

Clemens Hagen with Kirill Gerstein

Sunday, March 18, 2018 at 3:00pm

Pre-concert Talk at 2:00pm

This is the 811th concert in Koerner Hall

Clemens Hagen, cello

Kirill Gerstein, piano

ALL LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN PROGRAM

7 Variations in E-flat Major on “Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen” from Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, WoO46

Cello Sonata in G Minor, op. 5, no. 2

- I. Adagio sostenuto ed espressivo - Allegro molto, più tosto presto
- II. Rondo: Allegro

INTERMISSION

Cello Sonata No. 4 in C Major, op. 102, no. 1

- I. Andante - Allegro vivace
- II. Adagio -Tempo d’Andante - Allegro vivace

Cello Sonata No. 5 in D Major, op. 102, no. 2

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Adagio con molto sentimento d’affetto
- III. Allegro – Allegro fugato

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born in Bonn, Germany, December 15 or 16, 1770; died in Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827

7 Variations in E-flat Major on “Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen” from Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, WoO46 (1801)

With its ideals of human brotherhood, Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* resonated with Beethoven throughout much of his life. The most high-minded and last of Mozart’s operas had received its premiere in Vienna only 14 months before Beethoven arrived in the city to seek his fortune. By the year 1800, the suburban theatre of that consummate man of the theatre Emanuel Schikaneder (for whose company Mozart wrote this German-language *singspiel*) had itself mounted more than 200 performances. Productions were also taking place throughout Germany and beyond. The following year, Vienna’s Imperial Theatre (Hoftheater) put on its own production and shortly afterwards, Beethoven composed the second of two sets of variations for cello and piano on themes from this, his favourite Mozart opera. The seven variations are based on the divine love duet “Bei Männern” between Pamina and Papageno, Princess and birdcatcher. The piano opens with Pamina’s first phrase (‘A man who feels love does not lack a gentle heart’), then the cello takes over Papageno’s musically analogous response. The mood is pastoral, with cello and piano as partners in variations that reflect the underlying nobility of an aria that lies at the heart of the opera’s ideals.

Cello Sonata in G Minor, op. 5, no. 2 (1796)

In 1786, Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm II inherited a splendid tradition of music making at the Prussian court. He himself was a cellist of some accomplishment and enjoyed playing string quartets. In the first year of the Prussian King's monarchy, Haydn dedicated his six quartets, op. 50 to him. Friedrich Wilhelm appointed Boccherini Chamber Music Composer to the court as a means of getting him to write string quintets, with parts for two cellos. When Mozart came looking for a position at court hoping to write operas, he realized that the best way to get a foot in the door was by writing string quartets and by paying particular attention to the cello line. The 26-year-old Beethoven then made his way to Berlin, in the early summer of 1796. He had recently moved from Bonn, his birthplace, and settled (if that is the word for a man who moved lodgings more than 70 times in 43 years) in Vienna, where his two brothers also lived. A concert tour culminated in one month at the Prussian court. Here, Beethoven composed the two op. 5 cello sonatas and two shorter works for the same instruments. As far as we know, the King himself did not perform Beethoven's works. The soloist was his principal cellist, the leading virtuoso cellist of the day, and a musician who laid the foundation of present day cello playing.

Jean-Louis Duport's technique and musical personality had a decisive impact on the way Beethoven wrote his G Minor Sonata. Duport did for the cello what Viotti was doing at the same time for the violin. Both turned their attention to matters of sustaining power, articulation, and emotional expression, in addition to the nimble use of a left-hand finger technique that had been favoured by earlier composers. The two-movement form of the G Minor Sonata likely resulted from Beethoven's reluctance to write a full-scale slow movement for the two instruments. Instead, he provides a weighty slow introduction which leads to an extended opening movement. The themes are distributed equally between the two instruments. At the opening of the *Allegro*, the main theme dances from piano to cello and back again several times. Yet, Beethoven's own title for the work (Sonata in G Minor, for Piano and Cello) – and, indeed, the title for all five of his sonatas – falls into the convention of the time by putting the piano first, as *primus inter pares*. The publisher of the first edition of the G Minor Sonata covered all options when he described the music as for harpsichord or piano with a cello part that could also be played on violin. By keeping the cello busy and avoiding long *cantabile* lines in its powerful middle register, Beethoven avoided problems of balance with the limited sustaining power and projection of the late 18th century piano. The finale begins playfully in the 'wrong' key of C major instead of G major and the bright, good-humoured mood prevails to the end.

Cello Sonata No. 4 in C Major, op. 102, no. 1 (1815)

Beethoven's five cello sonatas are a cornerstone of the repertory. He wrote them throughout his life: two in his early period (op. 5), one in his middle period (op. 69), and two more in his late period (op. 102). He was a key player in the development of the cello sonata – the first composer to write duo sonatas for cello and piano, where, for the most part, the instruments strive to be equal partners. The cello has the first word in the Fourth Sonata, op. 102, no. 1, which Beethoven wrote in the summer of 1815. Here, the give and take between piano and cello is infinitely subtler than in the three earlier sonatas. In both movements, a slow introduction precedes a sonata-form *Allegro* and the theme of the quicker movements gives the listener the impression of evolving out of the introductory material. The musical argument between the two instruments is more concentrated than before. The unity of the whole is reinforced as the music of the opening measures is re-visited immediately before the final *Allegro*. Beethoven recognized that the structure of this sonata – generally viewed as the first work of his final period – was somewhat experimental and he described the work in the manuscript score as a 'free sonata.' Like the earlier op. 27 piano sonatas *quasi una fantasia*, Beethoven shifts the weight of the sonata from the traditional opening movement to the finale.

