University of Florida Performing Arts presents

David Finckel, Cello
Wu Han, Piano

in

Voices of Vienna

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David Finckel and Wu Han appear by arrangement with David Rowe Artists.

Public Relations and Press Representative: Milina Barry PR.

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Wu Han performs on the Steinway Piano.
PROGRAM

Sonata in A Minor (Arpeggione), D. 821  
Allegro moderato  
Adagio  
Allegretto  

Sonata No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 5  
Adagio sostenuto ed espressivo — Allegro molto piú tosto presto  
Rondo: Allegro  

Intermission  

Two Pieces, Op. 11  
Langsam  
Langsam  

Three Little Pieces, Op. 11  
Massige Achtel  
Sehr bewegt  
Auberst ruhig  

Sonata No. 2 in F Major, Op. 99  
Allegro vivace  
Adagio affettuoso  
Allegro passionate — Trio  
Allegro molto  

PROGRAM NOTES

Voices of Vienna

Indisputably the greatest musical city the world has ever known, Vienna has been the home of composers who have produced music without equal. In this program, the beauty and adventurousness of four Viennese giants speak through the intimacy of the cello and piano duo. The blissful, idealistic side of Franz Schubert — the purest embodiment of the Romantic spirit — is captured in his unique sonata composed for the arpeggione, an invention of the time which was a cross between a guitar and a cello. The fire of Beethoven’s youth is represented by his early sonata, which presages the drama of his later works while continuing to astonish audiences with its virtuosic brilliance. Two early pieces by Anton Webern pay homage to his predecessors Schumann and Brahms, and, bridging the centuries, three pieces from a decade later show us how far music traveled in such a short time. Finally, Brahms’ late sonata bids farewell to both the Classical and Romantic styles with passion and sentiment, a moving testament composed at the twilight of a musical era.
Sonata in A Major (Arpeggione), D. 821
Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

The French composer Olivier Messiaen (whose own music, with its exotic and complex scales and rhythms, may itself not be what is commonly considered “melodious” music) opens his treatise *The Technique of My Musical Language* with the acknowledgment that, “The melody is the point of departure. May it remain sovereign! And whatever may be the complexities of our rhythms and our harmonies, they shall not draw it along in their wake, but, on the contrary, shall obey it as faithful servants.” The supremacy in music of a perfectly crafted melody is difficult to challenge; such melodies were a particular specialty of the 19th century Romantic composers. And to invent, not a melody of the staid *Three Blind Mice* variety, but the kind of melody that flows so naturally and seamlessly that it seems to invent itself from one note to the next — this is an ability with which precious few people in all of humanity have been graced.

Names like Mozart and Mendelssohn, Schubert and Schumann, come immediately to mind. In the case of Franz Schubert, whose gift for melody is evident in the vast oeuvre of songs for which he is mostly known, the Sonata for *Arpeggione* likewise serves as a fine example. The arpeggione (ar-peh-gee-OH-nay) was a bowed string instrument invented in Vienna in 1814; it was also referred to as a bowed guitar, the instrument that it most resembled. Similar to the modern cello, the sound of the arpeggione bore an expressive speech-like quality, especially in its upper register. Although it is unclear how or when he was first introduced to the arpeggione, Schubert was a quick study on this new instrument, and wrote with exquisite sensitivity to its timbre. Nevertheless, by the time of the sonata’s posthumous publication in 1871, the arpeggione had fallen out of fashion; the first published edition of the piece already included an alternative cello part. Modern arrangements of the *Arpeggione* Sonata exist today for instruments ranging from the cello to the flute.

The opening *Allegro moderato* begins with a long and mellifluous melodic line. This breathless opening gesture stands in stark contrast to such compact, self-contained themes as the *Hallelujah* chorus from Handel’s *Messiah*, or the defiant four-note motif of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, composed just 15 years earlier. Schubert’s music here displays a heightened subjectivity, a brand of heart-on-my-sleeve, not present in (save, indeed, for the middle and late works of Beethoven) music prior to the Romantic era. A quick transition from this plaintive opening melody to the buoyant second theme similarly shows how manic the music of the early 19th century had become.

The *Adagio* first offers a seemingly brief melodic idea, only to grow into another long and lyrical musical statement. The meditative tenderness of this music owes just as much to Schubert’s ravishing harmonies. Long sustained notes by the soloist seem to change inflection, as colored by new harmonies in the piano accompaniment. A delightful *Allegretto* finishes the sonata, with the gentle music of its opening measures alternating with a moodier 16th-note theme, recalling the contrast between the two central ideas of the first movement.

Schubert completed the *Arpeggione* Sonata in 1824, when he was 27 years old. Although parallels between the events of a composer’s life and the works produced in correlation with those events are always drawn perilously at best (note that Beethoven’s stormy Fifth Symphony and the *Pastoral* Symphony, for instance, were composed within a year of each other), it is nonetheless worth noting — if only for the sake of historical context — that the early 1820s were marked by the emergence of the syphilis that would claim Schubert’s life in 1828. Schubert, fully aware that he was dying, often drew into reclusion over the final years of his life. Nevertheless, in spite of his illness, he continued to work at his typically superhuman pace — indeed, it has been often suggested that the immediacy of his mortality during these years may have motivated Schubert to create as much music as time would allow. Ultimately, it is of course unfair to reduce such ingenious late works
as the Arpeggione Sonata to a sense of despair: especially in the case of a composer with such an inherent and prodigious gift for the elements of melody and harmony.

