



Chamber Music Maryland

NICOLAS ALTSTAEDT, CELLO

FAZIL SAY, PIANO

Saturday, February 1, 2025, 7:30 pm
Linehan Concert Hall, UMBC

This performance is sponsored by Amalie Rothschild

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)

Sonata for Cello and Piano in C Major, Op. 65
I. Dialogo. Allegro
II. Scherzo-Pizzicato. Allegretto
III. Elegia. Lento
IV. Marcia. Energico
V. Moto perpetuo. Presto

FAZIL SAY (b. 1970)

Sonata for Cello and Piano, "Four Cities"
I. Sivas
II. Hopa
III. Ankara
IV. Bodrum

---intermission---

SAMUEL BARBER (1910-1981)

Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 6
I. Allegro ma non troppo
II. Adagio - Presto
III. Allegro appassionato

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38
I. Allegro non troppo
II. Allegretto quasi Menuetto
III. Allegro

*Nicolas Altstaedt appears by arrangement with HarrisonParrott |
www.harrisonparrott.com; nicolas-altstaedt.com*

*Fazil Say appears by arrangement with KD SCHMID |
www.kdschmid.de/en; fazilsay.com*

PROGRAM NOTES

Sonata for Cello and Piano in C Major, Op. 65

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)



Composed in 1961 for cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, after Britten had heard him in concert the year before, the Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 65, is the first of six works the composer wrote for that cellist, whose artistry he greatly admired. In naming the movements, Britten adhered to the classical tradition by using the

Italian language, but followed the example of romantic composers as he identified not only the tempo of the movement but also its genre. In the first movement, Dialogo: Allegro, Britten begins with a sparse texture in which the two instruments play separately, responding to one another in a dialogue. Later, as the two instruments play together, active movement on the part of the one is contrasted with placid calm on the part of the other. The dialogue returns, becoming louder and more intense in the middle of the movement, but as it continues it reverts to the quiet economy with which it began.

The second movement, Scherzo-pizzicato: Allegro, again has the instruments in dialogue, one playing while the other pauses. Here the emphasis is on the transparent texture that results when both instruments play short notes (pizzicato). A slow movement, Elegia: Lento, features the cello's ability to spin long legato phrases, while the piano murmurs, tolls, trills, and tremulates, exploring the full range of its dynamic and pitch possibilities. In the fourth movement, Marcia: Energico, Britten displays the brightness of spirit that is the trademark of many of his works, such as the Ceremony of Carols and the Simple Symphony. Equally high-spirited and brief, the final movement, Moto perpetuo: Presto, requires both players to repeat short virtuoso passages one after another without pausing, leaving performers and audience alike quite breathless.

Stephen Ackert

Sonata for Cello and Piano, "Four Cities"

FAZIL SAY (B. 1970)



Fazıl Say's "Four Cities" Sonata can be considered as a journey through four cities of Anatolia. This work has taken its inspiration from Fazıl Say's memories and events of his life. Bodrum is well known as a city greatly frequented by tourists which sets it apart from the other three locations. These four very different cities with their individual

have been selected from the nearly 2000-km wide expanse of Anatolia.

Sivas is a conservative city located in Eastern Anatolia which is known for its large Alevi population. Asık Veysel is an Alevi Ozan (poet) and Fazıl Say has been inspired by his song "Sazım" (my saz/my instrument) in the first part of this work. The movement is concluded on a melancholy tone in imitation of this ethnic instrument.

A traditional wedding provided Fazıl Say with his inspiration for **Hopa**, which embraces Eastern Black Sea culture. Horon is a very fast folk dance in 7/16 time which is played on the kemence, a typical instrument of the Eastern Black Sea region. The music also touches on Caucasian, Georgian and Laz dances, anonymous songs, "Laz women" and "Cilveloy nanayda" (a Turkish song).

Ankara was declared the capital city of Turkey by Atatürk in 1923. This city with its population of four million was where the composer was born and also spent his childhood. "Ankara'nın Tasına Bak", a rebellious song dating back to the First World War, can be discerned in the mournful middle section. The movement with its atmosphere of tragedy evokes the republican spirit and the ambience of former times.

