



Wednesday, December 4, 2019, 8pm  
Zellerbach Hall

**Sheku Kanneh-Mason, *cello***  
**Isata Kanneh-Mason, *piano***

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770–1827) 12 Variations on Mozart’s  
“Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen”  
(from *Die Zauberflöte*) in F major, Op. 66

Witold LUTOSŁAWSKI (1913–1994) *Grave* for Cello and Piano

Samuel BARBER (1910–1981) Cello Sonata in C minor, Op. 6  
Allegro ma non troppo  
Adagio  
Allegro appassionato

*INTERMISSION*

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

*This performance is made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsors Nadine Tang and Bruce Smith.  
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## 12 Variations on Mozart's "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" (from *Die Zauberflöte*)

in F major, Op. 66

Ludwig van Beethoven

In 1795, Beethoven appeared publicly as a pianist for the first time in Vienna, an event that garnered sufficient notice that the following year he was invited to give concerts in Prague, Nuremberg, Dresden, and Berlin. In the Prussian capital, he was introduced to the music-loving King Friedrich Wilhelm II, a capable amateur cellist who had warmly received Mozart and Boccherini at his court and graciously accepted the dedication of Haydn's Op. 50 quartets. While he was in Berlin in 1796, Beethoven also met Friedrich's court cellist, the eminent French virtuoso Jean-Louis Duport, and was inspired by his playing to compose a pair of sonatas for his instrument and piano, which were published together the following year as Op. 5 with a dedication to the King. In return, Beethoven received a magnificent snuffbox "like those given to the ambassadors," he reported, filled with gold *louis d'or*.

In 1796, Beethoven also created sets of variations for cello and piano on themes by Handel ("See the Conquering Hero Comes" from *Judas Maccabaeus*, WoO 45) and Mozart ("Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" from *Die Zauberflöte*, published in 1798 with the indefensibly high opus number of 66—an extra "6" apparently got tacked on by mistake). Beethoven held the music of Mozart in the highest regard (the two met just once, when the then-16-year-old Bonn musician came to Vienna for a fortnight of lessons in 1786), and he valued *The Magic Flute* above all other operas because of its musical diversity and its high moral tone. (He had little taste for Mozart's other Viennese operas—*Seraglio*, *Don Giovanni*, *Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*—because of what he had decided was the "immorality" of their stories.) In 1801, Beethoven again mined Mozart's Masonic masterpiece for the theme for another cello and piano work, a set of seven variations on the duet of Pamina and Papageno, "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen."

When Beethoven first broached the medium of cello and piano in 1796, the cello was only

just completing its metamorphosis from a Baroque continuo instrument to equal companionship with the higher strings. The two early sonatas are modeled in their form on the Classical piano sonata with violin accompaniment, but are distinctively progressive in the way they accord almost equal importance to both instruments. A similar partnership of cello and piano marks the 12 Variations on "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen," based on the playful, folkish aria in which the bird catcher Papageno wishes that he had "a little maiden or a wife." The first nine variations are largely figural in nature, preserving the tempo and structure of the original theme, but the tenth and eleventh variations, a pair of emotional Adagio stanzas, lend the composition a depth of feeling that sets it apart from many of the older Classical works in the form. The final variation, in dancing triple meter, provides a spirited ending for the piece.

## Grave for Cello and Piano

Witold Lutosławski

Witold Lutosławski was among the giants of late-20th-century music. Born into a highly cultured family in Warsaw, Poland on January 25, 1913, Lutosławski took up piano and violin as a teenager before entering the Warsaw Conservatory to study keyboard and composition. His first important work, the *Symphonic Variations* (1938), dates from the year after his graduation. He supported himself during the difficult years of World War II, when he was in constant fear of deportation, as a pianist in the Warsaw cafés. At that time, he also worked on his First Symphony, which was condemned following its 1947 premiere for not conforming to the government-prescribed style of "socialist realism." Many of his works of the following decade avoided "formalism" by deriving their melodic and harmonic inspiration from folk songs and dances, a period that culminated in the splendid Concerto for Orchestra of 1950–54. After the *Funeral Music* for string orchestra of 1957, Lutosławski's music was written in a more decidedly modern idiom, akin in some respects to 12-tone serialism but still individual in its formal strength, colorful sonority, lucid texture, and emotional power. His last works, notably



the Third (1983) and Fourth (1992) Symphonies and the Piano Concerto (1987), turned to an idiom that is less dissonant, dense, complicated, and unpredictable, and more lucid and obviously melodic than the compositions of the preceding two decades.

