



Sunday, January 20, 2019, 3pm
Hertz Hall

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

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770–1827) Sonata No. 3 in A Major for Cello and Piano,
Op. 69 (1807–08)
Allegro ma non tanto
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Adagio cantabile – Allegro vivace

Johannes BRAHMS (1833–1897) Sonata No. 1 in E minor for Cello and Piano,
Op. 38 (1862–65)
Allegro non troppo
Allegretto quasi Menuetto
Allegro

INTERMISSION

Felix MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847) Sonata No. 2 in D Major for Cello and Piano,
Op. 58 (1843)
Allegro assai vivace
Allegretto scherzando
Adagio
Molto allegro e vivace

David Finckel and Wu Han recordings are available exclusively through ArtistLed (www.artistled.com).

Artist website: www.davidfinckelandwuhan.com

Wu Han performs on the Steinway Piano.

Cal Performances' 2018–19 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

German Mastery

Together, Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms, and Felix Mendelssohn represent the peak of mastery in the German Classical and Romantic traditions, and each composer wrote significant works for cello and piano duo in their respective pinnacle years. The sonatas featured in this program, as selected by David Finckel and Wu Han, represent some of the most important, celebrated, and masterfully crafted pieces in the duo repertoire. From Beethoven's incredibly lyrical Op. 69 sonata, composed at the height of the Classical period, to Brahms' soulfully vocal Sonata in E minor, whose beloved fugue pays homage to J. S. Bach, the master of counterpoint, the program traverses the German tradition of consummate craftsmanship in artistry. Concluding with Mendelssohn's exhilarating Op. 58 sonata, which oozes an affectingly ebullient character that epitomizes the era of German Romanticism, this thrilling program is a *tour de force* survey of some of the most revered treasures of the cello and piano duo literature.

Ludwig van Beethoven

Sonata No. 3 in A Major for Cello and Piano, Op. 69

One of the greatest works in the cello literature, Beethoven composed the Sonata in A Major in the midst of one of his most phenomenally prolific periods, a period that also birthed the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, the Fourth Piano Concerto, the Choral Fantasy, and the Op. 70 piano trios. The new prominence of the cello, the sweeping use of the instrument's range, and the long, singing lines in the A-Major Sonata all herald the full flowering of the cello's role in Beethoven's compositions. The earliest sketches of the work appeared in 1807, among those for the Fifth Symphony; Beethoven completed the sonata in Vienna in the spring of 1808 at the age of 38.

Beethoven dedicated the sonata to Baron Ignaz von Gleichenstein, an amateur cellist and one of Beethoven's closest friends and advisers between 1807 and 1810. Gleichenstein helped to organize a consortium of sponsors who of-

fered the composer 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.

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 work 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 string quartets.

After presenting the first movement's 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 through mysterious, rhapsodic, stormy, soaring, and mystical sound worlds 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 movement is the only appearance of a scherzo (meaning "joke") in all five cello 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 chromaticism, grasping 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 sixteenth notes. 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!”).

— © David Finckel

Johannes Brahms
Sonata No. 1 in E minor for Cello and Piano,
Op. 38

Brahms composed the first two movements of the Cello Sonata No. 1 (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, Brahms 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 E-minor Sonata. 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 Fugue)*, 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 the two instruments 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 territories. 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

Felix Mendelssohn

Sonata No. 2 in D Major for Cello and Piano, Op. 58

The turn of the 19th century emancipated the cello from its traditional supporting role, as Beethoven, followed by his heirs in the Romantic period, increasingly contributed sonatas, concertos, and other solo works to the cello literature. Felix Mendelssohn's Cello Sonata in D Major, Op. 58 may rightly be counted among the most significant of these, and equally as a quintessential statement of the aesthetic that defined its era.

Mendelssohn penned the Op. 58 Sonata in 1843, a year of considerable personal upheaval. Having at last concluded an unhappy residency in Berlin, Mendelssohn and his family returned

to Leipzig, where they had previously spent the years 1835–1840, during which time, Mendelssohn scholar R. Larry Todd notes, the composer, still in his 20s, “stood at the forefront of German music.” Hence in 1840, as part of a sweeping attempt to install Berlin among Europe's major cultural capitals, the recently ascendant Friedrich Wilhelm IV had lured Mendelssohn from Leipzig. Though compensated handsomely in both payment and prestige, however, Mendelssohn would not find personal satisfaction in Berlin over the coming three years. His professional responsibilities remained frustratingly undefined—besides which, he regarded that city as “one of the most sour apples into which a man can bite”—and, in 1843, Mendelssohn resumed his conducting duties at the Leipzig Gewandhaus. Moreover, with his beloved mother's death in December, of 1842, Felix shared the realization with his younger brother, Paul, that “we are children no longer.” This sentiment may have partly impelled the 34-year-old composer to act upon his longtime ambition of founding a conservatory (now the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy University of Music and Theater), whose charter faculty would include himself, Robert and Clara Schumann, and others of Germany's musical elite.