Cello Sonata No. 5 in D Major, op. 102, no. 2 (1815)

The D Major Sonata is the more ambitious of the two op. 102 sonatas. It opens dramatically, even explosively, and the *Allegro con brio* continues with terse, affirmative exchanges, full of melodic and harmonic interest. The heart of the sonata lies in its beautiful, sonorous slow movement, the only full-length slow movement in the five sonatas. It is

based on a richly ornamented theme introduced jointly by the two instruments. At the end, the music gradually and mysteriously unwinds until the cello offers a simple rising scale as a new idea. The keyboard takes up the cause and together they launch into a rigorous fugue. This challenging, intellectually focussed fugue makes few concessions to the medium. The sketches show that its composition cost Beethoven much effort. Indeed, the struggle to emerge triumphant *despite* – as much as *through* – the instruments themselves is part of the character of the music. In this, the fugue points directly to the finale of the “Hammerklavier” Sonata and, eventually, to the Grosse Fuge. Its effect is powerful and pure Beethoven.

- Program notes © 2018 Keith Horner

Clemens Hagen

Cello

Born to a musical family in Salzburg, Austria, Clemens Hagen began to study the cello at the age of six. Two years later, he enrolled at the Mozarteum University and then transferred to the Basel Conservatory, and his teachers included Wilfried Tachezi and Heinrich Schiff. In 1983, Mr. Hagen was awarded the special prize of the Vienna Philharmonic and also the Karl Böhm Prize.

Mr. Hagen has performed as soloist with internationally renowned orchestra such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Concertgebouw Orchestra, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, NHK Orchestra Tokyo, and the Cleveland Orchestra. He has worked under such conductors as Claudio Abbado, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Franz Welser-Moest, Horst Stein, Ingo Metzmacher, Daniel Harding, and Manfred Honeck.

His recordings include Beethoven's cello sonatas together with pianist Paul Gulda for JVC records and Brahms Double Concerto with violinist Gidon Kremer and the Concertgebouw Orchestra under Nikolaus Harnoncourt for Teldec. Musikproduktion Dabringhaus und Grimm released a disc featuring chamber music by Brahms and Pfitzner, which Mr. Hagen recorded with Benjamin Schmid and Claudius Tanski.

Mr. Hagen regards his solo appearances as an important complement to performing with the Hagen Quartet. Other chamber music partners, in addition to working with Kirill Gerstein, include Martha Argerich, Evgeny Kissin, Mitsuko Uchida, Gidon Kremer, Leonidas Kavakos, Maxim Vengerov, Yuri Bashmet, and Sabine Meyer.

A professor at the Mozarteum University of Salzburg, where he has taught cello and chamber music since 1988, Mr. Hagen also has given master classes in the US and Japan. He plays a 1698 cello made by Antonio Stradivari.

Kirill Gerstein

Piano

The multifaceted pianist Kirill Gerstein is rapidly ascending into classical music's highest ranks. With a masterful technique, discerning intelligence, and a musical curiosity that has led him to explore repertoire spanning centuries and numerous styles, he has proven to be one of today's most intriguing and versatile musicians.

Mr. Gerstein is the sixth recipient of the prestigious Gilmore Artist Award, and his other awards include First Prize at the 2001 Arthur Rubinstein Piano Competition in Tel Aviv, the 2002 Gilmore Young Artist Award, and the 2010 Avery Fisher Grant.

Highlights of his 2017-18 season in North America include debuts with the Pittsburgh and National symphonies; re-engagements with the Minnesota Orchestra and the Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Indianapolis, Houston, Colorado, and Oregon symphonies; summer festival appearances at Ravinia, Aspen, and his debut at the Mostly Mozart Festival; and a tour with cellist Clemens Hagen with performances in Philadelphia, Toronto, and Montreal. Internationally, Mr. Gerstein works with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig and on tour in Paris

and Vienna; the Bavaria Radio Orchestra; the BBC Proms in London; and the Czech, Rotterdam, Stockholm, and Oslo Philharmonics.

Born in 1979 in Voronezh, Russia, Mr. Gerstein studied piano at a special music school for gifted children and taught himself to play jazz by listening to his parents' extensive record collection. At the age of 14, he came to the United States to study jazz piano but later turned his focus back to classical music and moved to New York City to attend the Manhattan School of Music. He became an American citizen in 2003 and divides his time between the United States and Germany.

Kirill Gerstein made his Royal Conservatory debut on December 8, 2013, and Clemens Hagen is making his Conservatory debut this afternoon.