

The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music

May 2, 2017 7:30 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Nan-Cheng Chen, cello Chi We Lo, piano

Sonata in A minor for Arpeggione and piano, D. 821 (1824)
Allegro moderato

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

7 Variations on 'Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen' WoO 46 (1801) Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Cello Sonata in C Major, op.102, no.1 (1815)
Andante – Allegro vivace
Adagio – Tempo d'andante – Allegro vivace

Beethoven

INTERMISSION

Three pieces for Piano and Cello, op.11 (1914)
Mässige
Sehr bewegt
Äusserst ruhig

Anton Webern
(1883-1945)

Cello Sonata (1915)
Prologue: Lent, sostenuto e molto risoluto
Sérénade: Modérément animé
Finale: Animé, léger et nerveux

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

Ai Limiti Della Notte (1984)

Salvatore Sciarrino
(b. 1947)

Adagio and Allegro, op.70 (1849)

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.
Please switch off your cell phones and refrain from taking flash pictures.

Notes on the Program

The **Sonata in A minor for Arpeggione and Piano, D.821** was composed by **Franz Schubert** in Vienna in November 1824. The arpeggione, a name used only by Schubert, is standardly called “Bogen Gitarre” or guitar-violoncello. The stringed instrument, fell out of fashion before the piece was published in 1871, is tuned to E-A-d-g-b-e and has frets like a guitar, and to be held between the knees and bowed like a cello. The instrument is described as “similar to in form to the standard guitar, but has a greater range, over spun gut strings, and is not plucked by the fingers but bowed; the beauty fullness and sweetness of its tone recall the oboe in the upper registers and the basset horn in the lower ones; it is particularly well suited for a light and limpid execution of chromatic passages even in double stops, and is acclaimed by all specialists as a valuable contribution to the arts” by Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung in 1823. Today the piece is widely presented with the cello or viola replacing the arpeggione, regarded as a standard repertoire for these instruments.

The Allegro moderato of the Sonata in A minor is remarkably song-like, with the cello singing the melancholy melody while generally accompanied by piano’s simple background ostinato such as Alberti bass and Oom-pah figures. The piece is notorious for its technical difficulties among cellists, for its utilization of cello’s high registers as a result of the transcription from the six-stringed arpeggione.

Written in 1801, **7 Variations on 'Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen', WoO 46** was composed by **Ludwig van Beethoven** as he set a variations for cello and piano base on a folk-like tune derived from Mozart’s Magic Flute, with which the duet is sung by Pamina and Papageno, on the subject about love. Observing the two characters take their turns to sing the theme before they join together, Beethoven incorporated this witty aspect of Mozart’s writing throughout his variations, gaining a quality of conversation between the cello and the piano.

After the grand opening of a held forte E-flat chord, the theatrical opening is followed by the entrance of the theme immediately by the piano. Variation I deviates the original theme by modifying its rhythmic impulses and the added inharmonic tones. In Variation II, the theme quickens into fast passages, with thirty-second notes running up and down in scalic fashion. Variation III draws back from the previous speedy excitement, as the theme is now ornamented by gracious “turns”, to prepare for the dark mood of the following Variation IV. In this mode of absurdly distanced E-flat minor, the cello gets to explore the instrument’s lowest registers and bassy qualities. Variation V brings to light another instance of drastic character change, *si prenda il tempo un poco piu vivace* is indicated to guide this lively, arpeggiated movement. Variation VI, the inevitable Adagio variation pronounces the beauty of the theme in a stately manner, while loaded with ornamentations associated with Bel Canto singing. Variation VII concludes the piece with the two instruments join together in a cheerful, buoyant manner as expected, yet not without a minor-mode intrusion in the middle of it.

Composed around the beginning of Beethoven’s “late” period in 1815, the **Sonata No.4 in C major, Op. 102, No.1** is filled with peculiar contrasting elements notably in characters, tempo change and thematic treatments. The component of surprise and wide range of emotion are to be experienced by both performers and listeners. Its first movement, Andante - Allegro vivace, begins an introduction with a several repetitions of the melodious theme which begins and ends in the key of C major in an atmosphere filled with peace and tenderness. A storm then takes over in Allegro vivace in an unexpected A minor, and upholds its fierceness through the majority of the section and all the way to the end, ending with three pounding chords in the same minor key.

