

68th Concert Series 2021-22



FRIENDS *of* MUSIC

is pleased to present

Wu Han, piano

Philip Setzer, violin

David Finckel, cello

Saturday, September 25, 2021, 8:00 pm

Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York

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Who We Are

Friends of Music Concerts, Inc. is an award-winning, non-profit, volunteer organization now celebrating its 68th season of showcasing, right here in Westchester, artists chosen from among the finest in today's diverse world of chamber music. Additionally, our Partners in Education program in the public schools and free student admission to our concerts give young people enhanced exposure to and appreciation of classical music.

In order to help sustain what one of our artists called this “legendary series,” we would welcome people who can join the volunteers listed above, either as Board members or equally valued off-Board committee members. Specifics we are looking for include, but are not limited to, people with networking, writing/publishing production, and/or fund development skills. Call us at 914-861-5080 or contact us on our website (see below); we can explore the range together.

Acknowledgments

We are proud to be a grantee of ArtsWestchester with funding made possible by Westchester County government with the support of County Executive George Latimer, as well as of the Rea Foundation. Additional support has been received from many friends of Friends of Music, including subscribers and other ticket holders listed in this program.* If you, too, can contribute in this way, please send your gifts to Friends of Music Concerts, Inc., P.O. Box 675, Millwood, NY 10546.

Program

Piano Trio No. 37 in D minor, Op. 71, No. 3

Molto andante

Adagio ma non troppo

Finale. Vivace

Franz Josef Haydn

1732-1809

Piano Trio in D Major, Op. 70, No. 1 “Ghost”

Allegro vivace e con brio

Largo assai ed espressione

Presto

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770-1827

Intermission

Piano Trio in F minor, Op. 25

Allegro ma non troppo

Allegretto grazioso

Poco Adagio

Finale (Allegro con brio)

Antonín Dvořák

1841-1904

Wu Han, David Finckel and Philip Setzer appear by arrangement with David Rowe Artists

Public Relations and Press Representative: Milina Barry PR.

David Finckel and Wu Han recordings are available exclusively on ArtistLed –

<https://www.ArtistLed.com>

Piano by Steinway

Program notes

Piano Trio No. 37 in D minor, Op. 71, No. 3. Hob. XV:23

Franz Josef Haydn

In the late 18th century, a relatively new instrument, the piano, became a favorite of amateur musicians. Composers wrote in great part to satisfy the demand brought on by the rush of piano sales; amateur music making at home became important because of the rising middle class. The proficient and largely female performers for whom Haydn frequently composed his trios had a significant influence on that era's art of musical composition.

In the 1790's, Haydn wrote 19 piano trios, 12 of which were published in four sets of three. They resemble piano sonatas with accompaniment, with the cello doubling the bass line and the violin playing the melody on top. As the late Charles Rosen explained, the doublings compensated for the thinness of tone in the fortepiano of Haydn's time, allowing the instrument to stand out in the creation of scintillating passagework.

During Haydn's winter stay in London in 1794 and 1795 he composed his last three London symphonies and three piano sonatas; they and the three Piano Trio Hob.XV:21-23 were composed at the height of his powers, and were immediately published in London before he left in August 1795 to return home.

The first movement of this trio, *Molto Andante*, is a double set of three variations with two themes of strongly contrasting character, the first somber in a minor key, the second, in a major key, playful and radiant. The D minor theme, each half of which is repeated, alternates with a D major theme; both are followed by two variations, always in alternation.

The demanding second movement, *Adagio ma non troppo*, in B-flat Major, is in sonata form, with a varied recapitulation in the style of C.P.E. Bach. It has an ornamented cantabile theme announced by the piano. The movement, the emotional center of this work, requires both sensitivity and a bravura virtuosity from the players.

The final movement, *Vivace*, also in sonata form, is in D major, emphasizing rhythmic elements above all. It begins in two-part counterpoint, then develops into more of a virtuosic piece. Throughout, however, the instability of the rhythm is prominent. The writing for the piano is both effective and demanding.

- notes provided by Susan Halpern

Piano Trio in D Major, Op. 70, No. 1 "Ghost"

Ludwig van Beethoven

The exposition of the Ghost Trio's first movement begins with a lively, affirmative rhythmic idea, stated in unison between the violin, cello, and piano. Following an abrupt halt, the theme continues with a sweet, lyrical melody, started by the cello and then shared by the full ensemble. After extending this musical idea, Beethoven

introduces the second theme in the piano. As in the opening measures, the defining trait of this theme is its distinctive rhythm. Beethoven's elaboration of this theme takes the exposition to its close. The development section opens with a variation of this idea: while the exposition opens with an assertive shout, here Beethoven turns the same rhythmic idea into a quiet, reflective utterance, then uses rhythmic fragments of it to enter an utterly different world.

The second movement of the Ghost Trio serves as the work's expressive centerpiece. Czerny once wrote that its macabre character evoked for him the first appearance of the ghost in Hamlet, thus bestowing upon the entire work the nickname by which it has been known ever since. Beethoven's sketches for the movement relate directly to another of Shakespeare's plays: the musical ideas were first considered for the opening witches' chorus in Macbeth. Tempering the morose slow movement, the finale remains sunny and exuberant from its opening theme to its final measures.

