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**YOUNG CONCERT ARTISTS WINNER:
JONATHAN SWENSEN, CELLO**

Sunday, February 16, 2020, at 3pm
Foellinger Great Hall, salon-style

PROGRAM

YOUNG CONCERT ARTISTS WINNER:

JONATHAN SWENSEN, CELLO

with Noreen Cassidy-Polera, piano

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Seven variations on *Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen*, WoO 46

Theme. Andante

Variation 1

Variation 2

Variation 3

Variation 4

Variation 5. Si prenda il tempo un poco più vivace

Variation 6. Adagio

Variation 7. Allegro, ma non troppo

Coda

Zoltán Kodály
(1882-1967)

Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 8

Allegro maestoso ma appassionato

Adagio (con grand' espressione)

Allegro molto vivace

20-minute intermission

César Franck
(1822-1890)

Sonata for Cello and Piano in A Major

Allegretto ben moderato

Allegro molto

Recitativo-Fantasia: Ben moderato

Allegretto poco mosso

Audiences and rising young performers share the stage of the Foellinger Great Hall in these events, fostering a close mutual connection. The stage ticket price includes light refreshments; balcony seating, which does not include refreshments, is available at a reduced price. The 2019-20 series includes Concert Artists Guild Winner: Yi-Nuo Wang, piano (November 10); Naumburg International Violin Competition Winner: Grace Park, violin with Joseph Liccardo, piano (January 26); Young Concert Artists Winner: Jonathan Swensen, cello (February 16); and the Krannert Center Debut Artist (April 26). For more information about these events, please visit KrannertCenter.com/calendar.

Jonathan Swensen appears by arrangement with:

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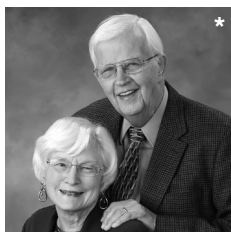
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PROGRAM NOTES

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 1770, in Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria

Seven variations on *Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen*, WoO 46

In this 2020 season celebrating the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, we are exploring the heights and depths of this unmatched composer. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* article Stuart Isaacoff quipped, "While other composers may play a good game of checkers, Beethoven is consistently a master of chess." So it is in his Seven Variations on a theme from Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*.

Beethoven was obviously attracted to variation form since he composed some seventy sets. That in itself is remarkable not only because of the number he wrote but also because of the challenges of variation form which demands, as the form suggests, both variation and continuity. Beethoven's WoO 46 honors well those demands.

Beethoven wrote the first sonatas for piano and cello. Neither Haydn nor Mozart attempted the form despite the fact that, in their string quartets and piano trios, they were both composers who were essential to the establishment of the cello as more than an accompanying instrument. But it was Beethoven who would write the first works with equally important parts for cello and piano. First as they may have been, Beethoven's five cello sonatas and three sets of variations for cello and piano are monuments of the repertoire.

Beethoven's lively set of seven variations, WoO 46, is based on a duet between Papageno and Pamina from Act I of *The Magic Flute*, reputed to be Beethoven's favorite Mozart opera. Within

these variations, Beethoven honors duet form and thus gives great equality to the instruments. In this case, the cello plays the masculine role of Papageno and the piano the feminine Pamina in the love duet that deals with the pangs of love as suggested by its title translated as "With Men Who Feel Love." Interestingly, Beethoven wrote the variations at the suggestion of Emanuel Schikaneder, who sang the role of Papageno in the 1791 premiere of the opera. Despite the variations' inspiration, they reflect as much on Beethoven's genius as on Mozart's. Beethoven makes them his own rhythmically, harmonically, and texturally—but at no cost to the spirit and fun of *The Magic Flute*.

ZOLTÁN KODÁLY

Born December 16, 1882, in Kecskemét, Hungary

Died March 6, 1967, in District XII., Budapest,

Hungary

Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 8

Kodály spent most of his life in his birthplace, Budapest, where he studied at both the University of Budapest and the Franz Liszt Academy of Music. The exception was his time in Paris where he studied with Charles Widor and was influenced by the music of Debussy. He returned to Budapest in 1907 to teach at the Academy of Music and to champion the cause of Hungarian music. He also befriended Béla Bartók, and the two began their life-long study of Hungarian folk music. Like Bartók, however, Kodály was no simple imitator of folk melodies. In a 1955 speech, his telling comment on this subject was: "The music of the people . . . can be lifted out from beneath the rubbish heaped on top of it, and a higher art can be built upon it." Referring to his own work in another lecture, he stated:

"Someday the ringing tower of Hungarian music is going to stand. And if in its pedestal some of these stones will be lying and the rest destroyed, I shall regard without concern the night of my deep grave." When he died in Budapest in 1967, he was one of the most respected figures in Hungarian music and remains so today. The vastly interesting landscape of Kodály's music includes influences as diverse as Gregorian chant, Palestrina, Bach, and, in particular, Debussy.

Kodály's excellence is evident in his extraordinary *Sonata for Solo Cello, Op.8*. Fraught with emotional intensity as well as virtuosic challenges, the Sonata cannot help but suggest the troubled times during 1915 when it was written. Kodály himself was ineligible for military service, but he served as a volunteer to protect the monuments of Budapest from the ravages of World War I. Because of the war, the Budapest premiere of the Sonata was delayed until May 7, 1918.

The dramatic and powerful opening casts the cello in its lowest and highest registers. Challenging string techniques also add to the many textures of the movement. The virtuosic display, however, is not at the expense of wonderful writing and the expression of profound emotion. One cannot help but feel the subtext of this music.

