

ESTABLISHED 1941 • OUR 82ND SEASON

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY *of* UTICA

with generous support from

Elizabeth Lemieux and Marietta von Bernuth

presents

Peter Wiley, Cello

Anna Polonsky, Piano

PROGRAM

12 Variations on 'Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen'

for Piano and Cello, Op. 66 (1796).....Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Fantasy pieces for Cello and Piano, Op. 73 (1849).....Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Zart und mit Ausdruck

Lebhaft, leicht

Rasch und mit Feuer

Sonata for Cello and Piano in C Minor, Op. 6 (1932) Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Allegro ma non troppo

Adagio-Presto

Allegro appassionato

INTERMISSION

Song Without Words for Cello and Piano in D Major, Op. 109 (1845)

.....Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Sonata for Cello and Piano in A Major (1886) César Franck (1822-1890)

Allegretto ben moderato

Allegro

Recitativo-Fantasia: Ben moderato

Allegretto poco mosso

Sunday, 26 March 2023 • 2:30 PM

Sinnott Family Bank of Utica Auditorium • Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute

310 Genesee Street • Utica, New York 13502

PROGRAM NOTES

12 Variations on ‘Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen’

for Piano and Cello, Op. 66..... Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven was a great admirer of Mozart, whose influence can be heard in a number of Beethoven’s compositions. (Just listen to the opening measures of the “Eroica” symphony and the overture to Mozart’s “Bastien und Bastienne.”) Indeed, Beethoven once said, “*Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute) will always remain Mozart’s greatest work, for in it he for the first time showed himself to be a German musician.” (Seyfried)

It is no surprise, then, that of the three sets of variations he composed for piano and cello, two were based on music from that opera. The Op. 66 variations are based on an aria sung by Papageno, who, after wishing for - and receiving - food and wine, declares he has just one more wish: “Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen” (“a girl or a wife”).

Throughout the work, Beethoven treats the two instruments as equal partners, giving each performer moments in the spotlight. He also pushes the boundaries of the accepted musical standards of his time, with one review accusing him of unusual tonal movements, a criticism that has certainly not stood the test of time.

Fantasy Pieces for Cello and Piano, Op. 73..... Robert Schumann

The music of Robert Schumann runs the gamut from large, complex orchestral works to small, intimate chamber works and art songs. His Fantasy Pieces, Op. 73, were composed over the course of just two days, and premiered that same week by Clara Schumann and Dresden clarinetist Johann Gottlieb Kotte. Schumann later made an arrangement for cello and piano, which is the most familiar and frequently performed today.

The three movements take the listener (and performers) on quite the journey. The first movement is marked “tenderly, with expression,” making its way from minor to major. The second movement, marked “lively and light,” continues with a playful tone, while the third (“quick with fire”) brings the journey to an exciting culmination.

Sonata for Cello and Piano in C Minor, Op. 6.....Samuel Barber

As one of the first students at the Curtis Institute of Music, Samuel Barber studied voice, piano, and composition. His Sonata for Cello and Piano was the last work he composed as a student there. He began the composition over the summer of 1932, while staying at the family villa of his friend and fellow student, Gian-Carlo Menotti. There, without a piano at hand, he composed the entire first movement and most of the second, completing the sonata when he returned to school in the fall.

One can hear the influence of Brahms in the work. Barber had played both Brahms cello sonatas while crossing the Atlantic a few years earlier, and the works share an intensity in their structure. He also collaborated closely with cellist Orlando Cole, with whom he premiered the work, and the original manuscript clearly shows the adjustments and changes resulting from that collaboration. Cole later called the sonata “very cellistic, very singing. . .and it takes advantage of the best qualities of the instrument.”

Song Without Words for Cello and Piano in D Major, Op. 109.....Felix Mendelssohn

In 1842, Mendelssohn wrote to a former student about this concept of Songs Without Words, explaining, “[Words] seem so ambiguous, so vague, so subject to misunderstanding when compared with true music, which fills the soul with a thousand better things than words.”

Mendelssohn began writing a series of Songs Without Words for piano solo in 1830, eventually publishing eight volumes of six short works each. In 1843, he composed a short work for cello and piano of the same title, which was published posthumously as his Op. 109. After a calm opening section, the middle section becomes agitated and restless, increasing the tension until the cello finally breaks free. A coda then brings the work back to a calm and quiet end.

Sonata for Cello and Piano in A Major César Franck

The morning of his wedding, Eugène Ysaÿe received the manuscript for a violin sonata composed as a wedding gift from César Franck. After a hurried rehearsal, Ysaÿe performed it at the wedding.

Franck had intended the opening movement to be slow and reflective, but Ysaÿe persuaded him that it worked best at a quicker tempo. Franck then marked that first movement Allegretto, with the caveat - “ben moderato.” The work was well received by the public and critics, and after hearing a performance, cellist Jules Delsart asked Franck for permission to make a transcription of the violin part for cello. While the work has since been transcribed for other instruments, this remains the only alternative version sanctioned by Franck.

