

Sunday, October 10, 2010, 3pm  
Hertz Hall

David Finckel, *cello*  
Wu Han, *piano*

Beethoven: The Complete Sonatas for Cello and Piano

PROGRAM

- Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) Sonata No. 1 in F major, Op. 5, No. 1 (1796)  
Adagio sostenuto—Allegro  
Rondo: Allegro vivace
- Beethoven Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Op. 5, No. 2 (1796)  
Adagio sostenuto ed espressivo—  
Allegro molto più tosto presto  
Rondo: Allegro

INTERMISSION

- Beethoven Sonata No. 3 in A major, Op. 69 (1808)  
Allegro ma non tanto  
Scherzo: Allegro molto  
Adagio cantabile—Allegro vivace

PAUSE

- Beethoven Sonata No. 4 in C major, Op. 102, No. 1 (1815)  
Andante—Allegro vivace  
Adagio—Tempo d'andante—Allegro vivace
- Beethoven Sonata No. 5 in D major, Op. 102, No. 2 (1815)  
Allegro con brio  
Adagio con molto sentimento d'affetto  
Allegro fugato

*This afternoon's performance is made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsor Kathleen G. Henschel.*

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Beethoven's Complete Sonatas for  
Cello and Piano

The Early Works: The Sonatas and  
Variations of 1796

These works are milestones of the cello literature. Although during the 18th century the cello had gradually come to be regarded as a solo as well as an accompanying instrument, neither Mozart nor Haydn had composed a cello sonata. Beethoven was the first major composer to write works with equally important roles for the cello and piano.

Sonatas Op. 5, Nos. 1 and 2

Fast Facts

*Composed:* Berlin, in the late spring or summer of 1796. At the time, Beethoven was on his first and only significant concert tour, which also included the cities of Prague, Leipzig and Dresden. He was 25 years old.

*Dedicated to:* King Friedrich Wilhelm II, nephew and successor to Frederick the Great. The king was an amateur cellist and devotee of the instrument who had entertained both Mozart and Haydn at his court. Both of these composers had already dedicated string quartets featuring prominent cello parts to the king.

*First performance:* In 1796, during the visit to Berlin, at the royal palace. Beethoven played the piano, and it is thought that Jean-Louis Duport, rather than his older brother, Jean-Pierre, was the cellist. The Duports were renowned virtuosos who lived in Berlin and played in the king's orchestra. It is likely that Beethoven and Jean-Louis performed the G major "Judas Maccabaeus" variations on this occasion as well.

*Published:* February 1797, Vienna.

*Other works from this period:* Piano Trios, Op. 1, and Piano Sonatas, Opp. 2 and 7. In the following year, Beethoven began composing sonatas for piano and violin.

Notes

Sonata No. 1 in F major, Op. 5, No. 1

In the *Adagio sostenuto* introduction, Beethoven begins his first cello sonata with caution—hesitations and tense silences lead to melodic ideas which are left undeveloped, as though the sonata is struggling to begin. After a climactic cadential flourish, the music pauses and the piano introduces the main *Allegro* theme, ornamented in the style of Mozart and full of details and virtuosity. The second theme begins with serious-sounding chromaticism but ends light and carefree, moving through virtuosic scales to a sequence in staccato eighth-notes full of playful rhythmic confusion. In the exuberant closing material, the pianist's hands leap over one another with forceful answers from the cello, followed by a contemplative coda leading to the repeat of the exposition. The development section shows the composer's ever-lurking stormy side and a surprise *forte* announces the recapitulation. As in many of Beethoven's concertos, there is a lengthy written-out cadenza, beginning with a short fugato passage. An obsessive 16th-note figure in the right hand of the piano leads to an unexpectedly droll and sleepy *Adagio*, which is interrupted by a wild *Prestissimo*. The movement concludes happily and vigorously.

The *Rondo: Allegro vivace* is an exciting ride full of virtuosic outbursts from both instruments. One can imagine the court's amazement at the spectacle of Beethoven devouring the keyboard in this finale. The only calm moments are dreamy interludes of piano arpeggios over cello drones. Near the finish, a long ritard winds the action down to a standstill, and when the composer has us in the palm of his hand, he ends the work with an explosion of notes from both instruments.

Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Op. 5, No. 2

Beethoven enjoyed surprising and even scaring his listeners. The opening *Adagio sostenuto ed espressivo* does just that. A jarring G minor chord is quickly hushed by the marking *fortepiano*, itself a novel idea, and a spooky scale descends in

the piano (foreshadowing the slow movement of the “Ghost” Trio, which he would write in 1808). The motifs and themes of this *Adagio* are more fully developed than those of the F major sonata’s introduction, creating a movement of much greater substance. Unbelievably long silences near the end hold the listener under a spell, which is broken quietly by the brooding *Allegro molto più tosto presto*. In contrast to the previous sonata, the cello takes the theme first, passing it back and forth with the piano. This is a remarkable movement, emotionally multilayered even through the frequent stormy sections. In the development, the excitement continues until a new theme enters, dancelike and delicate, the accompaniment changing from nervous triplets to steady eighth notes. At the recapitulation, the theme is beautifully harmonized, intensifying the emotion. The movement proceeds tempestuously to the finish.