Despite the turbulence surrounding this time, 1843 nevertheless represented a solidly productive year. In addition to the Op. 58 Sonata, Mendelssohn completed his incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the *Capriccio* for String Quartet (later published as Op. 81, No. 3), five *Lieder ohne worte* for piano, and numerous choral pieces, among other works.

Be fitting Mendelssohn's mature compositional language, the Sonata in D Major is firmly rooted in the tenets of Classicism inherited from Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, but meanwhile demonstrates the pathos of the Romantic period. Each of the sonata's four movements portrays a vital dimension of Mendelssohn's musical identity. The opening Allegro assai vivace is all soaring lyricism and propulsive rhythmic energy, even at its tender second

theme. The movement's ecstatic tone dispels the misguided aphorism that music's emotional content must correlate to biography—there is nothing in this movement, after all, to betray Mendelssohn's grief over his mother's passing—but, rather, its great emotive breadth reflects the *zeitgeist* of the Romantic period at large. The second movement offers further Romantic *cantabile*, but couched in a signature Mendelssohnian scherzo. The cello complements the piano's sly staccato figures with piquant pizzicati before indulging in breathless melody. The homophonic, hymn-like piano introduction to the slow movement furtively recalls Bach—one of Mendelssohn's formative influences—but with an unmistakably 19th-century touch: Mendelssohn's instruction *sempre arpeggiando col pedale* ("arpeggiated and with pedal") imbues each chord with a distinctly more lush and immersive sound than would characterize a

Baroque organ chorale. The cello answers with a dramatic recitative, marked *appassionato ed animato*. The spirited dialogue between cello and piano continues in the finale, now returning to the effervescence of the opening movement. An increased restlessness in the piano accompaniment matches the virtuosic cello writing measure for measure until the stirring final cadence.

Though the Op. 58 Sonata bears a dedication to the Russian cellist and arts patron Count Mateusz Wielhorski, Felix truly intended the work for the aforementioned Paul, the cellist of the Mendelssohn family. It is the second of two cello sonatas Mendelssohn composed: the first, the Sonata in B-flat Major, Op. 45 (1838), as well as the earlier *Variations concertantes* for Cello and Piano (1829), were likewise composed for Paul.

— © Patrick Castillo

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

David Finckel and Wu Han are among the most esteemed and influential classical musicians in the world today. They are recipients of Musical America's Musicians of the Year award, one of the highest honors granted by the music industry. The energy, imagination, and integrity they bring to their multifaceted endeavors as concert performers, artistic directors, recording artists, educators, and cultural entrepreneurs go unmatched.

In high demand among audiences worldwide, David Finckel and Wu Han appear annually at the most prestigious concert venues across the United States, Mexico, Canada, the Far East, and Europe, their performances garnering superlatives from the press, public, and presenters alike. Highlights of their 2018–19 season include international and domestic tours as a duo and collaborations with a stellar lineup of artists and ensembles. They will continue to perform with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS) in New York and on tour; reunite with violinist Daniel Hope and violist Paul Neubauer for a US tour reaching seven cities; and embark on a series of piano

trio performances in Canada and the United States with violinist Philip Setzer. As the winter unfolds, they join CMS artists on tour to the Far East with appearances in Taipei and Hsinchu, Taiwan, and in Shanghai, China. The duo will also be the subject of two television features to be broadcast on PBS stations across the country.

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 CMS founder Charles Wadsworth. They are the founders and artistic directors of Music@Menlo, the popular Bay Area summer chamber music festival and institute, approaching its 17th season in 2019. Additionally, they are founding artistic directors of Chamber Music Today, an annual festival held in Seoul, South Korea, which marks its eighth season this year. Wu Han currently serves as artistic advisor of Wolf Trap's Chamber Music at the Barns, and in the spring, the duo inaugurates an immersive, week-long festival in Palm Beach that explores German and Austrian chamber music through an array of performances and interactive events.

In addition to 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. They opened up a whole new world in the classical recording industry when they created ArtistLed, the first musician-directed and internet-based classical recording company. *BBC Music Magazine* recently saluted the label's 20th anniversary, featuring the duo on its cover. David Finckel and Wu Han have also overseen the establishment of the CMS Studio Recordings label, the Society's partnership with Deutsche Grammophon; CMS' livestream programming; and Music@Menlo *LIVE*, which has been praised as "the most ambitious recording project of any classical music festival in the world" (*San Jose Mercury News*).

David Finckel and Wu Han have received universal praise for their commitment to nurturing the artistic growth of countless young artists through a wide array of educational initiatives. Under their leadership at CMS, the Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two) identifies and inducts the finest young chamber artists into the entire spectrum of CMS activi-

ties. At Music@Menlo, their Chamber Music Institute has provided hundreds of students with incomparable, immersive musical experiences over 16 summers. Since 2009, David Finckel and Wu Han have directed the LG Chamber Music School in South Korea, which serves dozens of young musicians annually. From 2013 to 2018, the duo led an intensive chamber music studio at the Aspen Music Festival and School. In the current season, David Finckel and Wu Han's website opens a new initiative that addresses the challenges and opportunities facing today's classical music performers and presenters.

David Finckel and Wu Han reside in New York.

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

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