The second movement, Adagio - Tempo d'andante - Allegro vivace, also launches with a slow introduction as in the previous movement. However, before arriving at Allegro vivace, the theme of the previous movement briefly returns, and at this curious moment it establishes the home key of C major for the subsequent section. Allegro vivace proceeds with an outburst of energy under a varied version of classical sonata form. The piece concludes with three glorious C major chords.

Anton von Webern composed *Drei kleine Stücke*, or **Three Little Pieces for Cello and Piano, Op.11** in 1914, during a period of his life when he was following in the footsteps of the early composition style of Arnold Schoenberg, to produce free atonal works.

To perform it in its entirety requires only barely three minutes. The piece bears a close resemblance to Schoenberg's *Drei Klavierstücke*, or *Three Piano Pieces*, Op. 11, written five years earlier in 1909, in terms of its elements of atonality, brevity, three-piece structure, and corresponding opus number. As a cellist and a pianist of near-professional caliber, Webern likely felt confident in writing for this particular instrument combination. Indeed, there is evidence that he considered the Op.11 to be one of his representative works, although he considered it to be too difficult for performers and audiences alike to fully understand. The piece was first performed in 1924, ten years after its completion in 1914. It was well received by audiences then, according to the Austrian composer, Alban Berg. Nonetheless, Webern felt that the pieces should not be performed.

Like many other works by Webern, this piece embraces its sense of color and beauty with explicit expressive markings on almost every note. For this reason, the resulting fragmentation of this work demands the performer an additional layer of thoughts to connect and pan out those musical gestures.

Near the end of his life, **Claude Debussy** wrote the **Cello Sonata** in 1915, intended for it to be a part of "Six sonates pour divers instruments". However, he only completed two others, the sonata for flute, viola and harp and the sonata for violin. The latter being the last piece the composer ever composed as he died in 1918.

The cello sonata demonstrates the composer's ability to draw rich palette of timbre from both the cello and the piano. I. Prologue opens the piece with a bold gesture that quickly resolves into a more impressionistic sound world, marked by the cello's use of open strings. Debussy's trademark exploitation of pentatonic scales and major-minor mixture underlines the movement along with various speed changes. The impressionistic theme recur as the final statement at almost half the original speed. II. Sérénade exhibits a wide range of color by its use of unconventional cello techniques. A plucked theme, harmonics, bursting vibrato on a single note, flautendo, glissando and fingerboard bowing. Through attacca, the music launches into III. Finale. This final movement continues and further develops the wild rapid shifting of characters of the previous movement, with more rubatos and drastic tempo changes. The energy accumulates throughout the movement and finally climaxes into the last few measures, ending the piece abruptly with short but strong attacks from the both instruments.

Composer **Salvatore Sciarrino** was born in Palermo, Italy, in 1947. A self-taught composer primarily, Sciarrino began writing music at the age of twelve, and held his first public concert when he was only fifteen. He was a former artistic director of Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Academic of Santa Cecilia (Rome), Academic of Fine Arts of Bavaria and Academic of the Arts (Berlin). He has won distinguished awards such as Feltrinelli International Award (2003) and Salzburg Music Prize(2006). **Ai Limiti Della Notte** was first written for viola solo in 1979. The cello transcription was published in 1984 under the publisher Ricordi, dedicated to cellist Luigi Lanzillotta of Roma Sinfonietta. The

piece explores the combination of harmonics and tremolo, combined with a low dynamic to create a “whisper” effect. The five-minute music emerges from silence and disappears into nothing, while the tremolo-harmonics echo one another in between, creating timelessness.

Originally conceived as a work for horn and piano, **Robert Schumann’s Adagio and Allegro, Op.70** (1849) is a popular work among cellists. The transcription for cello, along with another version for violin, was authorized by the composer.

The Adagio, marked “Langsam mit innigem Ausdruck” (“Slowly, with tender feeling”) serves as the contrasting introductory section to the Allegro. Indulging in lyricism, the cello and the piano takes turns to sing their instrumental voices tenderly. The beginning themes returns as the final closure ending quietly in A-flat major. Without transition, fast triplets in both instruments inaugurates the passionate Allegro section, marked “Rasch und feurig” (“Fast and fiery”). The robust athleticism of the theme prevails throughout the piece, except for a brief return of adagio theme marked Poco tranquillo in the middle section.

