

Sunday, November 20, 2016, 3pm
Hertz Hall

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

PROGRAM

Johann Sebastian BACH (1685–1750) Sonata in G Major, BWV 1027 (c. 1736–41)
Adagio
Allegro ma non tanto
Andante
Allegro moderato

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770–1827) Sonata in C Major, Op. 102, No. 1 (1815)
Andante – Allegro vivace
Adagio – Tempo d'andante – Allegro vivace

Johannes BRAHMS (1833–1897) Sonata in E minor, Op. 38 (1862–65)
Allegro non troppo
Allegretto quasi Menuetto
Allegro

INTERMISSION

Sergei RACHMANINOFF (1873–1943) Sonata in G minor, Op. 19 (1901)
Lento; Allegro moderato
Allegro scherzando
Andante
Allegro mosso

David Finckel and Wu Han appear by arrangement with David Rowe Artists.
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Recordings by David Finckel and Wu Han are available exclusively on ArtistLed – www.ArtistLed.com
Artist website: www.davidfinckelandwuhan.com

Wu Han performs on the Steinway Piano.

Funded, in part, by the Koret Foundation, this performance is part of Cal Performances' 2016/17 Koret Recital Series, which brings world-class artists to our community.

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Johann Sebastian Bach Sonata in G Major, BWV 1027

On two occasions in 1723, the rich musical life of Leipzig grew magnificently richer. On May 22, the famous musician Johann Sebastian Bach arrived to assume the post of cantor and music director at St. Thomas' Church, one of the city's musical epicenters. Bach, now 36 years old, had achieved enough celebrity throughout Germany for his elite musical skill that not only his appointment but his family's very arrival in Leipzig was reported in newspapers as distant as Hamburg, 180 miles away ("He himself arrived with his family on two carriages at two o'clock and moved into the newly renovated apartment in the St. Thomas School").

The other great development that year was the partnership between Gottfried Zimmermann's coffeehouse, Leipzig's most prominent such establishment, and the Collegium Musicum. The Collegium was a performing collective of singers and instrumentalists (largely comprised of students) founded in 1701 by Georg Philipp Telemann, and had since then played a vital role in Leipzig's musical culture. Zimmermann's coffeehouse included a concert hall that could accommodate large ensembles and audiences of 150 (the neighborhood Starbucks it most certainly was not). A series of weekly concerts—always free of charge—sprung from this partnership, and would eventually fall under Bach's supervision when he became the Collegium's music director in 1729.

Though overseeing this series undoubtedly added a substantial commitment to Bach's already demanding church duties, he nevertheless thrived in his dual position as cantor at St. Thomas' and concert presenter at Zimmermann's. In fact, in addition to offering works by Handel, Locatelli, Scarlatti, and others, Bach moreover took advantage of the Collegium series as an opportunity to compose a good deal of non-liturgical music himself: primarily instrumental music, as well as a number of cantatas known as "moral cantatas," lighthearted musical dramas dealing with themes of moral virtue (including the famous "Coffee Cantata," which passes tongue-in-cheek judgment on the vice of caffeine addiction).

The instrumental music Bach produced for this series include numerous important works, among them this first of three sonatas for viola da gamba (BWV 1027–29). Bach's Collegium works for Zimmermann's coffeehouse also include the six sonatas for violin and keyboard obbligato (BWV 1014–19); the Violin Concerto in A minor (BWV 1065); and the famous Double Concerto in D minor (BWV 1043).

The Sonata in G Major also exists as a trio sonata for two flutes and basso continuo, BWV 1039, which is almost certainly the earlier version (probably from Bach's days as *Kapellmeister* at Cöthen). By the late 1730s (around the time of Bach's arrangement for viola da gamba of his trio sonata), the viola da gamba had already begun to fall out of favor as a solo instrument. Marin Marais, the instrument's greatest virtuoso, had died in 1728. Bach remained a champion of the viola da gamba, however, as evidenced by his use of it in numerous concertos, cantatas, and the *St. John* and *St. Matthew* passions, in addition to these sonatas. These works remain today standard repertoire for both the viola and cello; the latter's more burnished tone, compared to the delicacy of the gamba, demands a heightened sensitivity of the player to the nuances of Bach's writing. The early Bach biographer Philipp Spitta—who ranked the G Major among the three gamba sonatas "the loveliest, the purest idyll conceivable"—also noted that the viola da gamba "afforded a great variety in the production of tone, but its fundamental character was tender and expressive rather than full and vigorous. Thus Bach could rearrange a trio originally written for two flutes and bass, for viol da gamba, with harpsichord obbligato, without destroying its dominant character."