Stefan Jarociński was a distinguished Polish musicologist and a life-long friend and champion of Lutosławski. Both came from privileged families, both attended the Stefan Batory School in Warsaw as youngsters, and both shared an interest in the music of Claude Debussy; Jarociński published an important study in 1976 titled *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*. After Jarociński died unexpectedly in May 1980, Lutosławski composed in his memory the *Grave* for Cello and Piano, which derives much of its material from the pitches D–A–G–A, the “forest motif” that opens and permeates Debussy’s opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*. In Lutosławski’s brief piece, Debussy’s motive is announced solemnly at the start before a longer theme is spun from it—whose most easily recognizable element is a series of repeated notes—and becomes more agitated with each modified repetition. (The work’s subtitle is “Metamorphoses.”) The composition closes with the solemn music of the opening, so Lutosławski’s *Grave* describes an emotional arch from grief to rising anger to grief again and stillness at the end.

### Cello Sonata in C minor, Op. 6 Samuel Barber

In 1924, at the tender age of 14, Samuel Barber entered the inaugural class enrolled at Philadelphia’s Curtis Institute of Music. He first studied piano (with Isabelle Vengerova), and in successive years added lessons in composition (Rosario Scalero), singing (Emilio de Gogorza), and conducting (Fritz Reiner), eliciting the highest praise from his instructors for his musical gifts and his keen intelligence. In 1928, after winning the Bearns Prize for his Violin Sonata, Barber began the practice of regular traveling to Europe for music study and general cultural education. He usually spent the summers with his classmate Gian Carlo Menotti and the Menotti family in the village of Cadegliano on the Italian

side of Lake Lugano, which Barber described in a letter to his parents: “Hidden away in mountains of extreme natural beauty, almost unpastured, and overlooking a magnificent valley with parts of three lakes, dividing new mountain-ranges which in turn form a background for the vistas of Switzerland—hidden away here, little known, not caring to be known, is this little settlement of quaint villas, of all styles, of diverse degrees of luxury.... There are exquisite formal gardens, immaculately kept....” In late June 1932, after hiking from Innsbruck to Lake Lugano with Menotti, Barber began his Cello Sonata at Cadegliano. He took the gestating score to his lessons with Scalero, who summered nearby at Montestrutto, and had largely drafted the first two movements by the time he returned to Curtis in the fall. Back in Philadelphia, Barber enlisted a classmate, the cellist Orlando Cole, to try out the new composition and to offer some technical advice, and the work was finished early in December 1932. Cole and Barber gave the sonata a trial performance at the Art Alliance in Philadelphia soon after the first of the year, and played its formal public premiere at a League of Composers concert in New York City on March 5, 1933, the same program on which Barber’s setting of Matthew Arnold’s *Dover Beach* was introduced. With those premieres and the first performance of the Overture to “The School for Scandal” by the Philadelphia Orchestra five months later, Barber announced himself as one of the most promising composers on the American musical scene.

Barber was a great and natural melodist, and his innate lyricism found a fine vehicle in the Cello Sonata, which Orlando Cole said was “very cellistic, very singing.” The main theme of the sonata-form opening movement recalls the arching melodies, rich chromaticism, and dense piano writing of Brahms, but Barber’s own personality emerges clearly as the music progresses, not least in some complex rhythms; the second theme is a sweet cello strain intoned over a rustling accompaniment. Two hammer-blow chords mark the beginning of the brief but dramatic development section. The recapitulation begins with a tranquil reiteration of the main theme in long notes before the return

of the exposition's subsequent materials, appropriately adjusted as to key, rounds out the movement. The second movement is an ingenious conflation of Adagio and Scherzo, with a dashing central Presto framed at beginning and end by a tenderly expressive paragraph. The finale, another sonata form, uses a broad heroic melody and a delicate staccato passage as its main and second themes.

