University of Florida Performing Arts

presents

David Finckel
and Wu Han

Sunday, November 25, 2012, 2 p.m.

University Auditorium

Sponsored by

SFI
David Finckel, cello
Wu Han, piano

Program

Sonata No. 3 in A Major, Op. 69
Ludwig van Beethoven
Allegro ma non tanto
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Adagio cantabile — Allegro vivace

Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 38
Johannes Brahms
Allegro non troppo
Allegretto quasi Menuetto
Allegro

______________________________ INTERMISSION ________________________________

Sonata for Cello and Piano
Claude Debussy
Prologue
Sérénade
Finale

Sonata for Cello and Piano in D Minor, Op. 40
Dmitri Shostakovich
Allegro non troppo
Allegro
Largo
Allegro

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ArtistLed — www.ArtistLed.com or 1-888-ArtLedCD.
Artist website: www.davidfinckelandwuhan.com

Wu Han performs on the Steinway Piano
Sonata No. 3 in A Major, Op. 69 (1808)
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

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 1807-10. 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 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.

**Allegro ma non tanto:** 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:** 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!”). — Program note by David Finckel and Michael Feldman

Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 38 (1862-65)
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

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 20s. 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 20s and early 30s, 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 più presto coda drives the work to a restless finish, the cello and piano continuing their battle for supremacy to the end.

— Program note by Patrick Castillo
Sonata for Cello and Piano (1915)
Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

The last years of Debussy’s life were largely unhappy times. He once wrote: “Try as I may, I can’t regard the sadness of my existence with caustic detachment. Sometimes my days are dark, dull, and soundless like those of a hero from Edgar Allan Poe; and my soul is as romantic as a Chopin Ballade.” Though his marriage to the singer Emma Bardac was sufficiently content, Debussy nevertheless found domestic life increasingly stifling. His melancholy was compounded in 1909, when he was diagnosed with cancer, and the onset of war in 1914 deeply dismayed the already fragile composer. (He mused in a letter to Stravinsky: “Unless one’s directly involved in a war, it makes thought very difficult.”)

In 1915, Debussy underwent an operation to treat his cancer, which took a severe physical toll, leaving him almost unable to compose. Nevertheless, feeling that he had little time left, he continued to work as feverishly as his strength would allow, planning a set of six sonatas for various instruments. A letter from October 6 of that year to the conductor Bernardo Molinari thoroughly illustrates the state of Debussy’s psyche at the time:

“Mon cher ami,

Your kind letter has reached me in a little spot by the sea where I’ve come to try and forget the war. For the last three months I’ve been able to work again.

When I tell you that I spent nearly a year unable to write music … after that I’ve almost had to re-learn it. It was like a rediscovery and it’s seemed to me more beautiful than ever!

Is it because I was deprived of it for so long? I don’t know. What beauties there are in music ‘by itself,’ with no axe to grind or new inventions to amaze the so-called ‘dilettanti’… The emotional satisfaction one gets from it can’t be equaled, can it, in any of the other arts? This power of ‘the right chord in the right place’ that strikes you … We’re still in the age of ‘harmonic progressions’ and people who are happy just with beauty of sound are hard to find.

I haven’t written much orchestral music, but I have finished: Douze Etudes for piano, a Cello Sonata, and another sonata for flute, viola and harp, in the ancient, flexible mould with none of the grandiloquence of modern sonatas. There are going to be six of them for different groups of instruments and the last one will combine all those used in the previous five. For many people that won’t be as important as an opera … But I thought it was of greater service to music!”

In addition to the Cello Sonata and the Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp, Debussy would two years later complete the third sonata of the projected six, for violin and piano. The fourth sonata was to be for oboe, horn, and harpsichord, and the fifth for trumpet, clarinet, bassoon and piano. The Violin Sonata would prove to be his final work, however: Debussy took ill and died in Paris in 1918, at the age of 55.

The Cello Sonata utilizes a rich palette of timbres, which Debussy achieves with exquisite subtlety in both the piano and cello. The work furthermore demonstrates an economy of language characteristic of the composer’s mature style, but also offers a rare example in Debussy’s works of sonata form, the predominant musical structure since the Classical era. Debussy was most explicit about his ambivalence towards such acknowledged past masters as Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and Brahms, and their musical forms; nevertheless, he wrote to his publisher Jacques Durand, “It’s not for me to judge [the Cello Sonata’s] excellence, but I like its proportions and its almost classical form, in the good sense of the word.”

