THE ART OF THE RECITAL
THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 6, 2020 AT 7:30
Daniel and Joanna S. Rose Studio
Livestreams and other digital initiatives are supported, in part, by MetLife Foundation, The Hauser Foundation, and the Sidney E. Frank Foundation.

The Chamber Music Society is deeply grateful to Board member Paul Gridley for his very generous gift of the Hamburg Steinway & Sons model “D” concert grand piano we are privileged to hear this evening.
THE ART OF THE RECITAL
THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 6, 2020 AT 7:30 • 4,053RD CONCERT
Daniel and Joanna S. Rose Studio

PAUL WATKINS, cello
ALESSIO BAX, piano

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Sonata in F major for Cello and Piano, Op. 5, No. 1 (1796)
› Adagio sostenuto—Allegro
› Rondo: Allegro vivace

BEETHOVEN

Sonata in G minor for Cello and Piano, Op. 5, No. 2 (1796)
› Adagio sostenuto ed espressivo—Allegro molto, più tosto presto
› Rondo: Allegro

—INTERMISSION—

BEETHOVEN

Sonata in A major for Cello and Piano, Op. 69 (1807-08)
› Allegro, ma non tanto
› Scherzo: Allegro molto
› Adagio cantabile—Allegro vivace

—PAUSE—

program continued on next page
BEETHOVEN  Sonata in C major for Cello and Piano, Op. 102, No. 1 (1815)
  ‣ Andante—Allegro vivace
  ‣ Adagio—Tempo d’andante—Allegro vivace

BEETHOVEN  Sonata in D major for Cello and Piano, Op. 102, No. 2 (1815)
  ‣ Allegro con brio
  ‣ Adagio con molto sentimento d’affetto
  ‣ Allegro—Allegro fugato
NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Sonatas for Cello and Piano, Op. 5

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
− Born December 16, 1770 in Bonn.
− Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna.

Composed in 1796.
− First CMS performance of No. 1 on January 9, 1996 by cellist Gary Hoffman and pianist David Golub.
− First CMS performance of No. 2 on January 6, 1984 by cellist Lynn Harrell and pianist Lee Luvisi.
− Duration: 50 minutes

In the summer of 1796, Beethoven at age 25 was in a state of mind and career that he would essentially never see again: he was happy, healthy, and full of creative energy, and he was undertaking a performing tour that took him to a row of German courts. He had just published his first set of piano sonatas, Op. 2. The previous opus, three piano trios, had been a well-received debut. Not all those pieces sound “Beethovenian” to later ears, but none of them are apprentice works. On the German tour he composed busily, working on songs and instrumental pieces, experimenting with a symphony.

All this is to say that in 1796 Beethoven was at the beginning of a decades-long creative journey of unprecedented depth and breadth. He was also beginning to make use of the renown he had gained as one of the leading pianists in Vienna. In a period when the piano was still much in transition, he carried on a campaign of prodding piano makers to build richer and more robust instruments. During the tour he wrote the celebrated manufacturer Streicher: “There is no doubt that so far as the manner of playing it is concerned, the fortepiano is still the least studied and developed of all instruments; often one thinks that one is merely listening to a harp.” In the next years the mounting ambition of his piano works and chamber music with piano would have much to do with the development of the instrument itself, a development to which he contributed.

In June he arrived at the Berlin court of the Prussian King Frederick William II. The king was a passionate music fancier, also an able cellist who wanted to expand the repertoire for an instrument that had spent most of its musical life sawing away on bass lines in chamber music and in the orchestra. Beethoven's reception at the court was so gratifying that he spent two months there. Among the celebrated musicians in residence were the Duport brothers, Jean-Louis and Jean-Pierre, both of them cello virtuosos in an era when that was a rare breed. Soon after he arrived, Beethoven received a commission from the king to write two pieces for one or both of his house cellists. The results, the sonatas for cello and piano in F major and G minor, would be the most ambitious pieces he finished that year. They were published as Op. 5, dedicated to Frederick William. It is no surprise that these sonatas turned out confident, ebullient, and youthful. At
AS MUCH AS ANYTHING, THE SONATAS ARE ABOUT THE CELLO’S COLORS, ITS MOODS, ITS CAPACIOUS RANGE, ITS SINGING LEGATO, AND ROBUST STACCATO