### Cello Sonata in G minor, Op. 19 Sergei Rachmaninoff

The absolute failure of Sergei Rachmaninoff's First Symphony at its premiere in 1897 thrust the young composer into such a mental depression that he suffered a complete nervous collapse. His family, alarmed at the prospect of Sergei wasting his prodigious talent, sought professional psychiatric help. An aunt of Rachmaninoff, Varvara Satina, had some time before been successfully treated for an emotional disturbance by one Dr. Nicholas Dahl, and she suggested that the family consult him. Rachmaninoff, who began treatments in January 1900, recalled years later, "My relatives had informed Dr. Dahl that he must by all means cure me of my apathetic condition and bring about such results that I would again be able to compose. Dahl had inquired what kind of composition was desired of me, and he was informed 'a concerto for pianoforte,' which I had given up in despair of ever writing. In consequence, I heard repeated, day after day, the same hypnotic formula, as I lay half somnolent in an armchair in Dr. Dahl's consulting room. 'You will start to compose a concerto—You will work with the greatest of ease—The composition will be of excellent quality.' Always it was the same, without interruption. Although it may seem impossible to believe, this treatment really helped me. I began to compose again at the beginning of the summer." The Second Piano Concerto was completed and launched with enormous success within a year, the first music to carry Rachmaninoff's name to an international audience. In gratitude, the new work was dedicated to Nicholas Dahl.

Full of confidence and pride, Rachmaninoff immediately followed the concerto with a cello

sonata, written in for his long-time friend Anatoli Brandukov. Composer and cellist gave the first performance on December 2, 1901 in Moscow. Rachmaninoff and Brandukov had been associated ever since their student days a decade earlier, when they participated together in Rachmaninoff's own *Trio Élégiacque* at the composer's first formal public concert, in Moscow on January 30, 1892. A year later Rachmaninoff composed a second *Trio Élégiacque* (Op. 9), in memory of Tchaikovsky, which he premiered with Brandukov and the violinist Julius Conus. Brandukov, along with Rachmaninoff's cousin, the conductor Alexander Siloti, were best men for the composer at his wedding to Natalia Satina on April 29, 1902.

In its fecund lyricism and rich emotionalism, the Cello Sonata, the finest and last of Rachmaninoff's few chamber works, is a musical pendant to the Second Piano Concerto—which is no bad thing. It is his only large composition for cello, and the first of his three sonatas; the other two are for solo piano. The Cello Sonata is symphonic in its scope and expressive ambition. The work opens with a large movement in sonata form prefaced by a dreamy slow introduction. The cello states the lyrical main theme over a busy accompaniment, while the complementary melody, a simple, almost chant-like theme of touching simplicity, is initiated by the piano. Much of the development section is ingeniously extrapolated from a half-step motive first heard in the introduction. As is characteristic of several of Rachmaninoff's large formal structures, the recapitulation emerges without pause or strong demarcation from the climax of the development. The whirling Scherzo that follows presents some extremely challenging problems of bowing to the cellist, who, in compensation, is rewarded with two superb melodies—one serving as the second theme of the Scherzo and the other as the principal theme of the central trio. The Andante is a wonderful moonlit song of great warmth and nostalgia. The finale is another fully realized sonata form, with a second theme even more melodically ingratiating than that of the opening movement and a robust, invigorating coda.

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**Sheku Kanneh-Mason**, one of the brightest young stars on the classical music scene, became a household name worldwide in May 2018 after performing at the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex at Windsor Castle. His performance was greeted with universal excitement after being watched by nearly two billion people globally.

The winner of the 2016 BBC Young Musician competition, Sheku is already in great demand from major orchestras and concert halls worldwide. In January 2018, his debut recording for Decca Classics, *Inspiration*, was released, featuring the Shostakovich Cello Concerto No. 1 with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) and Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla. The success of the album propelled Sheku to a debut spot at No. 18 on the official UK album charts, and No. 1 on the classical chart. Alongside short works by Shostakovich, Offenbach, Casals, and Saint-Saëns, Sheku's own arrangement of Bob Marley's "No Woman No Cry" was also featured on the album, going viral on social media and clocking one million streams in its first month on Spotify alone. In June 2018, Sheku received the Male Artist of the Year and the Critics' Choice honors at the re-launched Classic BRIT Awards, and in July 2018, he became the first artist to receive the new BRIT Certified Breakthrough Award, having sold over 30,000 copies of his debut album in the UK and surpassing 100,000 album sales worldwide.