Knowing the origins of the work, it seems fitting that musicologist David Fanning said, “It is hard to resist reading this as a musical symbol of married bliss, especially when the dialogue is placed even closer together, at a distance of half a bar rather than a full bar, on the deliriously happy closing page.”

THE ARTISTS

Cellist Peter Wiley's Utica story began in Deerfield-North Utica in the mid-1950s, where he grew up on Glendale Place, off Walker Road, with four brothers. It was a musical household supervised by Peter's mother, Joan McBride, who was a pianist. Peter's older brother Tom started violin lessons with Sidney Bouck, the reputable strings teacher then in the Whitesboro schools, and Peter followed directly with the cello at the age of seven. The two boys were introduced to chamber music early on, playing at home and attending concerts, and they performed locally—Peter remembers playing at the Masonic Home with his mother and Tom.

In the mid-1960s Peter and Tom started taking lessons with members of the Guarneri Quartet, when the young quartet was in residency at Harpur College, now a part of Binghamton University. Joan drove the boys to Binghamton for lessons, after which they stayed to hear the Quartet's concert. This was the beginning of Peter's life-long mentorship with the Guarneri's eminent cellist David Soyer.

When Peter was 11 and Tom 15, the boys auditioned for the Utica Symphony, conducted then by the Hungarian émigré Zoltan Rozsnyai. Peter played with the orchestra during the 66-67, 67-68 seasons—his last years in Utica. One of the highlights was the orchestra's performance at Carnegie Hall in 1966, given in honor of the 10th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. Peter has fuzzy memories of the bus trip to New York, but definitely remembers playing on the Carnegie stage.

Playing with the Utica Symphony opened doors to more chamber music opportunities for Peter. The orchestra's Principal Violist Dr. George Volow—who was then Director of the Utica State Hospital—invited Peter to his home on the hospital grounds for chamber music readings.

In 1968 David Soyer announced to Peter's mother Joan that Peter was going to study with Soyer at the illustrious Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, where all students attend on full scholarship. When Joan told this story, she always said there was no conversation. From the age of 13, Peter studied for six years at Curtis then landed his first orchestra job with the Pittsburgh Symphony. One year later, at the age of 20, Peter was appointed principal cellist of the Cincinnati Symphony where he stayed for 8 years.

Awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 1985, Peter made his concerto debut at Carnegie Hall in 1986 with the New York String Orchestra conducted by Alexander Schneider. From 1987 through 1998, he was cellist of the Beaux Arts Trio. He succeeded his mentor, David Soyer, as cellist of the Guarneri Quartet from 2001 through 2009. Peter was also nominated for a Grammy Award in 1998 with the Beaux Arts Trio, and in 2009 with the Guarneri Quartet. He has maintained a close association with the Marlboro Music Festival since 1971.

A much sought-after teacher, Peter has been a faculty artist at Caramoor's "Rising Stars" program, and taught at the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, Mannes College of Music, and Manhattan School of Music. He is currently on the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music and the Bard College Conservatory of Music.

Pianist Anna Polonsky, a Steinway Artist, is widely in demand as soloist and chamber musician. A frequent guest at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Anna collaborates with chamber ensembles and soloists of note, performing at chamber music festivals including Marlboro, Music@Menlo, and Caramoor, as well as Bargemusic in New York City. She has toured extensively throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia.

Anna made her solo piano debut at the age of seven at the Special Central Music School in Moscow, Russia, emigrated to the United States in 1990, and attended high school at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan. She received her Bachelor of Music diploma from The Curtis Institute of Music under the tutelage of pianist Peter Serkin, and continued her studies with Jerome Lowenthal, earning her Master's Degree from the Juilliard School. Currently, she serves on the piano faculty of Vassar College, and in the summer at the Marlboro and Kneisel Hall chamber music festivals.

Together with violinist Jaime Laredo, violist Milena Pájaro-van de Stadt, and cellist Sharon Robinson, Anna is a member of *Espressivo!* Piano Quartet. With the clarinetist David Shifrin and cellist Peter Wiley, she performs with the Polonsky-Shifrin-Wiley Trio.

CMSU'S NEXT CONCERT

APRIL 30, 2023 VERONA QUARTET

www.veronaquartet.com/bio

The ensemble's "thoughtful, impressive" (Cleveland Classical) performances emanate from the spirit of storytelling; the Quartet believes that this transcends genre and therefore the name "Verona" pays tribute to William Shakespeare, the greatest storyteller of all time.

The Verona Quartet's program includes Grażyna Bacewicz's Quartet No. 4, Béla Bartók's Quartet No. 3, and Ludwig von Beethoven's Quartet No. 7, Op. 59, "Rasumovsky" No. 1.

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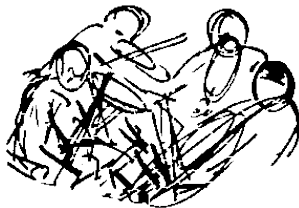
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