- notes provided by Patrick Castillo

Piano Trio in F minor, op. 65

Antonín Dvořák

The Opus 65 Piano Trio in F minor is the third of Dvořák's four existing trios. It was composed in 1883, when he was at a crossroads in his artistic career. Having built his reputation on the strength of the Czech accent of his music, he now was more broadly incorporating the language of his German Romantic contemporaries. Additionally, he had become personally acquainted with Brahms, who would become an important mentor figure for him. As a result, though the Czech element always would be a vital part of Dvořák's musical language, the Opus 65 Piano Trio and other works from this period have less of a gleeful Slavonic folk flavor, favoring instead a darker, Germanic *Sturm und Drang*. Indeed, throughout its four movements, the F minor trio is relentlessly expressive and can be heard as a case study of the Romantic aesthetic. It also is a work that bespeaks a newfound artistic maturity in Dvořák's writing.

The *Allegro ma non troppo* begins with a dramatic introduction, begun in expectant octaves by the violin and cello and then joined by the piano; a crescendo from pianissimo to fortissimo ushers in the forceful first theme. The first theme group is a succession of one exceptional melody after another. Equally impressive is how seamlessly Dvořák brings the listener through such wide-ranging emotional terrain.

The development section, in characteristically Romantic fashion, mines the expressive depth of the exposition's thematic material, beginning with the dark first theme, now set in the warm key of B major. But this quickly yields to further disquiet, with the music making a startling harmonic shift from B Major to B-flat minor. At the end of the development section, the cello puts together a long, eloquent melody, based on fragments of thematic material from the exposition but slowed down to half-tempo.

The music arrives at the recapitulation forcefully and with gripping conviction.

The scherzo movement evokes Dvořák's Slavic roots, adopting the rhythmic gait of a polka. Wrapped in the garb of this Bohemian dance, however, is a vigorously Romantic statement. The trio section offsets the driving, forward motion of the dance with a dreamlike idyll. This music's serenity is colored with a subtle melodic inflection: the half-step between A-flat and B-double-flat, which appears at the top of the violin melody, among other places – this simple turn gives the melody a Bohemian accent and also recalls the meaningful half-step gestures from the first movement.

The slow third movement shows Dvořák at his most inspired. Above solemn chords in the piano, the cello offers a broad and generous melody. The writing is strikingly vocal and, as a result, human in its expressive quality. And when the violin enters, the resulting duet could rank alongside the most affecting love duets of any Romantic opera. As a foil to the devastating emotional depth of this opening, Dvořák follows with another violin-and-cello dialog that couldn't be more simple: the childlike naïveté of this theme is disarming and exquisitely poignant.

Like the scherzo, the final movement begins with the élan of a lively folk dance; the cross-rhythms call to mind the *furiant*, a Czech dance form that Dvořák drew upon numerous times throughout his compositional career. The folk flavor of the movement is reinforced by the second theme, a tranquil, waltz-like tune. The remainder of the movement is given over to working through both themes until, near the end of the finale, Dvořák shows a cunning sleight of hand: the restless energy of the finale culminates in a powerful reminiscence of the first theme of the first movement. This dissolves into a wistful moment of reflection, before the trio finally races to its blazing finish.

- notes provided by Patrick Castillo



About the Artists

Pianist **Wu Han** began her musical studies in Taipei, Taiwan at the age of nine. By age 12, she was playing concerts and within a few years had captured first prizes in all of Taiwan's major competitions. In 1981 she came to America to continue her studies at The Hartt School in Connecticut, where she was a double major in viola and piano. She has gone on to perform on the world's leading stages including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Washington's Kennedy Center, and London's Wigmore Hall.

Born in Madison, NJ, into a family of cellists, **David Finckel** began his musical studies at age five with his father, Edwin Finckel, a leading jazz musician of the Big Band Era. After taking up the cello at age ten, he made his debut at age 15 with the Philadelphia Orchestra. At 17 he played for Mstislav Rostropovich, and soon after became that great cellist's first American pupil. From 1979 to 2013 he was the cellist in the multi-award-winning Emerson String Quartet. His recent appearances as orchestral soloist have included those with the Slovenia Symphony Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. He is Professor of Cello at The Juilliard School and Artist-in-Residence at Stony Brook University.

Since their marriage in 1985, **Wu Han and David Finckel** have emerged as one of the most popular cello-piano duos in today's musical scene; they also appear regularly in trio performances with violinist Philip Setzer (as they do this evening) and clarinetist David Schifrin. They co-founded Music@Menlo, an annual chamber music festival and institute in the San Francisco Bay area; launched ArtistLed, classical music's first musician-directed and Internet-based recording company; and in 2011 became Co-Artistic Directors of Chamber Music Today, a festival in Seoul, South Korea. In 2004, they were appointed Co-Artistic Directors of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, where they currently present around 200 concerts, lectures, master classes, and outreach events each season.

Violinist **Philip Setzer**, a founding member of the multi-award-winning Emerson String Quartet, was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and began studying violin at the age of five with his parents, both former violinists in the Cleveland Orchestra. In 1976 he received a bronze medal at the Queen Elisabeth International Competition in Brussels. A versatile musician with innovative vision, he is the mastermind behind the Emerson's two highly praised collaborating theater productions: *The Noise of Time*, directed by Simon McBurney, which is a multi-media production about the life of Shostakovich; and *Shostakovich and the Black Monk: A Russian Fantasy*, a work that premiered at the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival and since then has been performed at Tanglewood, Ravinia, Princeton, and elsewhere. He is a tenured Professor of Violin and Chamber Music at SUNY Stony Brook and has given master classes around the world. He has been a regular faculty member of the Isaac Stern Chamber Music Workshops at Carnegie Hall and the Jerusalem Music Center. In 2001, his article about those workshops appeared in *The New York Times* on the occasion of Isaac Stern's 80th birthday celebration. His violin was made in 2011 by contemporary luthier Samuel Zygmuntowicz, who is based in Brooklyn, NY.

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