The sonata does indeed demonstrate trio sonata-style writing. Instead of a sparse basso continuo accompaniment to the through-composed gamba part, Bach provides a complete keyboard accompaniment, which moves in melodic and contrapuntal dialogue with the soloist. In the opening movement, the dignified yet dance-like Adagio, the keyboard and gamba bear equal melodic responsibility, often following each other in canon. The movement's latter



half features an intricately involved dialogue between the two, colored gracefully in turn by florid countermelodies and ornamental trills.

The work follows the four-movement structure of the Italian *sonata da chiesa* (“church sonata”) from the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Following a slow introduction, Bach launches into the fugal Allegro ma non tanto, whose rollicking, perfectly shaped subject inches its way upwards before quickly laughing its way back down to its starting point. The third movement is a languishing Andante in the relative minor, which the finale answers with another jovial fugue.

In the great wealth of solo and chamber instrumental works throughout Bach’s *oeuvre*, the sonatas for viola da gamba are among those gems that have, though certainly not ignored, somewhat taken a back seat to the cello suites, the sonatas and partitas for violin, *Die Kunst der Fuge*, and other such works. Even 200 years ago, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, Bach’s first biographer, only quaintly made note of “several sonatas for harpsichord and violin, harpsichord and flute, harpsichord and viol da gamba. They are admirably written and most of them are pleasant to listen to even today.” These sonatas are far from second-tier pieces, however, and demonstrate Bach’s genius in the mature years of his career as fully as any other works.

—Patrick Castillo

Ludwig van Beethoven

Sonata 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. Here, as in the Sonata in A Major, 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 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, the composer 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 one 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 Op. 95, *Serioso* Quartet.)

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 another worldly 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 that 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.

—David Finckel and Michael Feldman

Johannes Brahms

Sonata in E minor, Op. 38

Premiered on January 14, 1871 at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig, by cellist Emil Hegar and pianist (and concertmaster of the Gewandhaus Orchestra) Carl Reinecke.

Brahms composed the first two movements of the Op. 38 cello sonata (his first work for a solo instrument with piano) while in his late twenties. By this time, Brahms had already composed a great deal of chamber music and become sufficiently well-versed in the nuances of writing for individual instruments. In the summer of 1862, he visited the Lower Rhine Music Festival in Cologne, and spent the following weeks on holiday with the conductor and composer Albert Dietrich and Clara Schumann, Robert Schumann's widow. The vacation was a happy one: Brahms and Dietrich spent the days hiking and composing; in the evenings, Clara—one of her generation's greatest pianists, and a gifted composer in her own right—would play.

Brahms revered Bach above all composers (it can be safely surmised that he was aware of the Baroque composer's cello suites while composing his own cello sonatas) and paid homage to him with the Sonata in E minor. The principal theme of the first movement resembles in shape and mood the fugal subject of Bach's *Die Kunst der Fuge* (*The Art of Fuge*), and the fugal subject of the third movement directly quotes from the same work's Contrapunctus XIII. Nevertheless, in his late twenties and early thirties,

Brahms, the young Romantic, had already established his voice with such confidence that despite the explicit nod to a past master, the language of this sonata is unmistakably his own.