The Prologue opens with a resolute gesture in the piano, solidly in the key of D Minor, but this conventional harmony yields almost immediately to more mysterious, Impressionistic sounds, sung in the cello’s upper register. The development section continues to defy Classical harmony, mixing major and minor tonalities. Debussy’s musical ideas unfold with a graceful logic throughout, and are set sensitively to
each instrument’s acoustic strengths: in a turbulent excursion towards atonality, agitated rhythms in the lower register of both instruments create an excited murkiness, before building into the bright and sweeping reprise of the opening measures (marked *largent declamé* by the composer), soaring triumphantly at the top of the cello’s range.

The bold opening measures of the animated Serenade lean even further toward atonality, giving the impression of abandoning western Classical harmony altogether. Guitar-like pizzicati in the cello, evocative of Spanish music, provide the engine for the movement’s forward motion. As in the Prologue, Debussy’s gestures here afford a certain degree of elasticity, but consistently remain compact and understated. Recurrent whole-tone figures lend the movement an exotic touch. The daring gestures and nuances of this Serenade illustrate Debussy the visionary: the movement sounds as fresh and modern today as the works of any present day composers.

After a static and suspenseful passage, marked by a bowed return to the opening guitar-like theme, the music launches *attacca* into the lively finale. The cello soars again in its expressive upper register, then launches into a jaunty melody. The movement features two notably distinct interludes: in the first, the piano offers a lyrical melody in high octaves, again evoking an exotic Spanish flavor; the cello appropriately accompanies with strumming pizzicati. Later, the lively theme suddenly dissipates again into a trance-like music, this time with the stylishly lethargic swagger of *fin-de-siecle* Paris. Recalling with a vengeance the declamatory measures of the entire sonata, Debussy returns to D Minor, and punctuates the work with a defiant self-assurance.

— Program note by Patrick Castillo

**Sonata for Cello and Piano in D Minor, Op. 40 (1934)**

*Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)*

**Composed:** Begun in mid-August 1934 in Moscow. On Aug. 17 the composer noted that the first movement was nearly finished. The third movement was completed on Sept. 13, and the last movement on Sept. 19 in Leningrad. The sonata was written for cellist Viktor Kubatsky, former principal cellist of the Bolshoi Theater, Moscow, and organizer of the Stradivarius Quartet. Shostakovich and Kubatsky toured as a duo, performing not only Shostakovich’s sonata but also the sonatas of Rachmaninov and Grieg. Shostakovich reportedly performed all the piano parts from memory. The composer was 27 years old.

**First performance:** In Leningrad, December 25, 1934, by Viktor Kubatsky and Shostakovich.

**Other works from immediately before:** Piano Concerto No.1, Op.35; Jazz Suite No.1.

**Other works from immediately after:** The Tale of the Priest and His Servant Balda, Op.36 (cartoon opera for children based on Pushkin); The Limpid Stream, Op.39 (ballet); Symphony No.4, Op.43.

**The composer and the music:** In public interviews at this time Shostakovich spoke of his need to ‘struggle for a simple language’ and he invoked Maxim Gor’ky’s phrase about a need for a “purity of language”. At the same time, his private letters suggest a connection with emotional experiences at this time.

Although already married, in June the composer had fallen in love with a young translator, Elena Konstantinovskaya. He and his wife Nina took a long seaside holiday in the South during which time he wrote continually to Elena. Stopping in Moscow on their way home to Leningrad, in mid-August, Nina decided she had had enough and pushed for a separation. She continued on to Leningrad, leaving Shostakovich behind in Moscow. It was at this time that he began the cello sonata. Soon after the first performance of the cello sonata, Shostakovich asked his wife for a divorce. By later 1935 however Nina was expecting their first child, Galina, and the couple were re-united.

— Program note by Gerard McBurney
About David Finckel and 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 13 ArtistLed recordings have met with critical acclaim and are available via the company's website at www.artistled.com. This season, ArtistLed releases its 14th 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 10th 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 18-year-old daughter, Lilian.

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