

Saturday, May 7, 2016, 8pm  
First Congregational Church

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

*The Passionate Cello*

Richard STRAUSS (1864–1949) Cello Sonata in F Major, Op. 6  
Allegro con brio  
Andante ma non troppo  
Finale: Allegro vivo

Olivier MESSIAEN (1908–1992) “Louange à l’Éternité de Jésus”  
from *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*

Isaac ALBÉNIZ (1860–1909) Selections from *Suite española*, Op. 47  
*Granada (Serenade)*  
*Cádiz (Canción)*  
*Sevilla (Sevillanas)*

INTERMISSION

Alexander GLAZUNOV (1865–1936) *Song of a Minstrel* in F-sharp minor, Op. 71

Frédéric CHOPIN (1810–1849) Cello Sonata in G minor, Op. 65  
Allegro moderato  
Scherzo: Allegro con brio  
Largo  
Finale: Allegro

*This performance is made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsor Bernice Greene.  
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Originally conceived for the celebration of Music@Menlo's 10th anniversary season, this program celebrates music's power to transmit intense emotion. From the youthful exuberance of Strauss, to the burning desire of Chopin, to the profoundly spiritual Messiaen, the cello gives voice to mankind's spectrum of passions. Providing added dimension, the soulful selections of Albéniz and Glazunov evoke vivid sensations of time and place. This is a recital designed to capture the heart of every listener.

### **Cello Sonata in F Major, Op. 6**

#### **Richard Strauss**

Strauss was born in Munich on the June 11, 1864, the son of Franz Joseph Strauss, principal hornist in the Court Orchestra (Hoforchester), and Josephine Pschorr, whose family were prominent brewers in the Bavarian capital (a city still famous the world over for its beer). This lineage provided the young Richard with a background both musically and financially secure and, indeed, he showed great promise from an early age; he started piano at age four (he could read musical notes before letters and words) and began composing at the age of six (lieder, piano pieces, and orchestral overtures).

At the age of eight, Strauss began violin studies and at 11, theory, harmony, and instrumentation (of which he was to become an acknowledged master). His father encouraged him to listen to the music of the older masters—including Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Schumann—all of whose influences can be clearly heard in Strauss's Cello Sonata, which he began to compose in 1881 at the age of 17. He revised the work extensively during the winter of 1882–1883, preserving only the introductory Allegro con brio, in which the cello is treated in a heroic style anticipating his tone poem of 1888, *Don Juan*. When the sonata was first performed in Berlin in 1884, he was congratulated on the opening lyrical theme by the legendary violinist and composer Joseph Joachim.

The vitality and verve of the opening pervade the entire first movement, whose unified thematic structure shows the influence of Beethoven and Schumann. There is extensive

dialog between the cello and piano, and an ingenious four-part fugue leads into the recapitulation.

The second movement, with its pensive, dark-hued atmosphere and sensitive theme in "romanza" style, is clearly inspired by Mendelssohn—possibly by one of his "Songs without Words." (Strauss also composed a Romance for Cello and Orchestra in the same year, 1883.) In the finale, Strauss draws inspiration from Mendelssohn's *Scottish* Symphony and Wagner's *Parsifal* (which he had heard in Bayreuth). In addition, the movement reveals some unmistakably Straussian characteristics, including a cadence that foreshadows his own *Elektra*, written 15 years later.

The F-Major Cello Sonata was written for the Czech cellist Hanuš Wihan, who gave the first performance in Nuremberg on December 8, 1883. (Twelve years later, Wihan was the dedicatee of Dvořák's Cello Concerto.) The Dresden premiere of the sonata took place two weeks later, with the cellist Ferdinand Böckmann and Strauss himself at the piano, after which the composer reported proudly to his mother, "My sonata pleased the audience greatly, and they applauded most enthusiastically. I was congratulated from all sides, and the cellist, Böckmann, reflected quite wonderfully in his playing how much he liked the work and plans to play it quite soon again in his concerts."

—Steven Paul

### **"Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus" from *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* Olivier Messiaen**

In 1939, Messiaen was called to serve in World War II. In May of the following year, he was captured and taken to a prisoner-of-war camp in Görlitz. It was there that he completed the *Quartet for the End of Time*, one of only a handful of chamber works he composed and one of his most powerful and significant contributions to the repertoire in any medium. Although work on the quartet had begun well before Messiaen's imprisonment, the piece nevertheless represents his catharsis from, in his own words, the "cruelty and horrors of camp."

Messiaen also suffered from synesthesia, a condition that caused him to see music and hear colors. The bleakness of Görlitz made him thirst for what he called “sound-colors,” which he attempted to capture in his music.

