

Stephen Hartke

CAOINE

for Solo Violin

Program Note

Composed between December 1979 and January 1980, **Caoine** (pronounced 'keen') derives its name from the laments once sung by the professional wailing women of Ireland. The form of the traditional *caoine* is one of refrain and verse, where each repetition is varied according to the taste and skill of the performer. In transferring what is an essentially vocal genre to the violin, I have been guided by the folk-fiddling tradition of the Shetland Islands, in particular the highly expressive form known as the 'slow air,' music which was first introduced to me by Pamela Swing, a folklorist specializing in that tradition. Additionally I have made use of a scale which appears in some 19th century transcriptions of Irish fiddle tunes. This scale, which can easily give rise to strong melodic dissonances, is the result of a natural sort of fingering pattern that existed in Irish fiddling before the influence of classical European music 'corrected' it out of existence.