Bodrum is universally known as the Saint-Tropez of Turkey. A famous street in the city is fringed with countless bars and pubs from which a cacophony of different music can be heard, ranging from jazz, pop and rock to folk songs. Fazıl Say blends the sounds from these pubs in this movement which includes a walking theme in a swinging jazz tempo. The movement makes a reference to the song "Yıldızların Altında" which was performed by the famous singer Zeki Muren who was also born in Bodrum. Asık Veysel's song "Uzun İnce Bir Yoldayım" which is wellknown in numerous arrangements is also featured in this movement. It is brought to an abrupt and absurd conclusion in its depiction of a pub brawl as frequently experienced in this city.

PROGRAM NOTES

Sonata for Cello & Piano, Op. 6

SAMUEL BARBER (1910-1981)



Samuel Barber was just finishing his studies at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia when he wrote his single cello sonata 1932. It shows his lifelong admiration for the music of Johannes Brahms, which began early in his life. Like the music of Brahms for cello & piano, it is solemn and intense and makes frequent use of the low

register in both instruments. In an apparent salute to Brahms' Cello Sonata No. 2 in F Major, Op. 99, the Barber work begins with a series of melodic leaps in both the piano and cello, with primary emphasis on the minor sixth. A contrasting cantabile second theme appears, in which the predominant interval is the major second. Two sudden loud chords usher in the development section, in which both types of motion are juxtaposed. The movement ends with an extended passionate dialog between the two instruments, each playing an equal role.

The great classical composers, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, established the sonata for solo instrument and piano as a three-movement form. Earlier, however, sonatas had four movements, and some sonatas from the romantic period onward again contain four movements, with the interior ones providing a lively scherzo and a quiet slow movement. Barber chose to integrate these two functions in one movement, marked *Adagio*. Having established a rather melancholy calm, as might be expected in a slow movement, Barber interrupts it with a fast-paced scherzo, providing light-hearted interplay between the instruments. The opening texture returns however, affirming the identity of this movement as the slow and quiet one of the three.

In a brief finale, marked *Allegro appassionato*, the composer allows the piano to set the passionate tone, which the cello reiterates. Before long, however, we hear fleeting references for the juxtaposition of melancholy and sport that characterized the second movement. The alternation of exuberant passion and light-fingered playfulness continues to the sonata's emphatic conclusion. In 1933 Barber played the piano for the premiere of the work, collaborating with cellist Orlando Cole, and in 1937 the American Academy in Rome awarded its annual prize to Barber for this sonata and his Music for a Scene from Shelley, Opus 7.

Sonata for Cello & Piano, No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)



One of the musicians Brahms befriended early in his time in Vienna was an Austrian voice teacher and amateur cellist by the name of Josef Gaensbacher (1829-1911). Gaensbacher helped Brahms to obtain the position of Director of the Wiener Singakademie, and in gratitude Brahms offered to write a sonata that they could play together

Evidently Brahms came to regret this act of reciprocity. In their first and only performance together for a private audience, Brahms played so loudly throughout that the neither the cellist nor the audience members could hear his part. When Gaensbacher complained, Brahms is purported to have had a gruff reply: "Lucky you!"

In later years, Brahms revisited and revised this work, which originally had three movements, an Allegro, an Adagio, and an Allegretto quasi Menuetto. In 1865 he added a fugal finale, but before publication he removed the Adagio, leaving the work in three movements, without a true slow movement. The opening Allegro shows Brahms' respect and admiration for established forms, as it follows the classical sonata form closely. The exposition presents two themes and is repeated. The development follows, building on the second half of the opening theme's first phrase and introducing a third theme. The recapitulation faithfully echoes the exposition, and there is a coda that refers to the third theme, presented now in E major, the dominant of A minor, which is the key chosen for the subsequent movement.

In the enigmatic Allegretto quasi menuetto, Brahms again follows a traditional form with the repeated minuet in triple meter followed by a contrasting trio, also repeated, and concluding with one more repeat of the minuet. The cello doubles the piano throughout the trio, a texture that is rare in Brahms' music.

Continuing his adherence to established forms for this work, Brahms creates a fugue as its final movement. A diligent student of baroque counterpoint, Brahms explores inversion and diminution of his theme as well as stretto (beginning a second statement of the theme before the previous one has finished). The movement is far from pedantic, however, as contrasting interludes provide variation and excitement.