



Lisa-Marie Mazzucco

UGA
presents.

24|25 SEASON

DAVID FINCKEL, cello
WU HAN, piano

FRI, SEPT 13, 7:30 pm
Hodgson Concert Hall

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Wu Han performs on the Steinway Piano.

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PROGRAM

BEETHOVEN JOURNEY

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Sonata No. 1 in F Major, Op. 5 No. 1 (1796) [24:00]

- I. Adagio sostenuto – Allegro
- II. Rondo: Allegro vivace

Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Op. 5 No. 2 (1796) [25:00]

- I. Adagio sostenuto ed espressivo – Allegro molto più tosto presto
- II. Rondo: Allegro

INTERMISSION

12 Variations in G Major on “See the conqu’ring hero comes”
from Handel’s *Judas Maccabaeus*, WoO 45 (1796) [13:00]

Sonata No. 3 in A Major, Op. 69 (1808) [26:00]

- I. Allegro ma non tanto
- II. Scherzo: Allegro molto
- III. Adagio cantabile – Allegro vivace

Program is subject to change.

PROGRAM NOTES

by David Finckel and Michael Feldman

The Early Works: The Sonatas & Variations of 1796

These pieces are milestones of the cello literature. Although during the eighteenth century the cello had gradually come to be regarded as a solo as well as an accompanying instrument, neither Mozart nor Haydn had composed a cello sonata. Beethoven was the first major composer to write works with equally important roles for the cello and piano.

Sonatas Op. 5, Nos. 1 and 2

Composed: Berlin, in the late spring or summer of 1796. Beethoven was on his first and only significant concert tour, which also included the cities of Prague, Leipzig and Dresden. He was 25 years old.

Dedicated to: King Friedrich Wilhelm II, nephew and successor to Frederick the Great. The king was an amateur cellist and devotee of the instrument who had entertained both Mozart and Haydn at his court. Both of these composers had already dedicated string quartets featuring prominent cello parts to the king.

First performance: 1796, during the visit to Berlin, at the royal palace. Beethoven played the piano, and it is thought that Jean-Louis Duport, rather than his older brother, Jean-Pierre, was the cellist. The Duports were renowned virtuosos who lived in Berlin and played in the king's orchestra. It is likely that Beethoven and Jean-Louis Duport performed the G major “Judas Maccabaeus” variations on this occasion as well.

Published: February 1797, Vienna

Other works from this period: the Piano Trios Op. 1, Piano Sonatas Op. 2 and Op. 7. In the following year, Beethoven began composing sonatas for piano and violin.

Sonata No. 1 in F major, Op. 5, No. 1

In the *Adagio sostenuto* introduction, Beethoven begins his first cello sonata with caution—hesitations and tense silences lead to melodic ideas which are left undeveloped, as though the sonata is struggling to begin. After a climactic cadential flourish, the music pauses and the piano introduces the *Allegro* main theme, ornamented in the style of Mozart, full of details and virtuosity. The second theme begins with serious-sounding chromaticism but ends light and carefree, moving through virtuosic scales to a sequence in staccato eighth notes full of playful rhythmic confusion. In the exuberant closing material, the pianist's hands leap over one another with forceful answers from the cello, followed by a contemplative coda leading to the repeat of the exposition. The development section shows the composer's ever-lurking stormy side and a surprise *forte* announces the recapitulation. As in many of Beethoven's concertos, there is a lengthy written-out cadenza, beginning with a short fugato passage. An obsessive sixteenth-note figure in the right hand of the piano leads to an unexpectedly droll and sleepy *Adagio* which is interrupted by a wild *Prestissimo*. The movement concludes happily and vigorously.

The Rondo: *Allegro vivace* is an exciting ride full of virtuosic outbursts from both instruments. One can imagine the court's amazement at the spectacle of Beethoven devouring the keyboard in

this finale. The only calm moments are dreamy interludes of piano arpeggios over cello drones. Near the finish, a long *ritard* winds the action down to a standstill, and when the composer has us in the palm of his hand, he ends the work with an explosion of notes from both instruments.

Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Op. 5, No. 2

Beethoven enjoyed surprising and even scaring his listeners. The opening *Adagio sostenuto ed espressivo* does just that. A jarring G minor chord is quickly hushed by the marking *forte-piano*, itself a novel idea, and a spooky scale descends in the piano (foreshadowing the slow movement of the “Ghost” Trio, which he would write in 1808). The motifs and themes of this *Adagio* are more fully developed than those of the F major sonata’s introduction, creating a movement of much greater substance. Unbelievably long silences near the end hold the listener under a spell which is broken quietly by the brooding *Allegro molto più tosto presto*. In contrast to the previous sonata, the cello takes the theme first, passing it back and forth with the piano. This is a remarkable movement, emotionally multi-layered even through the frequent stormy sections. In the development the excitement continues until a new theme enters, dance-like and delicate, the accompaniment changing from nervous triplets to steady eighth notes. At the recapitulation, the theme is beautifully harmonized, intensifying the emotion. The movement proceeds tempestuously to the finish.

By contrast, the Rondo: *Allegro* is a study in gaiety and the joy of virtuosity. The movement begins with a harmonic joke: It starts out squarely in C major instead of the expected G major. After a moment the music slides into the

home key, a trick Beethoven used later in the finale of the Piano Concerto No. 4, also in G major. Virtuoso stunts abound: for piano, for cello, and again for piano. A dark episode is dispelled by a chromatic passage returning to the main theme, which leads to an extended middle section in C major and a new theme. The instruments trade virtuosic displays in an almost competitive fashion. The cello surprises by substituting an unexpected E-flat in the theme, and this event wrenches the music into the foreign key of A-flat major.

After a full recapitulation, sweeping scales in the piano herald an extended and brilliant coda. One can imagine Beethoven, filled with the coffee he loved to drink, rattling away on the keys. After some pompous closing music, the piano settles things down to a standstill only to have the cello burst in with the main theme in jumping octaves. Joyful wildness concludes the sonata.

12 Variations in G major on “See the conqu’ring hero comes” from Handel’s *Judas Maccabaeus*, WoO 45

Composed in 1796.

Premiered in 1796 in Berlin, along with the Op. 5 Sonatas, by Jean-Louis Duport and the composer.

Published in 1797 in Vienna.

Beethoven’s 12 Variations in G major for Cello and Piano on “See the conqu’ring hero comes” from Handel’s *Judas Maccabaeus*, WoO 45 was composed in 1796. Beethoven was a great admirer of Handel; borrowing another composer’s melody was considered a gesture of homage at the time. Beethoven may have also chosen Handel’s “Conqu’ring hero” theme as a tribute to King Friedrich Wilhelm.

The piano plays the noble and elegant theme while the cello accompanies in the middle register as if it were the viola in a string quartet. This treatment of the theme sets the tone for the entire work—light and transparent in contrast to the weightier F and E-flat variations. The middle, or B section of the theme, is in the relative minor key, adding a moment of pathos.

Variation I, entirely for solo piano, is smooth and flowing in contrast to the stately theme. Scales move gently against each other.

Variation II allows the cello its own version of the theme in broken, sweeping arpeggios. The piano accompanies with bubbling staccato triplets.

Variation III is a display of virtuosity for the pianist’s right hand. Broken scales start explosively but end apologetically.

Variation IV turns dark with a change of key to minor. The middle section’s usually minor episode becomes a glowing E-flat major.

Variation V is a coy conversation between the two instruments. The piano is optimistic and brilliant, the cello sober and simple.

Variation VI sounds much like Bach, featuring broken scales in a highly contrapuntal setting.

Variation VII allows the cello to run in a brilliant virtuosic display. The piano gets one chance to show off, in an outburst typical of the composer.

Variation VIII shows Beethoven’s famous stormy side. In a shocking G minor fortissimo, the piano pounds out the tune in crashing chords against wild scales that move from hand to hand. Dramatically, the storm ceases for a moment in the prayer-like middle section.

Variation IX is childlike and innocent, breezing over the anger of the previous variation.

Variation X captures the glory and heroism evoked by Handel’s title. The theme is played in canon between the cello and the booming bass of the piano, while the pianist’s right hand supplies a bristling sixteenth-note accompaniment.

Variation XI, marked *Adagio*, is the most extended slow movement of all three sets of variations.

Variation XII, the finale, is the most carefree. Beethoven transforms the theme into a lively dance in triple meter. After some odd excursions into foreign keys the mirth returns and the work ends in appropriately triumphant style. —© Patrick Castillo

The “Heroic Period” Sonata of 1808 Sonata No. 3 in A major, Op. 69

One of the greatest works in the cello literature, the A major sonata was composed by Beethoven in the midst of one of his most phenomenally prolific periods. The new prominence of the cello, the sweeping use of the instrument’s range, and the long, singing lines all herald the full flowering of the cello’s role in the duo sonata.

