

PHOTO BY BRIAN HATTON



**NAUMBURG 2015 CELLO COMPETITION WINNER:
LEV SIVKOV, CELLO**

Sunday, November 13, 2016, at 3pm
Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

NAUMBURG 2015 CELLO COMPETITION WINNER:

LEV SIVKOV, CELLO

János Palótyay, piano

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Claude Debussy
(1862-1918) | <i>Sonata in D Minor for Cello and Piano, L. 135</i>
Prologue: Lent, sostenuto e molto risoluto
Sérénade: Modérément animé
Finale: Animé léger et nerveux |
| George Crumb
(b. 1929) | <i>Sonata for Solo Cello (1915)</i>
Fantasia: Andante espressivo e con molto rubato
Tema pastorale con variazioni
Toccata: Largo e drammatico; Allegro vivace |
| Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975) | <i>Sonata in D Minor for Violoncello and Piano, Op. 40</i>
Allegro non troppo
Allegro
Largo
Allegro |

20-minute intermission

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Richard Strauss
(1864-1949) | <i>Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 6</i>
Allegro con brio
Andante ma non troppo
Finale: Allegro vivo |
| Alberto Ginastera
(1916-1983) | <i>Pampeana No. 2 for Violoncello and Piano, Op. 21</i> |

Lev Sivkov appears by arrangement with:
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PROGRAM NOTES

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Born August 22, 1862, in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France

Died March 25, 1918, in Paris, France

Sonata in D Minor for Cello and Piano, L. 135

Claude Debussy established a new direction in music which put Impressionism on the musical map. Despite that association with the famous movement in painting, it is important to note that Debussy saw himself more as Symbolist than Impressionist and was as much influenced by the Symbolist poets as Impressionist painters. The significant point remains, however, that Debussy represented a daring departure. "Any sounds in any combination and in any succession are henceforth free to be used in a musical continuity," he ruled. Yet this statement should not lead us to think that Debussy lacked form in his composition. Quite to the contrary, his music reflects a thorough understanding of Classical form even if its actual sound suggests new concepts. While most of musical Europe was dividing its loyalties between Brahms and Wagner and focusing attention on the emergence of the Second Viennese School, Debussy, along with Fauré and Ravel, took an entirely new direction in French music that transcended those situations. We assign the name "Impressionism" to that direction, but we should understand that the term is a reference to a new sense of harmony and color in music rather than a total disregard of Classical form. Nor is Impressionism in music one and the same idea as it is in painting. If we are having a hard time defining it in regard to Debussy, it is because the composer himself eluded classification with the exception that he wished to be understood as French. That, of course, introduces the question of national identity in music, another elusive subject.

The *Cello Sonata* came late in Debussy's life, in 1915, just three years before his death from cancer. It is one of his final chamber works along with the *Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp* and the *Sonata for Oboe, Horn, and Harpsichord*. The title without connotations reflects his late interest in "absolute music," an interest that did not curtail his freedom of expression. "I am more and more convinced," he wrote, "that music, by its very nature, is something that cannot be cast in a traditional and fixed form. It is made up of colors and rhythms. The rest is a lot of humbug invented by frigid imbeciles riding on the back of the masters." On the structure of the work, Debussy commented, "The proportions and the form of the Sonata were almost Classical in the true sense of the word."

Here we have a darker, more defined Debussy, as suggested in the opening statement by the piano. The great variation of tempo in the first movement Prologue and throughout the piece seems almost to belie the movement markings, and the freedom of modulation suggests a composer fully confident of his own harmonic sense. He ignores the traditional legato sounds of the cello in the *Sérénade* with its pizzicato double-stops. This rhapsodic but finely organized movement is linked without interruption to the *Finale*. The last movement, with its stark middle section, opens and closes with a kind of variant of the *Prologue*.

Debussy himself referred to the *Cello Sonata* as "Pierrot angry at the moon." His fascination with the clown figure masked his own suffering that, nevertheless, is clearly evident in the *Cello Sonata*.

GEORGE CRUMB

Born October 24, 1929, in Charleston, West Virginia

Sonata for Solo Cello (1915)

George Crumb, certainly an iconic figure in contemporary music, received his bachelor's degree from the Mason College of Music, his master's degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and his doctoral degree from the University of Michigan. In 1965 he began his long teaching career at the University of Pennsylvania where he taught such distinguished students as Christopher Rouse, Osvaldo Golijov, and Jennifer Higdon. He retired from teaching in 1997 but continued a residency at Arizona State University. Music continues in George Crumb's family with his composer son, David Crumb, and actress/singer daughter Ann Crumb.