The *Quartet for the End of Time* alludes to a passage from Chapter 10 of the Book of Revelations:

And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow on his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire... Setting his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land... and, standing on the sea and on the land, he raised his right hand toward Heaven and swore by He who lives forever and ever... saying: “There will be no more Time; but in the days when the seventh angel is to blow his trumpet, the mystery of God will be fulfilled.”

Messiaen wrote in his preface to the score of the quartet, “When we are freed from before and after, when we enter into that other dimension of the beyond, thus participating a little in Eternity, then we shall understand the terrible simplicity of the angel’s words, and then indeed there shall be Time no longer.”

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Composer’s note on the movement:

*Praise to the Eternity of Jesus.* Jesus is here considered as one with the Word. A long phrase, infinitely slow, by the cello, expiates with love and reverence on the everlastingness of the Word. Majestically the melody unfolds itself at a distance both intimate and awesome. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

—Patrick Castillo

## Selections from *Suite española*, Op. 47

### Isaac Albéniz

At an early age, Isaac Albéniz moved with his family from the remote northern Spanish city of Campodón to the bustling metropolis of Barcelona. Although Albéniz would eventually go on to study in Paris and Leipzig, his Catalan upbringing in the warm landscape and culturally rich city of Barcelona would continue to have a lasting effect on his musical language. By 1885, Albéniz had settled in Madrid, where he immersed himself in the city’s cultural fabric. A pianist of prodigious talent, he performed extensively in the homes of wealthy patrons and on various concert series throughout the city. Albéniz quickly established himself as a consummate improviser, impressing the public with his skill at turning simply rendered tunes into coloristic masterpieces. He wrote many of these improvisations down, producing a remarkable body of solo piano music in a short amount of time.

Albéniz began composing movements of his *Suite española* in 1886, eventually compiling the works into a set in 1887. As with many of Albéniz’s compositions, the work evokes specific locations throughout Spain. *Granada*, a peaceful and serene serenade, pays homage to the city and region in southern Spain. The movement features strumming, guitar-like chords, with a beautifully simple melody in the piano’s tenor register. *Cádiz* captures the essence of the port city of the same name on Spain’s western coast. The *Sevilla* movement takes the form of a *sevillanas*, a type of folk music and dance of Sevilla and its region, derived from the old Castilian *seguidilla* form and influenced in the 19th century by flamenco. The grand, sweeping chords in the opening of the movement evoke the vivid style of this favorite couples dance, full of turns and brightly colored costumes, and often performed at local festivals. The contrasting lyrical middle section, with its sparkling octaves and hazy rubato, stirs a hint of nostalgia that soon winds into a return to the movement’s opening melody, concluding with a flourish.

—Isaac Thompson and Rachel Sokolow

***Song of a Minstrel* in F-sharp minor, Op. 71  
Alexander Glazunov**

Russian composer Alexander Glazunov composed his short elegiac *Chant du ménestrel* in 1900, one year after being appointed professor of composition at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. In the decade prior, Glazunov had completed three symphonies, two string quartets, and the immensely successful ballet *Raymonda*. The overwhelmingly positive response to Glazunov's robust compositional output during that period had launched his career to new heights. The *Song of a Minstrel*, originally scored for solo cello and orchestra, contributed to Glazunov's international acclaim, partially owing to the many performances of the work given by the young British cellist Beatrice Harrison, a classical music sensation at the time.

The *Chant du ménestrel* evokes the image of a Russian troubadour, a traveling performer who wandered and freely sang his or her own original compositions. The piece begins with a short piano introduction before the cello enters with the plaintive and sorrowful theme. Throughout the work, the cello is scored primarily in the instrument's tenor range, giving the melody a distinctively songlike feel. Though the majority of the melodic material is given to the cello, the piano offers wonderful dialog throughout, commenting on the cello's rather improvisatory melodic musings.

—Isaac Thompson

**Cello Sonata in G minor, Op. 65  
Frédéric Chopin**

Chopin's Cello Sonata represents an extraordinary effort on the part of a composer who, only a few years from the end of his life, determined to master a genre he had never before attempted. Only five chamber works by Chopin exist; three of them are for cello and piano. (That the cello was Chopin's favorite instrument after the piano is not in doubt for me!) In poor health and the middle of an anguished breakup with George Sand, Chopin found it within himself to labor extensively on this work, making numerous sketches and revisions. "With my cello sonata I am now contented, now discon-

tented." The result is a grand sonata on a scale with Chopin's most serious and significant works. A big, virtuosic cello part is counterbalanced by masterful piano writing in which Chopin never compromises his unique style. All cellists owe a debt of gratitude to Auguste Franchomme (1808–1884), Chopin's close friend during his later years, for whom the sonata was written.