Composed: Sketches appear in 1807 amongst those for the Fifth Symphony. Completed in Vienna in the spring of 1808. Beethoven was 38.

Dedicated to: Baron Ignaz von Gleichenstein, an amateur cellist and one of Beethoven’s closest friends and advisers from 1807-1810. Gleichenstein helped to organize a consortium of sponsors who offered Beethoven 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.

First performance: not documented. 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 sonata 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 quartets.

Published: 1809, Leipzig.

Other works from this period: the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, the Fourth Piano Concerto, the Choral Fantasy, and the Piano Trios, Op. 70.

After presenting the noble theme alone in the *Allegro ma non tanto* first movement, 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 mysterious, rhapsodic, stormy, soaring, and mystical 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: *Allegro molto* is the only appearance of a scherzo (meaning “joke”) in all five 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 chromatic gropings 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 sixteenths. 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!”).

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Cellist **David Finckel** and pianist **Wu Han** are the recipients of Musical America’s Musicians of the Year Award, the highest honor bestowed by the organization. They enjoy a multifaceted musical life that encompasses performing, recording and artistic direction at the highest levels. Their concert activities have taken them from New York’s stages to the most important concert halls in the United States, Europe and Asia. They regularly perform a wide range of music that includes the standard repertoire for cello and piano, commissioned works by living composers, and virtually the entire chamber music literature for their instruments.

David Finckel and Wu Han founded ArtistLed, the first internet-based, artist-controlled classical recording label in 1997. ArtistLed’s catalog of more than 20 releases includes the standard literature for cello and piano, plus works composed for the duo by George Tsontakis, Gabriela Lena Frank, Bruce Adolphe, Lera Auerbach, Edwin Finckel, Augusta Read Thomas, and Pierre Jalbert.

They have served as Artistic Directors of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS) since 2004, one of eleven constituents of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the largest arts complex in the world. They are the longest serving artistic directors in the Society’s history. Under their artistic direction, through performances, education, and recording/broadcast activities, their programming draws more people to chamber music than any other organization of its kind. In recent seasons, they conceived and produced more than 270 digital events that sustained chamber music communities across the country.

Founders and Artistic Directors of Silicon Valley’s Music@Menlo since 2002, the festival’s innovative thematic programming and educational initiatives have set an example that is admired internationally. The festival’s exclusive recording label, Music@Menlo *LIVE*, has to date released more than 130 audiophile-quality CDs.

Passionately dedicated to education for musicians of all ages and experience, the duo was instrumental in transforming the CMS Two Program into today’s Bowers Program, which admits stellar young musicians to the CMS roster for a term of three seasons. They also oversee the Chamber Music Institute at Music@Menlo, which immerses some forty young musicians every summer in the multi-faceted fabric of the festival. The duo was privileged to serve on multiple occasions as a faculty member of the late Isaac Stern’s Chamber Music Encounters in Israel, New York and Japan. In addition, the unique Resource section of their website (davidfinckelandwuhan.com/resource) provides, at no cost, a wealth of guidance for students on both music study and careers, as well as invaluable information for arts organizations and individuals on every aspect of concert presenting.

Born in Taiwan, Wu Han came to the United States as a graduate student, where her talent quickly came to the attention of noted musicians. Mentored by legendary pianists such as Lilian Kallir, Menahem Pressler, and Rudolf Serkin, Wu Han thrived at the Marlboro and Aspen Music Festivals and subsequently won the prestigious Andrew Wolf Award. She currently serves as Artistic Advisor for Wolf Trap's Chamber Music at the Barns series and for Palm Beach's Society of the Four Arts, and in 2022 was named Artistic Director of La Musica in Sarasota, Florida.

David Finckel was raised in New Jersey, where he spent his teenage years winning competitions, among them the Philadelphia Orchestra's junior and senior divisions, resulting in two performances with the orchestra. The first American student of Mstislav Rostropovich, Finckel went on to become the cellist of the Emerson String Quartet, which, during his 34-season tenure, garnered nine Grammy Awards and the Avery Fisher Prize. David is a professor at both the Juilliard School and Stony Brook University.

David Finckel and Wu Han married in 1985 and divide their time between touring and residences in New York City and Westchester County.