this point in his life Beethoven had every reason to feel the same. He was lionized and well paid everywhere he went, and now he was composing for two of the finest cellists in the world. Best of all, in writing sonatas for cello and piano Beethoven had a genre virtually to himself. He did not have to look over his shoulder as he did with, for example, string quartets, because neither Mozart or Haydn or anyone else had written serious works for cello and piano as more or less equals. The cello was ready to come into its own, moving beyond its traditional role of playing bass lines to become a solo instrument and equal partner in chamber music. Coming into his own himself, Beethoven leaped at the chance to help emancipate an instrument.

The sonatas of Op. 5 seem to ride on their own joy of discovery. The form Beethoven devised for the sonatas is particular to the genre he was inventing. Both are in two large movements, the first beginning with a long, soulful introductory fantasia that is essentially a slow movement. That segues into an Allegro, and for finale there is a dancing rondo. The allegro of No. 1 in F major has a genial foursquare theme, but neither here nor anywhere else in these pieces is 18th-century style much present. Rather, Beethoven found a voice neither backward-looking nor proto-Romantic. As much as anything, the sonatas are about the cello’s colors, its moods, its capacious range, its singing legato, and robust staccato.

Both sonatas are engagingly tuneful. Though there are no serious clouds troubling them, the introduction of No. 2 in G minor is dark and brooding, leading to an Allegro molto of churning intensity that ends nonetheless with a big joyous coda, followed by a puckish finale. Inevitably in the sonatas there are prophecies of Beethoven’s later works, but on the whole he wrote no other pieces quite like Op. 5, perhaps because never again would he find himself happy and hearty and fathering a medium he knew he would, in a way, own forever.

Sonata in A major for Cello and Piano, Op. 69

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Composed in 1807-08.

- Duration: 27 minutes

In 1807 Beethoven took up his next cello sonata, Op. 69 in A major, he was in a quite different place creatively and personally. Now he had epochal works under his belt, including the Eroica Symphony and the Op. 59 Razumovsky String Quartets. At the same
time his health and personal life had been little but disappointing unto miserable. His opera "Fidelio" had failed in two productions, his growing deafness was wrecking his performing career, he was afflicted with a parade of illnesses, and there had been a string of romantic disappointments.

All that oppressed him, but none of it hampered his creative life. In 1807 he was well into his Second, aka Heroic Period, and at the height of his powers. With Op. 69 he returned to a genre he more or less invented in Op. 5. The A major has an air of something settled and incontrovertible. With a quiet, epigrammatic theme starting with cello alone, he establishes the central elements. That opening line contains in embryo all the themes of the sonata. The piano supplies the second phrase, setting up a partnership of equals who complete one another’s thoughts.

For all its impact, much of the work will be subdued and introspective. Cello and piano inject small cadenzas into the music, as if reflecting on its course. The straightforward A major of the first page is compromised by a turn to a passionate A minor, and that change echoes through the first movement: the expected E major of the second theme is prepared by E minor, and the E major is oddly unsunny. So the essential dynamic of the sonata unfolds as a dialogue of bright and dark, inward and outward. By the end of the first movement’s exposition the music has turned pealingly triumphant. That triumph, however, is the last for a while. The development section is largely quiet, minor-key, undramatic except for a furioso E minor outburst in the middle. The recap is expanded and recomposed, developmental, yet for much of it the tone is still quiet and introspective. By the end of the movement the music has taken on a quality of reflection and retreat.

The Scherzo is rhythmically quirky, ironically demonic, irresistible, but ends nearly inaudibly in sighs and fragments. An aria-like slow movement suddenly breaks off, and we find it was an introduction to the Allegro vivace last movement, which begins with a broad, serene theme that echoes the opening of the first movement. Once again, much of the music is quiet where we expect otherwise. Has the moment of triumph from the first movement vanished for good? No: after a muted and expectant opening of the development, the music finds that tone again. In the coda racing joy is unleashed and prevails to the end.