About the Artists

Cellist **Nan-Cheng Chen’s** performance was recently described as “personable and smile-inducing” and “fine playing” by Washington Post in 2014 and “Beautiful Tone” by New York Concert Reviews in 2011, Nan-Cheng is passionate about sharing music with music lovers. At only age of 29, Nan-Cheng is the executive director and founder of the New Asia Chamber Music Society (NACMS), a member of Sonic Escape, Chen Trio, Ensemble 101, and many other active music ensembles in New York City. An active soloist, Nan-Cheng has collaborated with Simon Bolivar Orchestra, National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, Queens Symphony Orchestra, Metro-West Symphony, Quincy Symphony and Symphony Pro Musica, which received a review that states: “It was the kind of performance one might hear live only once a decade”, from Worcester Telegram and Gazette.

Among Nan-Cheng’s many honors and awards are first prize in the 2010 Queens Symphony Concerto Competition, 2009 Lillian Fuchs Chamber Music Competition, 2006 International Chamber Music Ensemble Competition, 2005 Quincy Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition, 2004 Hsin-Tian Temple National Cello Competition in Taiwan, and 2003 Metro-West Concerto Competitions. He also won prizes in 2010 Long Island Conservatory Young Artist Competition, 2006 Fischhoff National Chamber Competition and 1999 Taiwan National Cello and Piano Competition. Nan-Cheng has also been featured on NPR’s From The Top national radio broadcast in 2006, performing with its host, pianist Christopher O’Riley. During the summer, Nan-Cheng has been invited to music festivals such as Canada’s Banff Centre, Sarasota Music Festival, Heifetz Institute, Encore School for Strings, and Kneisel Hall. He was a guest-performing artist at Chautauqua Summer Music Festival, a Kaplan Fellow at the Bowdoin International Music Festival and served as a teaching artist at the Annual Music Festival of Walnut Hill. As a teacher, Nan-Cheng has given masterclasses at Penn State University, University of Wisconsin, University of Calgary as well as universities in Panama, Colombia and Taiwan.

A Native of Taiwan, Nan-Cheng has earned Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from The Juilliard School, studying with Joel Krosnick, renowned cellist of The Juilliard String Quartet. Nan-Cheng Chen came to United States at the age of twelve and attended Idyllwild Arts Academy in California, studying under Eleonore Schoenfeld. He then entered the New England Conservatory Preparatory Program to study with Mark Churchill before attending the Juilliard School.

Nan-Cheng Chen's recent musical journeys features over a hundred performances including several solo and chamber concert tours throughout North American, South America, Europe and Asia. Recent highlights including a sold-out debut with National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan playing the Schumann Cello Concerto.

Nan-Cheng is currently a doctoral candidate at CUNY Graduate Center, studying under cellist Marcy Rosen.

Born in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, pianist **Chi Wei Lo** started studying piano at the age of three. He soon established himself as one of the prominently gifted children in the country, and has experienced success sharing his sincere love for music, winning all the major national piano competitions. In 2005, Chi Wei moved to the United States to become a student at the Walnut Hill School of the Arts studying with Mrs. Sylvia Chambless. After winning First Prize in the Chinese Performing Arts Festival, he performed Liszt's *Totentanz* with the Longwood Symphony Orchestra at Boston's Esplanade, under the baton of Jonathan McPhee. Mr. Lo's creativity and style made the year 2008 marked by numerous accomplishments, including First Prize in the *A. Ramon Rivera Piano Competition*, *The New England Conservatory's Preparatory School Concerto Competition* in the top category. In the year of 2010, Mr. Lo would go on to win the *Steinway competition*. Along with standard repertoire, Mr. Lo has arranged songs from pop and rock artists including Michael Jackson, The Beatles, and Queen, and has received praises for these repertoires in Asia, the United States, and Europe. Having graduated from the Juilliard School under the guidance of Mr. Jerome Lowenthal and Mr. Hung Kuan Chen this past year, Mr. Lo has been gaining reputations with his improvisation group, *The Illustrators*. With the release of their first album, *The Illustrators* premieres new works in addition to performing illustrations on pre-existing works. Mr. Lo also enjoys an active schedule of performances as a soloist and chamber player and is expanding his creativity through different genres of music.