An insistent, syncopated piano accompaniment underscores the cello's brooding opening melody, creating a feeling of inner agitation. This tension culminates as the cello ascends to its upper register, and as the piano assumes the theme, the first of a series of heated arguments between piano and cello begins. A yet more impassioned dialogue follows, ushering in the second subject. Commentary on the two cello sonatas of Brahms often makes note of the inherent problems of sonic balance in pairing cello with piano (as dense keyboard textures easily drown out the cello's middle register). Throughout this opening Allegro non troppo, Brahms makes a virtue of the challenge, often pitting the two instruments as combatants in contentious dialogue. The development section avoids danger as well, exploiting the extremes of the cello's range to symphonic results. The conflict dissipates with the appearance of cascading triplets in the piano, and after a full recapitulation, the movement ends serenely in E Major. Although composed before Brahms' move to Vienna, the second movement minuet parleys a distinct Viennese flavor: exuberant, but with a tinge of darkness more evocative of Mahler than of the waltzes of Johann Strauss. The heart of the movement is the divine trio section, which departs from the key of A minor to the even more mysterious, remote tonality of F-sharp minor. The cello offers a lyrical melody, doubled by a shimmering accompaniment in the right hand of the piano: rippling sixteenth notes give the effect of a voice-like vibrato.

The finale, in turns gentle and unrelenting, begins with a three-voiced fugue. The movement is indebted not only to Bach, but also to the fugal finale of Beethoven's Cello Sonata, Op. 102. No. 2. Brahms departs from that model, however, by traversing more extreme emotive territory. Following the intensity of the opening episode, the music takes a tranquil, pastoral turn; the next instance of this romantic dance-like music is interrupted by a reappearance of the fugal opening. After building to



an even greater climax, the storm dissipates, teasing the listener with the expectation of a somber ending. But the surprise appearance of a *piu presto* coda drives the work to a restless finish, the cello and piano continuing their battle for supremacy to the end.

—Patrick Castillo

Sergei Rachmaninoff Sonata in G minor, Op. 19

In the wake of the successful completion of his Second Piano Concerto, Rachmaninoff spent the summer of 1901 on the family's country estate Ivanovka in the Tambov region, several days' travel to the south of Moscow.

To judge by his letters, it was only after he returned to Moscow in late September that he began to work on this sonata, the performance of which was already planned. The Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 19, was composed in the fall and early winter of 1901 for the cellist Anatoly Brandukov. Towards the end of the last movement, Rachmaninoff wrote the date "November 20th." At the very end he wrote

"December 12th," showing that he revised the ending immediately after the first performance. The work debuted in Moscow on December 2, 1901, by Brandukov, with the composer at the piano.

By mid-November Rachmaninoff was crying off social engagements, complaining that "my work's going badly, and there's not much time left. I'm depressed...." On November 30, however, he sent a message to the composer Taneyev, inviting him to a rehearsal at 11.30 that morning. By the following January 15th he was hard at work on the final proofs of the piece: "I've found almost no mistakes."

In later years Rachmaninoff remembered his cello sonata as one of a series of pieces through which, with the help of Dr. Nikolai Dahl, after a long period of depression and inability to create, he was born again as a composer: "I felt that Dr. Dahl's treatment had strengthened my nervous system to a miraculous degree.... The joy of creating lasted the next two years, and I wrote a number of large and small pieces including the Sonata for Cello."

—Gerard McBurney

Musical America's 2012 Musicians of the Year, cellist **David Finckel** and pianist **Wu Han** rank among the most esteemed and influential classical musicians in the world today. 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, and their duo performances have garnered superlatives from the press, public, and presenters alike.

In high demand among chamber music audiences worldwide, the duo has appeared 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 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."

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 16 ArtistLed recordings, including the recent Dvořák piano trios, have met with critical acclaim and are available via the company's website at 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. 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. 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. 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, soon to celebrate its twelfth season. Additionally, David Finckel and Wu Han are artistic directors of Chamber Music Today, an annual festival held in Seoul, Korea.

The two musicians 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 provides workshops to young artists in Korea. In 2012 Finckel was named honoree and artistic director of the Mendelssohn Fellowship, a program established to identify young Korean musicians and promote chamber music in South Korea. In 2013, the duo established a chamber music studio at the Aspen Music Festival and School. 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.

For more information, please visit the artists' website at www.davidfinckelandwuhan.com.