Some of Crumb's best-known works include *Echoes of Time and the River* for which he received the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1968, *Star-Child* that brought him a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Composition in 2000, and *Ancient Voices of Children* for two singers and small ensemble (including a toy piano) which treats the poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca. He is also famous for his *Black Angels* recorded by the Kronos Quartet, four books of *Makrokosmos* composed between 1972 and 1979, and his ongoing *American Songbook*. From this remarkable list we should not omit his well-known and adventuresome *Vox Balaenae* (*Voice of the Whale*) for electric flute, electric cello, and amplified piano, a sure statement of his avant-gardism. He has recently returned to settings of Lorca texts in his *Spanish Songbook*.

The *Sonata for Solo Cello* of 1955 is an early work written before Crumb's turn to the experimental in music. That is not to say, however, that the work lacks modernism. In it, the traditional and the new

are melded in a streak of Crumb's singular genius. Dedicated to Crumb's mother, Vivian, it was first performed on March 15, 1957.

The first movement *Fantasia* opens with a simple strumming that is soon followed by repeated statements that are both lyrical and dramatic in force. In the sliding effects offered by the cello, we have a taste of the later Crumb. The movement also reflects a freedom of style we associate with fantasy form. It ends with a return to the solemn strumming of the opening.

The second movement, *Tema pastorale con variazioni*, retains a certain lyricism but also points to Crumb's modernism with its adventuresome harmonies. Crumb then undertakes variation form and all its complexities that, in this case, offer challenging virtuosic demands for the cellist. The rising tension of the movement reaches a climax before a gentle denouement concludes it.

The final *Toccato* with its contrasting markings, *Largo e drammatico* and *Allegro vivace*, takes the dramatic quality of the work to new heights but without the loss of a certain sadness that pervades the entire Sonata.

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Born September 25, 1906, in Saint Petersburg, Russia

Died August 9, 1975, in Moscow, Russia
Sonata in D Minor for Violoncello and Piano, Op. 40

The many photographs of Shostakovich's unsmiling face accurately depict the man, his sensibilities, and his music, but that depiction is unendingly complex. Arguments continue even today on his political views and on the compromises he may have made to sustain his creativity. The only thing certain is his position as a victim in the Soviet regime's attempt to control

the arts and make them subservient to its political ideals. That many artists died in this process is enough to confirm its devastating effect. Shostakovich had also been deeply affected by World War II and even tried enlisting in the military but was turned down because of his bad eyesight. Shostakovich's American biographer, Laurel Fay, wisely says of him that he was "an artist who felt the suffering of his people deeply, who courageously challenged the prohibitive aesthetic restriction of his time, to communicate through his music an emotional reality that could not be expressed in any other way." Yet both Fay and scholar Richard Taruskin have contested the authenticity of *Testimony*, a 1979 publication by Solomon Volkov purported to be Shostakovich's memoirs in which he admitted to anti-government messages in his music. An interesting take on Shostakovich's complicated life is treated in Julian Barnes' recent novel *The Noise of Time*.

In addition to the political problems of his time, Shostakovich was beset throughout his life with personal problems, marital and otherwise and including, in particular, persistent poor health. While these problems play out in his music, it sells him short to perceive only the non-musical references in his remarkable output that included, among others, three operas, 15 symphonies, six concertos, and solo piano works including his monumental *Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues*. In chamber music alone he produced fifteen string quartets (plus his *Two Pieces for String Quartet*), a piano quintet, two piano trios, and a string octet. His three strongest musical influences were Sergei Prokofiev, Igor Stravinsky, and, interestingly, Gustav Mahler.

Shostakovich is buried near his first wife Nina in the famous Novodevichy Cemetery in Moscow. A dark gray stone marks the grave with an inscription of his solemn four-note motto, D, E-flat, C, B, used frequently throughout his work.

The personal situation that surrounded the composition of the *D Minor Cello Sonata* cannot explain its genius, but surely it contributed to the anguished mood of the work. Written in the late summer of 1934, the Sonata coincides with the strains on Shostakovich's marriage caused by his love for a young translator, Elena Konstantinovskaya. He began composing the Sonata when his wife Nina left him. Soon after its first performance in Leningrad on Christmas of 1934, he asked for a divorce. When Shostakovich learned that Nina was pregnant with their first child, the couple reconciled.

While the emotional factors were significant, so were the musical ones that affected the work. At the time, Shostakovich referred to what he called his "struggle for a simple language." This may explain the Neoclassical structure of the work, which caused Prokofiev to comment that Shostakovich was following bourgeois trends, a dangerous thing for a composer to do in 1934. Yet Shostakovich's personal war between Western Neoclassicism and Socialist Realism was a struggle with which he would contend many times during his career.