By contrast, the *Rondo: Allegro* is a study in gaiety and the joy of virtuosity. The movement begins with a harmonic joke: It starts out squarely in C major instead of the expected G major. After a moment, the music slides into the home key, a trick Beethoven used later in the finale of the Piano Concerto No. 4, also in G major. Virtuosity stunts abound: for piano, for cello, and again for piano. A dark episode is dispelled by a chromatic passage returning to the main theme, which leads to an extended middle section in C major and a new theme. The instruments trade virtuosic displays in an almost competitive fashion. The cello surprises by substituting an unexpected E-flat in the theme, and this event wrenches the music into the foreign key of A-flat major. After a full recapitulation, sweeping scales in the piano herald an extended and brilliant coda. One can imagine Beethoven, filled with the coffee he loved to drink, rattling away on the keys. After some pompous closing music, the piano settles things down to a standstill, only to have the cello burst in with the main theme in jumping octaves. Joyful wildness concludes the sonata.

### The “Heroic Period” Sonata of 1808

One of the greatest works in the cello literature, the A major sonata was composed by Beethoven in the midst of one of his most phenomenally prolific periods. The new prominence of the cello, the sweeping use of the instrument’s range, and the long, singing lines all herald the full flowering of the cello’s role in the duo sonata.

### Sonata No. 3 in A major, Op. 69

#### Fast Facts

*Composed:* Sketches appear in 1807 amongst those for the Fifth Symphony. Completed in Vienna in the spring of 1808. Beethoven was 38.

*Dedicated to:* Baron Ignaz von Gleichenstein, an amateur cellist and one of Beethoven’s closest friends and advisers from 1807–1810. Gleichenstein helped to organize a consortium of sponsors who offered Beethoven a guaranteed annual stipend to remain in Vienna. It is thought that the dedication of the sonata was a gesture of thanks to Gleichenstein. After the agreement was signed, Beethoven asked Gleichenstein to help him find a wife.

*First performance:* Not documented. A year after the work was completed, Beethoven complained that the sonata “had not yet been well performed in public.” The first record of a performance is from 1812, when the sonata was played by Beethoven’s pupil Carl Czerny and Joseph Linke, the cellist who would later give the first performance of the Op. 102 sonatas. Linke was the cellist of the Razumovsky Quartet, which premiered many of Beethoven’s quartets.

*Published:* 1809, Leipzig.

*Other works from this period:* The Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, the Fourth Piano Concerto, the Choral Fantasy, and the Piano Trios, Op. 70.

### Notes

*Allegro ma non tanto:* After presenting the noble theme alone, the cello rests on a low note while the piano continues to a cadenza. The music is then repeated with the roles reversed, the cello playing an ascending cadenza marked *dolce*. The mood is rudely broken by a ferocious version of the theme in minor that quickly dissipates to allow for the entrance of the second subject, a beautiful combination of a rising scale (cello) against a falling arpeggio (piano). The cello and piano continue trading motifs, each repeating what the other has just played. A heroic closing theme is the culmination of the section and a brief, contemplative recollection of the opening motif leads to the repeat of the exposition. The development explores even more incredible worlds, turning mysterious, rhapsodic, stormy, soaring and mystical before reaching the recapitulation, where the cello plays the theme in its original form against triplet decorations in the piano. The coda is thoughtful, and an extended chromatic buildup leads to a heroic statement of the theme. After some dreamy, languishing music almost dies away, Beethoven finishes this great movement with a surprise *forte*.

The extraordinary *Scherzo: Allegro molto* is the only appearance of a scherzo (meaning “joke”) in all five sonatas. The music begins on the upbeat, and the 3–1 rhythm never ceases, even in the happier trio section. Although there are many clever exchanges, the incessant, manic energy leaves the distinct impression that this scherzo is no joke.

A short *Adagio cantabile*, a beautiful song for both instruments, relieves the nervousness of the scherzo. A moment of hesitation leads to the quiet, almost surreptitious appearance of the final *Allegro vivace*. The theme, though happy like its predecessors in the earlier sonatas, is more lyrical and has greater emotional depth. It introduces a movement in which the composer employs virtuosity not as an end in itself, but as a means of creating internal excitement. The second subject presents a difference of opinion between cello and piano, the cello singing a short phrase, the piano responding with percussive eighth notes.