— © Patrick Castillo

**Sonata No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 5**  
**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)**

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 multilayered 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. 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 standoff only to have the cello burst in with the main theme in jumping octaves. Joyful wildness concludes the sonata.

— © David Finckel and Michael Feldman

**Two Pieces, Op. 11**  
**Anton Webern (1883–1945)**

Vienna at the turn of the 20th century was markedly different from the Vienna of Schubert’s and Beethoven’s day. It had become a meeting point between the multiethnic immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe and the established nationals of Western Europe. It was a center of revolutionary thought in music, in art, and in the sciences. Indeed, Sigmund Freud and his notion of the unruly unconscious and its implications were the talk of the city’s cognoscenti. Artists of all stripes were exploring themes outside of the recognized traditions of the day. This was the city into which Anton Webern was born.

One of the revolutionaries of turn-of-the-century Vienna was Arnold Schoenberg, a composer who sought a new method of composing music that departed from the 19th century models of Beethoven and Brahms. He deliberately moved away from the key-centered, major-minor system of tonality that had held sway since the late 1600s and by the early 1920s had codified a new system he called the 12-tone method. It was a radical departure in that every tone now had equal weight rather than one predominating as a “center.”
Webern eventually became a disciple of Schoenberg and his methods, but not before penning two works that are firmly rooted in 19th-century Romanticism: the song Vorfrühling, and Two Pieces, for cello and piano, both written in 1899.

Webern was a cellist and probably wrote his Two Pieces to perform with his older sister, Maria, at the piano. An interesting aspect of the work is the pairing of two slow-tempo (langsam) movements together, a penchant for the obsessive that shows up in his later works as a fondness for the musical miniature.

— © Dave Kopplin

Three Little Pieces, Op. 11
Webern

Best known as the devoted disciple and torchbearer of Arnold Schoenberg’s 12-tone method, Webern in fact underwent numerous artistic transformations over the course of his career. His early works — including the Two Pieces for cello and piano — bear the hallmarks of late Romanticism and betray the influence of Wagner, Mahler, and Strauss. His gradual flirtation with atonal music culminated with the settings of 14 poems by Stefan George, composed between 1908 and 1909, which represented a complete departure from tonality. With the Opus 20 String Trio of 1927, Webern achieved full mastery of the 12-tone method, which he followed more strictly than even Schoenberg himself for the remainder of his career.

The pieces that first heralded Webern’s total abandonment of tonality, spanning the years 1908 to 1914, have been commonly referred to as Webern’s aphoristic works. This music is marked by its extreme brevity. It is obsessed with softness and silence. Entire pieces range in dynamic from ppp to no louder than p; the third of the Opus 11, Drei kleine Stücke, rises only to a pp. In the works of his aphoristic period, Webern places unprecedented import on sonic gesture: movements as short as 20 seconds magnify such instrumental effects as pizzicato, harmonics, spiccato (short, off-the-string bow strokes), and col legno (bowing with the wood, rather than the hair, of the bow) into musical events in themselves. Webern scholar Kathryn Bailey has identified the Drei kleine Stücke, op. 11, as “the extreme of Webern’s aphoristic style.” Schoenberg noted of Webern’s works during this period: “One has to realize what restraint it requires to express oneself with such brevity. You can stretch every glance into a poem, every sigh into a novel. But to express a novel in single gesture, a joy in a breath — such concentration can only be present in the absence of self-pity.”

— © Patrick Castillo

Sonata No. 2 in F Major, Op. 99
Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Brahms spent the summer of 1886 in the idyllic Swiss resort town of Thun. He rented the second floor of a hillside house on the Aare River, and spent much of the summer at a local casino, drinking beer and playing cards with musicians from the house orchestra. He wrote happily to his friend Max Kalbeck, “It is simply glorious here. I only say quite in passing that there are crowds of beer-gardens — actual beer-gardens — the English [tourists] are not at home in them!”

The F Major Cello Sonata was composed for Robert Hausmann, a close friend of Brahms and cellist of the great Joachim String Quartet. Like the violinist Joseph Joachim and the clarinetist Richard Mühlfield, Hausmann served Brahms as the prototypical performer-muse, very directly inspiring Brahms’s cello writing over the last decade of his career. By all accounts, Hausmann played with a remarkably burnished tone and ample technique; Brahms’s writing suggests that Hausmann had no trouble negotiating the cello’s highest registers, nor rising above the clanging fortissimo chords in the piano. Brahms’s facility
with instrumental technique is similarly evident in the striking tremolo across the strings, taken from the piano’s opening gestures, which Brahms uses to end the exposition, and then echoes at the haunting end of the development section. (It is also interesting to note that, despite the mastery Brahms had achieved in writing for the cello by the time of this work, as well as the Double Concerto the following year, he still was not satisfied. Upon hearing Dvořák’s Cello Concerto of 1895, he reportedly exclaimed, “Why on earth didn’t I know one could write a violoncello concerto like this? Had I only known, I would have written one long ago!”)

