

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Sponsor: **San Antonio Chamber Music Society**

Concert Date: **March 17, 2013**

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

Program credits:

David Finckel and Wu Han appear by arrangement with David Rowe Artists
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Public Relations and Press Representative: Milina Barry PR.

David Finckel and Wu Han recordings are available exclusively on ArtistLed –
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Wu Han performs on the Steinway Piano.

PROGRAM:

Cello Sonata in F Major, op. 6, TrV 115 (1881–1883) Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

Allegro con brio
Andante ma non troppo
Finale: Allegro vivo

Cello Sonata No. 1 in e minor, op. 38 (1862-65) Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)

Allegro non troppo
Allegretto quasi Menuetto
Allegro

intermission

Louange à l'éternité de Jésus from *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (1940–1941) Olivier Messiaen
(1908–1992)

Cello Sonata in g minor, op. 65, B. 204 (1845–1846) Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849)

Allegro moderato
Scherzo: Allegro con brio
Largo
Finale: Allegro

DAVID FINCKEL & WU HAN

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. 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 and concert series across the United States, Mexico, Canada, the Far East, and Europe to unanimous critical acclaim. Highlights include performances at Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, and Aspen's Harris Concert Hall, recital debuts in Germany and at Finland's Kuhmo Festival, their presentation of the complete Beethoven sonatas for cello and piano in Tokyo, and their signature all-Russian program at London's Wigmore Hall. They have also been frequent guests on American Public Media's *Performance Today*, *Saint Paul Sunday*, and other popular classical radio programs. Beyond the duo's recital activities, David Finckel also serves as cellist of the Emerson String Quartet, which has won eight Grammy Awards including two honors for "Best Classical Album," three *Gramophone Magazine* Awards, and the prestigious Avery Fisher Prize, awarded in 2004 for the first time to a chamber ensemble.

In addition to their distinction as world-class performers, the duo has established a reputation for their dynamic and innovative approach to the recording studio. In 1997, David Finckel and Wu Han launched ArtistLed, classical music's first musician-directed and Internet-based recording company, which has served as a model for numerous independent labels. All thirteen ArtistLed recordings have met with critical acclaim and are available via the company's website at www.artistled.com. This season, ArtistLed releases its fourteenth recording, an album featuring the Mendelssohn Piano Trios with violinist Philip Setzer.

David Finckel and Wu Han 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 now celebrating its tenth anniversary season. In these capacities, they have overseen the establishment and design of The Chamber Music Society's CMS Studio Recordings label, as well as the Society's recording partnership with Deutsche Grammophon (which includes CMS concert downloads made available through the Digital DG Concerts Series); and Music@Menlo LIVE, Music@Menlo's exclusive recording label, which has been praised as a "breakthrough" (*Billboard*) and "probably the most ambitious recording project of any classical music festival in the world" (*San Jose Mercury News*). In 2011, David Finckel and Wu Han were named Artistic Directors of Chamber Music Today, a new festival to be held annually at the Seoul Arts Center in Korea.

The duo's repertoire spans virtually the entire literature for cello and piano, with an equal emphasis on the classics and the contemporaries. Their modern repertoire includes all the significant works, from Prokofiev and Britten to Alfred Schnittke and André Previn. Their commitment to new music has brought commissioned works by Bruce Adolphe, Lera Auerbach, Gabriela Lena Frank, Pierre Jalbert, Augusta Read Thomas, and George Tsontakis 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 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. They appeared annually on the Aspen Music Festival's Distinguished Artist Master Class series and in various educational outreach programs across the country. Last season, under the auspices of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, David Finckel and Wu Han have 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 eighteen-year-old daughter, Lilian.

For more information, please visit www.davidfinckelandwuhan.com.

Updated August, 2012. Please discard previous versions.

Notes on the program

Richard Strauss (Born June 11, 1864, Munich; died September 8, 1949, Garmisch-Partenkirchen)

Cello Sonata in F Major, op. 6

Composed: 1881–1883

First performance: 1883, in Nuremberg

Other works from this period: Symphony no. 1 in d minor, op. 94 (1880); Horn Concerto no. 1 in E-flat Major, op. 11 (1882); Piano Quartet in c minor, op. 13 (1883)

Approximate duration: 23 minutes

Strauss was born in Munich on the 11th of June, 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 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, Richard Strauss began violin studies and at eleven, 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 seventeen. 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 fifteen years later. The F Major Cello Sonata was written for the Czech cellist Hanuš Wihan, who gave the first performance in Nuremberg on the 8th of December, 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

Johannes Brahms: Sonata for Cello and Piano no. 1 in e minor, 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 (see above) 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 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's 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 *pù presto* coda drives the work to a restless finish, the cello and piano continuing their battle for supremacy to the end.

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Olivier Messiaen (Born December 10, 1908, Avignon; died April 28, 1992, Paris)

Louange à l'éternité de Jésus* from *Quatuor pour la fin du temps

Composed: 1940–1941

Other works from this period: *Rondeau* (1943); *Visions of the Amen* (1943)

Approximate duration: 9 minutes

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 ten 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."

Composer's note on the movement:

V. *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

Fryderyk Chopin (Born March 1, 1810, Żelazowa Wola, near Warsaw; died October 17, 1849, Paris)

Sonata in g minor for Cello and Piano, op. 65

Composed: 1845–1846

Other works from this period: Three Mazurkas, op. 63 (1845); Two Nocturnes, op. 62 (1846)

Approximate duration: 26 minutes

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 discontented." 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.

Allegro moderato

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 ten 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.

Scherzo

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.

Largo

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.

Finale: Allegro

The finale is again in a minor key, its main theme dramatic and complex. There is something 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 section. 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