



PROGRAM NOTES

Petro-Canada Hall
M.O. Morgan Building

Thursday, 20 April 2006 at 6:00 p.m.

Michael Collins, violin Leslee Heys, piano

Sonata #5 in G
1. Aurora

Eugène Ysaÿe
(1858-1931)

In Memoriam

Michael Parker
(1948-)

Partita #2 in d minor
5. Ciaconna

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Intermission

Violin Concerto in d minor
1. Allegro moderato
2. Adagio di molto
3. Allegro, ma non tanto

Jean Sibelius
(1865-1957)

Presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Music 445B



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Eugène Ysaÿe was the pre-eminent violinist at the turn of the twentieth century, renowned as much for his unique musical personality as for his prodigious technique and tonal command. Inspired by Josef Szigeti's performance of a Bach sonata, Ysaÿe wrote six unaccompanied sonatas, dedicating each to a violinist he admired. In this movement, from the sonata dedicated to Mathieu Crickboom, the range of colour and rhythmic freedom Ysaÿe brought to his playing are preserved.

Born in Toronto, for thirty years Michael Parker has been making a name for himself as one of Newfoundland's most prominent composers. In this work, written in 1991, Parker responds in an intimate violin-piano duo to the deaths of both his parents in the previous five years. Despite the deeply personal nature of such a composition, Parker ultimately saw the work as reflecting grief in a universal light, not confined to his individual experience.

At the core of the violin repertoire lie Bach's solo sonatas and partitas, and at their core lies the monumental Ciaccona. Whereas Bach's dance movements tend to be short pieces in binary form, three or four minutes' music in the most sluggish hands, the expanded dimensions of this work reflect its emotional range. Around the slow, repeating bass in Sarabande rhythm Bach weaves a series of intricate variations spanning the expressive extremes of the Baroque idiom.

Sibelius wrote his Violin Concerto for Willy Burmeister, but, needing cash, rushed into a disappointing premiere with Viktor Nováček. Burmeister generously chose to overlook the composer's waywardness, accepting a revised concerto. A desperate Sibelius handed this, too, to an inferior soloist for immediate remuneration, and Burmeister furiously vowed never to play the piece. The Concerto languished until Jascha Heifetz championed it in the 1930s, and it is now the most-performed concerto of the century.

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