At the time of the F Major Sonata’s premiere, the conductor and critic Eduard Hanslick wrote, “In the Cello Sonata, passion rules, fiery to the point of vehemence, now defiantly challenging, now painfully lamenting. How boldly the first Allegro theme begins, how stormily the Allegro flows!” Indeed, Brahms’ writing at this stage in his career evinces a sense of daring often overlooked in the dichotomy between a Brahmsian conservatism and Wagnerian progressivism.

The Sonata unfolds with a bristling energy, with a jolting explosion in the piano answered by a triumphant cry from the cello. The opening Allegro vivace’s central theme comprises these shouting fragments, rather than a continuous melodic line. Remarking on its unusual rhythms and bold melodic leaps, Schoenberg would later write: “Young listeners will probably be unaware that at the time of Brahms’ death, this Sonata was still very unpopular and was considered indigestible” — a useful reminder to the contemporary listener, for whom this work fits well within common practice, that Brahms was nevertheless a “progressive” composer (Wagner and company notwithstanding). The movement’s harmony is similarly insolent, handily integrating dissonant tones, and flirting with minor key tonality throughout the exposition.

The work’s harmonic boldness carries into the Adagio affettuoso, which begins in the surprising key of F-sharp major, a half-step from the key of the opening movement. Hypnotic pizzicati mark time under the melody in the piano before Brahms again employs the cello’s luminous upper register to sing a long phrase which climbs passionately, before settling into a sweet lullaby. The movement is organized into ternary (A-B-A) form: as in the first movement, the harmonies throughout the central B section are exquisitely rich. A moment of mystery presages the appearance of the troubled and turbulent middle section. After a jarring transformation of the cello’s opening pizzicati, the music of the opening returns, beautifully decorated by a flowing accompaniment in the piano. Music of heavenly serenity closes the movement.

The fiery scherzo recalls Brahms’ ebullient Hungarian dances, with its chromatic melodic turns and hard syncopations. The trio section lends the movement a lyrical tenderness, but still with dense chromatic chords in the piano accompaniment.

Brahms the extroverted Romantic emerges in full form for the Sonata’s finale, which seems to go from gesture to gesture and episode to episode with an excitedly child-like impatience. The subject’s pastoral melody offers a contrast from the ferocity of the previous movements. Soon after the opening, however, the music builds to a crisp march, heralded by staccato double-stops in the cello. The next episode departs from the movement’s idyllic quality dramatically with a lyrical melody in B-flat minor, suffused with 19th-century Sturm und Drang. The piano’s sweeping triplet accompaniment leads seamlessly into a restatement of the theme (now in the foreign key of G-flat major), against which Brahms sets a charming pizzicato commentary. The movement ends triumphantly in a flourish and with great abandon.

— © Patrick Castillo
DAVID FINCKEL AND WU HAN

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 take them to some of the most prestigious venues and concert series across the United States, including San Francisco Performances; Stanford Lively Arts; New York’s Lincoln Center, The Morgan Library & Museum, Town Hall, and 92nd Street Y; Washington’s Kennedy Center, Smithsonian Institute, and Dumbarton Oaks; Wisconsin’s Union Theater; Milwaukee’s Pabst Theater; UCLA’s Performing Arts Series; the University of Chicago’s Mandel Hall; Princeton University Concerts; the University of Iowa’s Hancher Auditorium; the Cleveland Chamber Music Society; New Orleans Friends of Chamber Music; Santa Barbara’s UCSB Arts and Letters; and Aspen’s Harris Concert Hall.

The duo’s international engagements have taken them to Mexico, Canada, the Far East, Scandinavia and continental Europe to unanimous critical acclaim. Highlights from recent seasons include their debuts in Germany and at Finland’s Kuhmo Festival, their presentation of the complete Beethoven Cycle in Tokyo, and their signature all-Russian program at London’s Wigmore Hall.

David Finckel and Wu Han’s wide-ranging musical activities also include the launch of ArtistLed, the first musician-directed and Internet-based recording company, which is celebrating its 10th year. All nine ArtistLed recordings have received critical acclaim and are available via the company’s website at www.artistled.com. The duo’s Russian Classics recording, featuring works by Rachmaninov, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich, received BBC Music magazine’s coveted “Editor’s Choice” award. The two most recent additions to the ArtistLed catalogue feature the cello sonatas of Johannes Brahms and David Finckel’s recording of the Dvorák Concerto and Augusta Read Thomas’s Ritual Incantations (world premiere recording). The upcoming Russian Recital album will feature works by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, and Scriabin and mark Wu Han’s first full-length solo recording for the label.

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 in Silicon Valley that has garnered international acclaim since its inception in 2003. Prior to launching Music@Menlo, Wu Han and David Finckel served for three seasons as Artistic Directors of SummerFest La Jolla.

For many years, David Finckel and Wu Han 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. David Finckel and Wu Han reside in New York with their 13-year-old daughter Lilian.