Sheku has already performed with a number of the major UK orchestras and made debuts during the 2018–19 season with the Seattle Symphony, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Netherlands Chamber Orchestra at the Concertgebouw, Atlanta Symphony, and Japan Philharmonic, as well as returning to the BBC Symphony Orchestra to perform the Elgar Concerto in his hometown of Nottingham.

This season, he opens the London Philharmonic season and makes debuts with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, among others. He also makes his debut in a number of major German cities, performing Elgar with the CBSO.

Recital performances in 2018–19 and 2019–20 have included and will include debuts at the Barbican Centre's Milton Court, Wigmore Hall, Zurich Tonhalle, and Lucerne Festival, as well as his current tour of North America, which includes concerts in Boston, Los Angeles, and Ann Arbor, as well as Sheku's recital debut at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Sheku is currently a full-time ABRSM Scholarship student at the Royal Academy of Music, studying with Hannah Roberts. He began learning the cello at the age of six with Sarah Huson-Whyte and then studied with Ben Davies at the Junior Department of the Royal Academy of Music, where he held the ABRSM Junior Scholarship. He has received master class tuition from Guy Johnston, Robert Max, Alexander Baillie, Steven Doane, Rafael Wallfisch, Jo Cole, Melissa Phelps, and Julian Lloyd Webber and in July 2017 participated in the Verbier Festival Academy in master classes with Frans Helmerson and Miklos Perenyi. A keen chamber musician, Sheku performs with sister Isata and brother Braimah as a member of the Kanneh–Mason Trio. He plays an Antonius and Hieronymus Amati cello c. 1610, kindly on loan from a private collection.

**Isata Kanneh-Mason's** debut album, *Romance*, drew popular and critical acclaim, entering the UK classical charts at No. 1 when it was released in July 2019, leading *Gramophone* magazine to describe the recording as "one of the most charming and engaging debuts" and Classic FM to praise Isata as "a player of considerable talent." Isata recorded the all-Clara Schumann disc for Decca Classics as an homage to the composer and pianist in the year of what would have been her 200th birthday, selecting works from across her compositional output including solo piano pieces, a sonata, chamber music with violinist Elena Urioste, transcriptions of two of her husband Robert's songs, and the Piano Concerto, which she recorded with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Holly Mathieson.

While continuing her postgraduate studies with Carole Presland as a Gwendolyn Reiche



scholar at London's Royal Academy of Music, Isata has embarked on a successful and increasingly busy concert career as a solo artist, with concerto appearances, solo recitals, and chamber concerts throughout the UK and abroad, including a return to King's Place in solo recital and a debut with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall. Isata also continues to perform with her siblings, including regular duo recitals with her brother, cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason. Highlights this season include a tour of Italy; appearances at the Edinburgh Festival, Wigmore Hall, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Théâtre des Champs Elysées, and Rheingau Festival; and an extensive 10-city North American tour including their debut recital at New York's Carnegie Hall and a return to the Vancouver Recital Society.

Isata has also performed in the Portland Piano Series in Oregon, the Barbican Centre's Sound Unbound festival, and the Color of Music Festival in South Carolina; at the Edinburgh, Cheltenham, and Bath festivals, the

Snapé Proms, and the Musikfestspiele Saar; and in venues from Antigua and the Cayman Islands, to Perth.

Isata reached her category final in the 2014 BBC Young Musician competition, winning the Walter Todds Bursary for the most promising musician. She has since performed several times on television and radio, including on BBC Radio 3, the South Bank Sky Arts Awards, the *Andrew Marr Show*, the Radio 3 RPS Awards, BBC2's *Proms Extra*, Radio 4's *Front Row* and *Woman's Hour*, Al Jazeera TV, BBC World Service, Channel 4, *The One Show*, ITV's *Born To Shine*, BBC2's *Classroom Heroes*, and in a feature for *CBS Sunday Morning*. Isata made her debut as a television presenter for the coverage of the 2019 BBC Proms.

She previously completed her undergraduate degree at the Academy as an Elton John Scholar, and performed with Sir Elton in 2013 in Los Angeles. Isata is also grateful for support from the Nottingham Sorooptimist Trust, Mr. and Mrs. John Bryden, Frank White, and Awards for Young Musicians.