Surely these warring factors are evident in the lyricism of the first movement countered by its stark, death-march effects. The second movement bursts forth with the force of a peasant dance taking us into the Russian camp. It ends abruptly but not before we catch moments of humor. Both cello and piano go to their depths in the mournful third movement with its sense of longing and confusion. Somehow, however, it holds back from total despair with rays of light after its darkest moments. The final movement, too, is a war between the playful and the forceful, the propulsive and the lyrical.

The Sonata was written for cellist Viktor Kubatsky who premiered the work with Shostakovich reportedly playing the piano part from memory.

RICHARD STRAUSS

Born June 11, 1864, in Munich, Bavaria, Germany
Died September 8, 1949, in
Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria, Germany
Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 6

German-born Richard Strauss came from a secure family who saw that his brilliant gifts were grounded by an excellent education and favorable contacts in the music world. His early works were so admired that by 21 he was declared the successor to Brahms and Wagner. While he moved in and out of tonality (*Der Rosenkavalier* to *Elektra*) and had his own form of daring, he never really bore the controversy of the Second Viennese School. The banning of his opera *Salome* for lasciviousness only resulted in its popularity and financial success, which enabled Strauss to build the villa at Garmisch in Bavaria where he and his wife, soprano Pauline de Ahna, lived from 1908 to the end of their lives. Even death was kind to him since it was reported that he remarked to his daughter-in-law, Alice Strauss, in his final hour, "Dying is just as I composed it in *Tod und Verklärung*."

The cloud that hangs over Strauss' life was his association with Nazism. This has been painted in various hues from non-political naiveté to calculated opportunism. One way or the other, in 1933 Strauss was named president of the Reichsmusikhammer (RFK), the Nazi music council responsible for such awful matters as the purging and even execution of Jewish musicians and such ridiculous ones as the "Aryanized" version of Mendelssohn's incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Strauss was joined in the Nazi association by Wilhelm Furtwängler, Herbert von Karajan, and Elisabeth Swartzkopf. Fortunately, Strauss showed his colors by refusing to condemn Jewish writer Stefan Zweig and was removed from his dubious post in 1935. From that point on, he was merely tolerated by the Nazis. There is record of an obsequious letter to Hitler, but it

seems that Strauss was seeking protection for Alice, his Jewish daughter-in-law, and her children rather than for himself. He refused to take Nazi victims into his villa but presumably more in the name of wanting to be left alone to work than for any philosophical or moral objections. The destruction of the Munich Nationaltheater and the opera houses of Dresden, Weimar, and Vienna finally revealed the enormity of the tragedy to Strauss. In 1945 he wrote *Metamorphosen*, an elegy for the German musical life in which he had fared so well. In fear of "denazification," he and Pauline went into voluntary exile in Switzerland at the end of the war. He was acquitted of Nazi collaboration and lionized in London by Sir Thomas Beecham. He returned to Garmisch in 1949, just four months before his death on September 8.

It is difficult to believe that Strauss wrote his glorious *Sonata for Cello and Piano* of 1883 when he was merely 19. While his operas, orchestral works, tone poems, and lieder dominate his output, the *Sonata for Cello and Piano* remains a most remarkable work and stands alone as a reflection of Late Romantic expression. Some critics see it as a foretaste of his tone poem *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*. Believing the notion that "the child is father of the man," one might even hear a hint of his final work, the *Four Last Songs*.

The strong opening of the first movement *Allegro con brio* immediately reveals the balance of instruments established in the work. The piano offers strong opening chords and then turns over the lyrical theme to the cello. This trading back and forth continues throughout the movement as does the alternation between dark and light. We hear playful moments but also ones that are gentle, serious, and powerful. Strauss also manages to incorporate a fugal moment into the movement before he brings it to a triumphant conclusion.

Things take a turn to the dark side in the second movement *Andante ma non troppo*. In moments of searing Romanticism, the cello's lyricism is underscored by chordal statements from the piano. One could examine this movement in many technical ways, but ultimately its beauty is the ruling factor.

The final *Allegro vivo* is much in contrast to the first two movements although the equality of instruments is maintained. Brightness rules in its expression of inner and outward joy. Within its growing power, the movement still returns to the lyrical and even to the playful. Strauss takes us to the conclusion in what seems like an explosion of happiness.

ALBERTO GINASTERA

Born April 11, 1916, in Buenos Aires, Argentina
Died June 25, 1983, in Geneva, Switzerland
Pampeana No. 2 for Violoncello and Piano, Op. 21

Argentina-born Alberto Ginastera is considered one of the most significant composers of the 20th century both in the Americas and elsewhere. He graduated in 1938 from the conservatory in Buenos Aires but soon ventured to the United States where he studied with Aaron Copland at Tanglewood. He returned to Buenos Aires in 1947 where he co-founded the League of Composers and held numerous teaching posts.