While the second movement has a contrasting tempo marking, there is a consistency of emotional intensity that will continue in all three movements. The ominous opening of the Adagio leads indeed to its indication of "great expression." In this movement particularly, the cello can sound almost like two instruments with plucking in the low register while the upper register sings a mournful song. So is the movement filled with exclamatory statements that

couple virtuosity with emotional expression. The movement concludes on a high note that fades away over the low plucking sound.

The dark race of the concluding movement gives us no relief from the intensity and anxiety expressed in the earlier ones. To this movement, however, Kodály adds the feeling of a Hungarian dance form. But a dark dance it is. High screeches and low plucking again add to the dramatic effectiveness of the movement. We could mention its unusual and demanding string techniques, but to discuss only technique in Kodály seems almost an insult to its deeper implications. If there is any expression of hope in this movement, it comes in its musical excellence and an odd lightening in its final moments.

CÉSAR FRANCK

Born December 10, 1822, in Liège, Belgium
Died November 8, 1890, in Paris, France
Sonata in A Major for Cello and Piano, M. 8

César Franck's long-held positions as organist of Sainte-Clotilde in Paris and professor at the Paris Conservatoire greatly shaped his music but also can be misleading in understanding its complexity. He was generally perceived as a modest church organist and was overshadowed at the Conservatoire by his own notable students that included Vincent d'Indy, Ernest Chausson, Louis Vierne, and Henri Duparc. A domineering father and a musically conservative wife also contributed to Franck's conflicting image. Along with his modesty came a reverence and a seriousness that caused him to produce, late in life, some of the best-loved works in the chamber music repertoire, notably here the A Major Sonata for Cello and Piano. Hearing this music confirms his stature as a composer.

The beautiful opening melody is given to the cello, but the piano holds sway in this and in each movement, which is perhaps a reflection of Franck's own virtuosity as a pianist before he turned so seriously to the organ. Also notable from the outset is Franck's use of cyclic form, a method of establishing unity in a work by generating all principal themes from a basic one introduced in the first movement. The second movement heats up with a passionate introduction from the piano soon answered by the cello. The *Recitativo-Fantasia* is a gentler take, but not without its own passionate intensity. Here we also find another of Franck's imprints, the use of modulation or the subtle changing from one key to another. The sunnier final movement, with its summary of all preceding themes, is still not without its dark moments, although everything ends joyfully. The happy ending might be explained by the *Sonata's* dedication to the famous violinist Eugène Ysaÿe on the occasion of his wedding.

Ysaÿe made the work famous by playing it on his worldwide tours, which also encouraged many transcriptions of it, notably for viola, flute, organ, and cello. Rumor has it that the original version may have been for cello before Franck reworked it as his gift to Ysaÿe. History confirms that Franck approved the cello version created by his famous contemporary, cellist Jules Desart, who surely did the work no harm.

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PROFILES

JONATHAN SWENSEN (cello) has captured First Prizes at the 2018 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, 2018 Khachaturian International Cello Competition, and 2019 Windsor International String Competition. In his native Denmark, he was recipient of the Jacob Gades Scholarship in 2019, the Léonie Sonning Talent Prize in 2017, and the First Prize at the 2016 Danish String Competition.

Swensen made his concerto debut in 2017, performing the Elgar Cello Concerto with Portugal's Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música. Since then, he has appeared with orchestras including the Orquestra Ciudad de Granada, the Venice State Symphony Orchestra, the Denmark's Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, and Poland's National Forum of Music Leopoldinum Orchestra. He is also a frequent performer at festivals in Denmark, including the Schubertiaden, the Copenhagen Summer Festival, and the Hindsgavl Summer Festival.

During the 2019-20 season, Swensen debuts with the Copenhagen Philharmonic, Phiharmonia Orchestra at Windsor Castle, and Sun Symphony Orchestra in Vietnam, and a reengagement with Denmark's Aarhus Symphony Orchestra. Recital and chamber music appearances include a return to Armenia to take part in the Khachaturian Festival in Yerevan, the Usedomer Musikfestival in Germany, the Tivoli Festival in Copenhagen, and his South Korean debut at the Seoul Arts Centre.

In the United States this season, the Young Concert Artists Series presents Swensen's recital debuts in New York on the Michaels Award Concert at Merkin Concert Hall, and in Washington, DC on the Alexander Kasza-Kasser Concert at the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater.

He also appears at the Buffalo Chamber Music Society, Levine School of Music, Port Washington (New York) Library and University of Florida.

A graduate of the Royal Danish Academy of Music, Swensen currently studies with Professor Torleif Thedéen at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo.

NOREEN CASSIDY-POLERA (piano) ranks among the most highly-regarded chamber artists of today. Recent performances include appearances at the Caramoor, Bard, Grand Teton, and Cape Cod Chamber Music Festivals, as well as engagements at the Chamber Music Societies of Philadelphia and La Jolla. She has recorded for Sony, EMI, Audiophon and Centaur Records.

Cassidy-Polera has collaborated with leading soloists including cellists Narek Hakhnazaryan, Matt Haimovitz, Carter Brey, Antonio Meneses, and Yo-Yo Ma and won the Accompanying Prize at the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow.

Cassidy-Polera's mastery of the complete cello-piano repertory is widely-known, as is her dedication to performing the works of living composers. In recent seasons she has performed Elliott Carter's *Sonata for Cello and Piano* on tour in Paris, New York, and Philadelphia, along with new works by Lowell Liebermann, Benjamin C.S. Boyle and Kenji Bunch to critical acclaim. Her CD *Sound Vessels* with cellist Scott Kluksdahl features works by Richard Wesnick, Robert Helps, Augusta Read Thomas, and Elliott Carter.

Cassidy-Polera holds Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from the Juilliard School, where she studied with Martin Canin.