin writing in this piece owes much to Joachim, who suggested certain changes to the solo part after being given the score for review. The violin concerto was written at a time when Dvorak was composing detailed music, which is not as heavily influenced by Slavic traditions as his earlier music. This music is quite dramatic, with widely contrasting expressive styles, often placed closely together. The first movement has an unusual "cadenza like" opening with unaccompanied flourishes by the soloist. The second movement is reminiscent of Brahms with lush, serene melodic lines which are embellished by the soloist. Dvorak relies on his native style in the Finale, giving the movement a strong Czech folk element.

Johann Sebastian Bach is one of the greatest composers of the Baroque era. His pieces are both refined and innovative, and explore every musical form of this time period. Bach tended to focus on one compositional form at a time, developing that form to its highest potential before moving on. It is because of this process that his unaccompanied sonatas for violin, cello and flute were all written within a relatively short period of time. The violin sonatas are well suited to the instrument and challenge its technical ability. An unusual characteristic of these works is their employment of rolled chords and arpeggios to create the effect of multiple parts. The third movement of the Sonata No. 2 in A minor contains an unusual example of this technique where sustained quarter notes are played simultaneously with eighth notes to create two contrasting voices. The fourth movement is a dramatic and much expanded version of the traditional jig form.

The Sonata Op. 134 is the only violin sonata that Shostakovich wrote. It was composed in 1968. At this time Shostakovich was in the last ten years of his life, and had earned an international reputation as one of the most important composers of the mid twentieth century. Shostakovich was experimenting with twelve note composition during this period, and while his violin sonata includes some twelve note themes, it does not make as much use of them as his twelfth quartet written during the same time. Musically this sonata follows the example of Prokofiev's first violin sonata with the same layout of movements and gestural character. The allegretto movement is very harsh and raw with few resting places for the listener. The movement portrays a feeling of sarcastic pain and a sense of uncontrolled wildness.