Among his famous students there was Ástor Piazzolla. Ginastera returned to the US in 1968 but moved to Europe in 1970 where he remained until his death in 1983 in Geneva, Switzerland. His international influences affected his highly sophisticated music, yet he never lost a certain Latin American identity within it. This is reflected in the first two of his compositional periods which he himself identified as: Objective Nationalism (1934-1948) and Subjective Nationalism (1948-1958). A third period he labelled Neo-Expressionism (1958-1983). Ginastera's admiration of Bartók is consistent throughout these periods but never to the point of imitation.

"Subjective Nationalism" might well apply to the *Pampeana No. 2* of 1950 with its distinctly Latin American effects that ultimately transcend that identification. It is one of three rhapsodic works in which Ginastera evokes South America's fertile lowlands rich in wildlife. In purely musical terms, however, the piece might best be heard as a fantasy with its folk references and great freedom and variety of form within one continuous movement. The dramatic opening by the cello is soon followed by equally dramatic piano statements. The drama continues with growing tension and varying moods until a final riveting statement brings things to a dramatic conclusion.

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LEV SIVKOV, winner of the 2015 Naumburg Cello Competition was born in 1990 in Novosibirsk, Russia (Siberia) where he started studying the cello at age five. In 2016 he was appointed principal cellist of the Royal Danish Opera in Copenhagen, Denmark. Joshua Kosman writing for the *San Francisco Gate* (January 2016) called Sivkov on the occasion of his U.S. debut, “the robust young Russian cellist who made an impressive debut.” He said about Sivkov’s playing of Khachaturian’s *Sonata-Fantasy in C*, “This 15-minute showpiece amounts to a freewheeling catalog of everything a successful cellist needs to be able to do—from rapid-fire passagework to broad, soulful oratory—and Sivkov dug into the music like a dog attacking a T-bone.” In 2016 he was appointed principal cellist of the Royal Danish Opera in Copenhagen, Denmark.

From 2005-2009 he was a student at the Music-Academy in Basle, Switzerland where he studied with I. Monighetti. He later studied at the Music-Academy in Stuttgart, Germany with C. Brotbek and in Freiburg with Jean-Guihen Queyras. In addition, he has participated in masterclasses with Janos Starker at Indiana University, W.E. Schmidt at the Kronberg Music Festival in Germany, and with Ferenc Rados in the Prussia Cove Music Seminars in England. Among other first prize awards are the Julio Cardona String Performers International Competition (Covilha, Portugal); the Dominick Cello Prize at the International Competition (Stuttgart, Germany); and the Gavrilin International Music Competition (Vologda, Germany).

In addition, he was awarded the Prize of the Jury at the International Lutoslawski Cello Competition (Warsaw, Poland). Sivkov plays a cello made by the French master Mieremont (1880) that is on loan to him by the Landessammlung für Streichinstrumente Baden Württemberg in Freiburg, Germany.

JÁNOS PALOJTAY, a native of Budapest, Hungary, was born in 1987 and began studying the piano at age five. At 13 he was admitted to the Special Class for Exceptional Young Talents at the Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest, where he studied with András Kemenes and Péter Nagy, graduating in 2011. Additionally he studied at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, in the class of Imre Rohmann and at the Musikhochschule Stuttgart studying with Kirill Gerstein. He has been a prizewinner in numerous national and international competitions, and as a result has performed solo recitals in Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Austria, Spain, and the United States.

In his native country, Palojtay is a regular guest performing in the most important venues and with the country’s most prominent orchestras. He has worked with such conductors as Christopher Hogwood, Gregory Vajda, and Gergely Madaras. He is also an active chamber musician playing at numerous international festivals with fellow musicians such as IMS Prussia Cove, Encuentro de Musica Santander, and Collegium Musicum in Pommerfelden.

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

THE WALTER W. NAUMBURG FOUNDATION

was founded in 1926 by Walter W. Naumburg and continues today in the pursuit of ideals set out by Mr. Naumburg to assist gifted young musicians in America. The Naumburg Foundation has made possible a long-standing program of competitions and awards in solo and chamber music performance. It was Mr. Naumburg's belief that such competitions were not only to benefit new stars, but would also be for those talented young musicians who would become prime movers in the development of the highest standards of musical excellence throughout the United States.

Cellists who have been a recipient of the Naumburg Cello Award include Colin Carr, Ronald Leonard, Lorne Monroe, Clancy Newman, Hai-Yi Ni, and Nathaniel Rosen.