Lisa Marie Mazzucco

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Streaming Premieres
Thursday, November 12, 2020, 7pm (Sonatas Nos. 1–3)
Thursday, November 19, 2020, 7pm (Sonatas Nos. 4–5)

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

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
The Five Sonatas for Cello and Piano

Filmed exclusively for Cal Performances
at ArtistLed Studio, Ardsley, NY,
on September 30, 2020.

David Finckel and Wu Han appear
by arrangement with David Rowe Artists (www.davidroweartists.com).

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

www.davidfinckelandwuhan.com

Wu Han performs on the Steinway Piano.

PROGRAM

PREMIERING NOV 12

Cello Sonata No. 1 in F major, Op. 5, No. 1 (1796)
Adagio sostenuto – Allegro
Rondo: Allegro vivace

Cello Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Op. 5, No. 2 (1796)
Adagio sostenuto ed espressivo – Allegro molto più tosto presto
Rondo: Allegro

INTERMISSION

Cello Sonata No. 3 in A major, Op. 69 (1808)
Allegro ma non tanto
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Adagio cantabile – Allegro vivace

PREMIERING NOV 19

Cello Sonata No. 4 in C major, Op. 102, No. 1 (1815)
Andante – Allegro vivace
Adagio – Tempo d'andante – Allegro vivace

Cello Sonata No. 5 in D major, Op. 102, No. 2 (1815)
Allegro con brio
Adagio con molto sentimento d'affetto
Allegro fugato

Note: the complete set of sonatas will be available on demand beginning on November 13; it will remain online through February 10, 2021.

Opposite: David Finckel and Wu Han. Photo by Lisa-Marie Mazzucco.

Notes on the Music:
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 18th 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.

Cello 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. During the following year, Beethoven began composing sonatas for piano and violin.

Cello Sonata No. 1 in F major, Op. 5, No. 1
Beethoven begins his first cello sonata with caution—hesitations and tense silences lead to melodic ideas that 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 that is interrupted by a wild Prestissimo. The movement concludes happily and vigorously.

The last movement 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 once the composer has us in the palm of his hand, he ends the work with an explosion of notes from both instruments.

Cello 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 *fortepiano,* 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 music 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 that 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 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. Virtuosic 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.

The "Heroic Period" Sonata of 1808:
Cello 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, among 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 1807–10. 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 string 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, 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 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!").

The Late Sonatas of 1815:
Cello Sonatas Op. 102, Nos. 1 and 2

Composed: Vienna, July – August 1815, at the age of 44. They are the last works Beethoven wrote for piano and a solo instrument.

Dedicated to: Countess Marie von Erdödy, a long-time patron of Beethoven and a good amateur pianist. Many of Beethoven's works were played at her house concerts, and she remained loyal to Beethoven in his later years, when his music was losing its widespread public appeal.

First performance: the summer of 1815, at the country estate of the countess. Joseph Linke was the cellist and the countess played the piano.

Published: 1817, Bonn.

Other works from this period: very few. These sonatas are regarded as Beethoven's only significant works from the year 1815.

Cello Sonata No. 4 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. As in the A major sonata, 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 inner 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 com-

poser 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 an otherworldly 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.

Cello Sonata No. 5 in D major, Op. 102, No. 2
This final sonata bears similarities to one of the composer's late string quartets, Op. 130. Both works employ Baroque elements, such as the continuous sixteenth-note patterns found in Vivaldi and Bach. Beethoven's application of this style is powerful: in the opening Allegro con brio, he uses the figurations like weapons, firing them off here and there, like a frightened soldier in the dark. (Schubert may well have heard and copied Beethoven's opening five notes in his *Death and the Maiden* quartet of 1826, which also includes Baroque-style passage work). Although showing strength and confidence, this movement contains odd tentative moments, for example the vague and distracted-sounding transition to the second subject. In the development, there is feverish wandering, madness, and confusion. No longer composing music that was easy to understand, Beethoven gradually came to be regarded as a mad genius.

The next movement, especially, offers an extraordinary contrast to the heavenliness of the previous sonata. As with the Op. 5 sonatas, Beethoven took a giant step forward with the second of the set. Indeed, the haunting second movement is the most profound music in the entire cycle, the deathly opening evoking images of funerals. Beethoven uses thickly-written chords in the piano to create a muddy, rumbling sound (he could be called the first tone-painter of the piano). After the suspenseful opening, a dirge begins, the pianist's left hand sounding like the slow falling of horses' hooves. A new theme and a change to D major recall better times. The return of the opening music is more complex harmonically. A skipping, dotted rhythm introduces a vision of a dance of death—the smiling skull, the skeletal horse, the black hood.

The transition to the finale contains moments of supreme intimacy. The magical modulation to B-flat major takes the listener to a place beyond the pain of all that preceded, seeing the light of heaven for a brief moment.

An unexpected dip downwards to C-sharp minor brings back the sensation of a cold grave.

However, Beethoven unexpectedly starts to play games, introducing the finale in much the same way as he did in his previous sonata. In the final movement, the Allegro fugato, Beethoven takes the piano and cello sonata to new realms. Reaching the pinnacle of integration, the two instruments join together to create a dancing fugue full of dissonance even in its cheerful sections. Completely baffling to listeners in Beethoven's own time, the movement still shocks the ear. This fugue, victorious in its conquest of a new language, looks forward to the music of the 21st century, and is a fitting conclusion to Beethoven's towering literature for piano and cello.

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.

David Finckel and Wu Han are currently in their third term as artistic directors of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Under their leadership, CMS is celebrating three global broadcasting initiatives that bring chamber music to new audiences around the world via partnerships with Medici TV, Radio Television Hong Kong, and the All Arts broadcast channel. David Finckel and Wu Han are the founders and artistic directors of Music@Menlo in Silicon Valley, and of Chamber Music Today, an annual festival held in Seoul, South Korea. Wolf Trap appointed Wu Han to serve as artistic advisor of its Chamber Music at the Barns series, and this season, she is in residence at Montclair State University.

Leaders of the classical recording industry, the two created ArtistLed in 1997, the first musician-directed and internet-based classical recording company. David Finckel and Wu Han have also overseen the establishment of the CMS Studio Recordings label, the society's partnership with Deutsche Grammophon, CMS's live stream 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 passionate 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 identifies and inducts the finest young chamber artists into the entire spectrum of CMS activities. Their Chamber Music Institute at Music@Menlo has provided hundreds of students with incomparable, immersive musical experiences over 17 summers. From 2009–18, David Finckel and Wu Han directed the LG Chamber Music School in South Korea, which served dozens of young musicians annually, and they also led an intensive chamber music studio at the Aspen Music Festival and School. David Finckel and Wu Han's website recently launched 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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