The development section is mostly wild, with flying scales and pounding octaves. Approaching the recapitulation, Beethoven employs the basic materials of the movement: the rhythmic eighth-note accompaniment is combined with chromatic gropings for the main theme. The coda is full of thoughtfulness and pathos. There is a sense of reflection amidst excitement, of Beethoven yearning to be understood yet with satisfaction denied. After a series of repeatedly unsuccessful attempts to reach the home key, A major is finally attained, as the eighth-note melody accelerates to frenzied 16ths. The ending is triumphant, as Beethoven hammers his point home, the cello repeating the first bar of the theme over and over again with the piano pounding out the eighth-note accompaniment (“I will not give up!”).

### The Late Sonatas of 1815

#### Sonatas Op. 102, Nos. 1 and 2

#### Fast Facts

*Composed:* Vienna, July–August 1815. Beethoven was 44. They are the last works he wrote for piano and a solo instrument.

*Dedicated to:* Countess Marie von Erdödy, a long-time patron of Beethoven and a good amateur pianist. Many of Beethoven’s works were played at her house concerts, and she remained loyal to Beethoven in his later years when his music was losing its widespread public appeal.

*First performance:* Summer 1815, at the country estate of the countess. Joseph Linke was the cellist and the countess played the piano.

*Published:* 1817, Bonn.

*Other works from this period:* Very few. These sonatas are regarded as Beethoven’s only significant works from the year 1815.

## Notes

**Sonata No. 4 in C major, Op. 102, No. 1**

Beyond the heroic struggles of his middle period, and by this time almost completely deaf, Beethoven looked to the future in his last two cello sonatas. As in the A major sonata, the cello begins alone, but in an entirely new world. Whereas the A major theme is solid and firmly grounded in the cello's lower register, this one breathes an unearthly air, and the entire *Andante* seems to float somewhere beyond reality. The writing is contrapuntal, with independent voices of equal importance moving gently against each other. The thematic material is once again more complex: the decorative elements Beethoven once applied in his early period are now fused seamlessly into the larger structure. Long trills function not merely as ornaments but as orchestration, adding inner intensity to the sound.

The demonic and anguished *Allegro vivace* shatters the hypnotic serenity, Beethoven using every possible device to contrast with the previous music. Not only dynamics, rhythm and texture are changed but also tonality: the rest of the movement is no longer in the sonata's main key of C major but in the relative A minor. (In the Op. 5 sonatas, both introductions and subsequent movements were in the same key.) This movement is written in a style new to Beethoven's cello works. In his late period, Beethoven drastically varied the length of his movements. Some of his shorter movements, while having all the structural requirements, are devoid of transitions—Beethoven simply stops writing one kind of music and begins writing another, as if manners and civility had ceased to matter. This happens near the outset of the *Allegro* where Beethoven uses a surprise F-sharp to stop the motion dead in its tracks.

Out of nowhere the second subject appears—soothing, quiet, but only for a moment. Turmoil returns and the feisty movement is at the double bar before one realizes it. A very brief development section contains two ideas: a contrapuntal section followed by a brief chorale leading to the stormy recapitulation. An abrupt “get out and

stay out!” ending concludes the movement. (An interesting comparison is the first movement of the “Serioso” Quartet, Op. 95.)

Beethoven was fascinated by the stars and is reported to have composed in his head while contemplating the mysteries of the universe. Certainly the slow-motion *Adagio* evokes an otherworldly atmosphere. The movement's timeless feeling is gently punctuated by fleeting scales, as distant as comets. The mystery soon turns to brooding, with a turbulent modulation moving through several keys before coming to an inconclusive halt. At this moment, a different kind of music emerges, deeply tender in a way that is unique to Beethoven. He then proceeds to create something unexpected and of inspired beauty: The sonata's opening theme reappears, but this time so warmly that its first incarnation seems only a dream. Phrases repeat over and over, as if asking for something in prayer. After this deeply confessional episode, the *Allegro vivace* begins in a humorous way, and we are off on a frisky and sometimes funny adventure, full of fantasy and invention. There are inexplicable starts and stops which must have sounded very strange to listeners in Beethoven's time (as indeed they still do). There is a fugato passage and, at the end, a brilliant coda that shows he had not lost interest in using virtuosic feats to create excitement. After a brief unwinding, a surprise finish recalls the end of the F major sonata.

**Sonata in D major, Op. 102, No. 2 (1815)**

This final sonata bears similarities to one of the composer's late string quartets, Op. 130. Both works employ Baroque elements, such as the continuous 16th-note patterns found in Vivaldi and Bach. Beethoven's application of this style is powerful: In the opening *Allegro con brio*, he uses the figurations like weapons, firing them off here and there like a frightened soldier in the dark. (Schubert may well have heard and copied Beethoven's opening five notes in his “Death and the Maiden” Quartet of 1826, which also includes Baroque-style passage-work.) Although showing strength and confidence, this movement contains odd tentative moments, for example the vague

and distracted-sounding transition to the second subject. In the development, there is feverish wandering, madness and confusion. No longer composing music that was easy to understand, Beethoven gradually came to be regarded as a mad genius.

