

Program Notes
Howard Levy & Fox Fehling

Mozart Sonata in F K. 377, 1781.

Fox's violin was already 47 when Mozart composed this sonata- he was only 26, living in Vienna. It is extremely upbeat and playful, with the opening piano melody suggesting peals of laughter and the violin playing furious triplets. Soon, the piano's left hand arpeggios sound like someone racing around in a circle full speed - you can almost feel the centrifugal force - and then coming to a stop, before bursting out running again. It almost sounds like a game of hide- and- seek.

The second movement is a theme and variations in Dm. Each one has its own character and personality, with an even balance of roles between the violin and the piano. (He slyly foreshadows the 3rd movement arpeggios in the 5th Variation.) The last variation is a Siciliana, which reflects Mozart's great fondness for Italian music, coming from his many visits to Italy.

The third movement is a minuet, full of swoops, bows, and pirouettes, dance moves that went along with this popular courtly dance form. Mozart loved to dance, knew these forms inside - out, and took great delight in writing dance music into his sonatas. He took Minuets and turned them into transcendent art with his genius and creativity. Once again the arpeggios appear in this movement, this time sounding more like cascades of falling water. After building to a climax the dance slows down and comes to an end, and you can imagine the partners' final bows...

Dvorak 4 Romantic Songs, Opus 75 (1887)

We are playing 3 of these, leaving out the 2nd one in Dm, and adding as a 4th song the lovely "Songs my Mother Taught Me", in an intense and emotional arrangement by Fritz Kreisler. Dvorak had a personality overflowing with heartfelt emotion, which he loved to convey in his compositions. On Valentine's Day, his music is a must - romantic songs and even one about his mother- what could be more appropriate?

A Rodgers and Hart Medley:

My Romance - Richard Rodgers/Lorenz Hart, 1936

This wonderful tune was written for "Jumbo". It was made famous in Jazz by the late pianist Bill Evans, and Howard and Johnny Frigo used to play it often as a harmonica/violin duet.

Lover- Richard Rodgers/Lorenz Hart, 1932

The prolific Richard Rodgers wrote this waltz for the show "Love Me Tonight". Jazz musicians like soloing over its descending chromatic changes, and often play it in fast 4/4 time. Tap dancers like to dance to it in stop- time rhythm. Our version draws on all of those styles.

Intermission

Schubert Sonata in Am Opus 137 #2 (1816)

This is from a set of 3 Sonatas that Schubert composed at the age of 19. (They are also played on clarinet.) Schubert had an amazing knack for writing endless streams of beautiful melodies. The first movement of this Sonata contains yearning minor key melodies full of pathos, alternating with major key passages of piano triplets, sounding like flowing water with the violin playing wistfully in 4 over the top.

The second movement, in F major, is almost a Minuet, but it has long winding passages that shift keys and modalities, taking you on a trip through many shades of emotions, even into deep pathos and tragedy, finally ending on a wistful major chord.

The Scherzo, in D minor, is playful, but also angry and stormy. It has a short Trio section that is slightly slower and almost courtly, then back to the first melodies without repeats, as Scherzos always go.

The last movement, back A minor, is melancholy, with rising and falling melodies that sound hopeful but sad, then going suddenly into angry triplets that fall back down into passages where the violin and piano seem to be questioning each other, finally culminating into what sounds like the ending of a minor- key church hymn. Then, the original melody comes back and proceeds, although not in a straight line, to the finish.

I hear a lot of doubt and anguish in Schubert's music, although the melodies are relentlessly beautiful. The tragic circumstances of his life caused his early death at 31...

Schubert - Ave Maria Opus 52 #6

This is one of the most well- known and beautiful melodies in music. We made our own arrangement for piano/harmonica and violin, based on the arrangement by August Wilhelmj.

Spanish Serenade - H. Levy (1961 and 1996) Howard started writing this piece at age 10 and realized that it was just the first part of a longer piece when he met Fox in 1996. They had both attended Manhattan School of Music, he on Saturdays from age 9- 12, she as a college student. By coincidence, Howard and Fox lived on the same block while she was in NY going to Manhattan in 1972 (which they discovered within minutes of their first meeting). After sharing memories of the taste of the tuna sandwiches in the school cafeteria, Howard started to think about the little tune he wrote in 1961, and realized that he now had to add more sections. Those start with the entrance of the violin. Recorded on "Cappuccino".

My One and Only Love - Guy Wood and Robert Melin, 1952. One of my favorite Jazz standards, also recorded on "Cappuccino".

Stephanie's Dance - H Levy 1987 Howard composed the playful "Stephanie's Dance" for his daughter when she was 4 years old. Recorded on Trio Globo's "Carnival of Souls" cd in 1995.

Macedonian Fiddle Tune - In 1995, Howard played in Skopje, Macedonia with Lebanese Oud player Rabih Abou Khalil. He visited the bazaar and bought several cd's. One of them had this wonderful tune on it, and he transcribed and arranged it. The first section is in a fast 6/8, and then the piece goes into 9/8, a common rhythm in that part of the world. It blazes to a crash-bang finish.

Program notes by H. Levy