A melancholy piano solo foreshadows a long and complex story. A fragment of the main theme is introduced, supported by rich and intense harmonies, and gives way to an impressionistic flourish. The cello, interrupting, states the theme in its entirety, and both instruments proceed together through melodic episodes, culminating in a heroic transformation of the theme. The excitement quickly dissipates to allow for the appearance of the second subject, beautifully still and thoughtful, only 10 notes long. As if sacred, this theme is not further developed and is heard again only in its original form. Chopin continues rhapsodically, bringing in new melodies in both the cello and piano, until a spectacular climax is reached in which the two instruments play a rapid scale in opposite directions. The exposition is repeated, and the development is again introduced by a piano solo. A standard recapitulation is abandoned in favor of a sudden reappearance of the magical second subject. The movement concludes in an appropriately stormy fashion.

The second movement's energetic theme uses repeated notes in rapid succession, giving it a hammering momentum, especially when played by the piano. This scherzo is almost quirky, alternating lyrical phrases with thunderous chords and virtuosic flourishes. In the cantabile trio, the cello is given the upper hand the whole way, spinning out a seamless melody over plangent harmonies reminiscent of a folk song.

The heart of the work is indeed the gorgeous Largo, as tranquil and brief as its neighbors are troubled and lengthy. Words cannot adequately describe this little gem, the only really extended peaceful experience in the sonata.

The Finale is again in a minor key, its main theme dramatic and complex. There is some-



thing of a martial air about the first and second subjects, which both utilize dotted rhythms. But seriousness soon turns to fun as the dotted rhythms, repeated over and over, are turned into a rollicking rollercoaster ride. The main theme then reappears, but Chopin has worked it into a canon, and a highly contrapuntal episode creates the development sec-

tion. The second subject returns, curiously drained of its energy by the disappearance of the dotted rhythms. The rollercoaster leads us to an even faster coda, full of brilliant writing for both instruments. Chopin's great work ends triumphantly, its penultimate chord somehow reminding us of the magnitude of the experience.

—David Finckel

#### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

David Finckel and Wu Han are among the most esteemed and influential classical musicians in the world today. In 2012, they were the recipients of *Musical America's* Musicians of the Year award, one of the highest honors granted by the music industry. The talent, energy, imagination, and dedication they bring to their multifaceted endeavors as concert performers, recording artists, educators, artistic administrators, and cultural entrepreneurs go unmatched. Their duo performances have garnered praise from the press, public, and presenters alike.

In high demand year after year among chamber music audiences worldwide, the duo has appeared to critical acclaim each season at the

most prestigious venues and concert series across the United States, Mexico, Canada, the Far East, and Europe. London's *Musical Opinion* said of their Wigmore Hall debut: "They enthralled 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."

Aside from their distinction as world-class performers, David Finckel and Wu Han have established a reputation for their dynamic and innovative approach to the recording studio. In 1997, they launched ArtistLed, classical music's first musician-directed and internet-based recording company, which has served as a

model for numerous independent labels. All 18 ArtistLed recordings, including *Wu Han LIVE*, Wu Han's most recent release in collaboration with the Music@Menlo LIVE label, have met with critical acclaim and are available via the company's website at [www.artistled.com](http://www.artistled.com).

The duo's repertoire spans virtually the entire literature for cello and piano, with an equal emphasis on the classics and the contemporaries. The artists' 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. In 2011, Summit Records released a recording of the duo performing Gabriela Lena Frank's concerto, *Compadrazgo*, with the ProMusica Columbus Chamber Orchestra. David Finckel and Wu Han 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*).

Now in their third term as artistic directors of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, David Finckel and Wu Han hold the longest tenure as directors since Charles Wadsworth, the founding artistic director. Last season, they oversaw several major international CMS tours, including the Society's historical first performances in China; performances in Germany and South Korea, and at London's Wigmore Hall; and a second residency season at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center in Saratoga Springs, NY. They are also the founders and artistic directors of Music@Menlo, a chamber music festival and institute in Silicon Valley that has garnered in-

ternational acclaim, currently celebrating its 13th season. Additionally, David and Wu Han are artistic directors of Chamber Music Today, an annual festival held in Seoul, Korea.

David and Wu Han 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. Under the auspices of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, David Finckel and Wu Han direct the LG Chamber Music School, which serves dozens of young musicians in Korea annually. In 2013, they established a chamber music studio at the Aspen Music Festival and School. David Finckel serves as professor of cello at the Juilliard School, as well as artist-in-residence at Stony Brook University. In addition to his duo activities, Finckel served as cellist of the Grammy Award-winning Emerson String Quartet for 34 years.

David Finckel and Wu Han reside in New York.

David Finckel and Wu Han appear by arrangement with David Rowe Artists.

[www.davidroweartists.com](http://www.davidroweartists.com)

Milina Barry PR, *public relations and press representative*

David Finckel and Wu Han recordings are available exclusively on ArtistLed.

[www.ArtistLed.com](http://www.ArtistLed.com)

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Wu Han performs on the Steinway Piano.