The next movement, especially, offers an extraordinary contrast to the heavenliness of the previous sonata. As with the Op. 5 sonatas, Beethoven took a giant step forward with the second of the set. Indeed, the haunting *Adagio con molto sentimento d'affetto* is the most profound music in the entire cycle, the deathly opening evoking images of funerals. Beethoven uses thickly written chords in the piano to create a muddy, rumbling sound (he could be called the first tone painter of the piano). After the suspenseful opening, a dirge begins, the pianist's left hand sounding like the slow falling of horses' hooves. A new theme and a change to D major recall better times. The return of the opening music is more complex harmonically. A skipping, dotted rhythm introduces a vision of a dance of death—the smiling skull, the skeletal horse, the black hood.

The transition to the finale contains moments of supreme intimacy. The magical modulation to B-flat major takes the listener to a place beyond the pain of all that preceded, seeing the light of heaven for a brief moment. An unexpected dip downwards to C-sharp minor brings back the sensation of a cold grave. However, Beethoven unexpectedly starts to play games, introducing the finale in much the same way as he did in his previous sonata. In the final movement, the *Allegro fugato*, Beethoven takes the piano and cello sonata to new realms. Reaching the pinnacle of integration, the two instruments join together to create a dancing fugue full of dissonance even in its cheerful sections. Completely baffling to listeners in Beethoven's own time, the movement still shocks the ear. This fugue, victorious in its conquest of a new language, looks forward to the music of the 20th century, and is a fitting conclusion to Beethoven's towering literature for piano and cello.

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Christian Steiner

Cellist **David Finckel** and pianist **Wu Han** rank among the most esteemed and influential classical musicians in the world today. They bring extraordinary talent, energy, imagination and dedication to their multifaceted endeavors as concert performers, recording artists, educators, artistic administrators and cultural entrepreneurs. Their duo performances have garnered superlatives from the press, public and presenters alike.

In high demand year after year among chamber music audiences worldwide, the duo has appeared each season at the most prestigious venues across North America, the Far East and Europe to unanimous critical acclaim. London's *Musical Opinion* said of their Wigmore Hall debut: "They enthralled both myself and the audience with performances whose idiomatic command, technical mastery and unsullied integrity of vision made me think right back to the days of Schnabel and Fournier, Solomon and Piatigorsky." Beyond the duo's recital activities, Mr. Finckel also serves as cellist of the Grammy Award-winning Emerson String Quartet.

The duo has also established a reputation for their dynamic and innovative approach to the recording studio. In 1997, Mr. Finckel and Ms. Wu launched ArtistLed, classical music's first musician-directed and Internet-based recording company, which has served as a model for numerous independent labels. This season, ArtistLed releases its 13th recording, an album of clarinet trios by Beethoven, Brahms and Max Bruch, featuring clarinetist David Shifrin. All ArtistLed recordings are available via the company's website.

The duo's repertoire spans virtually the entire literature for cello and piano, with an equal emphasis on classic and contemporary works.

Their commitment to new music has brought commissioned works by many of today's leading composers to audiences around the world. In 2010, the duo released *For David and Wu Han* (ArtistLed), an album of four contemporary works for cello and piano expressly composed for them. Mr. Finckel and Ms. Wu have also overseen the establishment and design of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's CMS Studio Recordings label, as well as the Society's recording partnership with Deutsche Grammophon; and Music@Menlo LIVE, which has been praised as a "the most ambitious recording project of any classical music festival in the world" (*San Jose Mercury News*).

Mr. Finckel and Ms. Wu have served as Artistic Directors of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center since 2004. They are also the founders and Artistic Directors of Music@Menlo, a chamber-music festival and institute in Silicon Valley that has garnered international acclaim since its inception in 2003. They have achieved universal renown for their passionate commitment to nurturing the careers of countless young artists through a wide array of education initiatives. For many years, the duo taught alongside the late Isaac Stern at Carnegie Hall and the Jerusalem Music Center. Last season, under the auspices of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Mr. Finckel and Ms. Wu established chamber-music training workshops for young artists in Korea and Taiwan, intensive residency programs designed to bring student musicians into contact with an elite artist faculty.

David Finckel and Wu Han reside in New York with their 16-year-old daughter, Lilian.

*For more information, please visit [www.davidfinckelandyuhan.com](http://www.davidfinckelandyuhan.com).*

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*Wu Han performs on the Steinway piano.*