**LEARN MORE:** Visit the Watch and Listen section of the CMS website to see Paul Watkins perform Beethoven’s Variations in E-flat major for Piano, Violin, and Cello, Op. 44.
The Op. 102 Cello Sonatas, from 1815, were the last of Beethoven’s essays in the genre. They also mark his farewell to chamber music with piano—that in part because he was no longer a performing pianist. In Op. 102 appear many of the elements that are going to mark the late music. To examine those elements in the context of the sonatas—First, *lyric melody*: Op. 102, No. 1, in C major begins with a gently songful theme for cello alone. Next, *equality of voices*: the piano enters on an echo of the melody, as if continuing the cello’s thought. *Harmonic suspension*: There is no firm cadence onto C major until the third line, and barely then. Only at the end of the introduction does a prolonged C major chord settle in. *Unconventional harmonic relationships and tonal structures*: the quiet and lyrical C major introduction prepares a driving, a touch demonic *Allegro* in A minor, a compact sonata-form movement that stays in the minor key to the end.

The sonatas show a new subtlety in the handling of motifs. The opening unaccompanied cello melody in the C major Sonata serves as a kind of motto; the ensuing themes are based on motivic germs in the first bars. Here more than before, Beethoven uses small motifs as seeds to sprout themes, often within what sounds like a capricious drifting from one idea to another. Thus, a *poetic stream of consciousness*, the music seemingly capable of going anywhere from anywhere, changing direction in a second, the emotional effect powerfully evocative but often mysterious unto magical.

He incorporates *overt recalls of earlier moments*. After the first movement of the C major comes a swirling *Adagio*, neither exactly a movement or an introduction. All this is nominally in the home key, but actually it sort of condenses in a C major direction that melts unexpectedly into a varied recall of the opening page, now led by the piano, which is marked dolce, “sweetly.” Traditionally, long pieces had avoided literal recalls of music from earlier movements; Beethoven had shied away from them as well. Now for him more or less literal recalls were going to be available as a device. (Eventually critics took to calling these kinds of pieces “cyclic” works.) Another feature of the late music: *familiar forms are still in place but often obscured*, leaving an impression of fantasy and improvisation. In the C major Sonata, the second of two short virtual slow movements—or double introduction, or both—leads to the finale proper, a playful *Allegro vivace*, nominally in sonata form but almost monothematic with its little zipping figure.

Beethoven’s *contrasts, always*
dramatic, have intensified. In the C major and in the second work of Op. 102, the D major Sonata, strong contrasts are often juxtaposed with little or no transition. The compact Allegro con brio of the D major’s first movement begins with a dynamic leaping motto in piano, countered by a soaring lyric phrase in cello that seems to take up the piano’s idea and lyricize it. Those two contrasting gestures are the central dichotomy of the piece. The dominant tone of the D major, though, is ebullient and muscular, with lyrical interludes. In Sonata No. 2 the cooperation of cello and piano is as strong as in No. 1, but the terms are different, like two equals in a friendly competition.

In the late music there is often long-breathed lyricism in slow movements. The lyrical trend in the D major flowers in the remarkable second movement, which sounds like an archaic, tragic aria. We are close to the sublime slow movements of Beethoven’s last years, with their long, time-stopping melodies. Here the music becomes ornamented, rhapsodic, finally slipping into an uncanny atmosphere prophetic of Schubert—his doppelgänger or his weird organ-grinder in the song cycles. There is a new emphasis on counterpoint in general and fugue in particular. Beethoven is turning away from Classical piano figuration and clear demarcations of foreground and background, to a texture where all the voices are more nearly equal and melody is everywhere top to bottom. The finale of the D major is an energetic, dashing, also ironic, fugue full of rhythmic quirks that foreshadow some of his fugal finales to come.

These, then, were the new elements of the late music: unconventional harmonic moves and tonal structures; long periods without harmonic resolution; new angles on traditional formal patterns, sometimes with recalls of earlier movements; a sense of quasi-improvisatory freedom; familiar forms still in place but often obscured; long-breathed lyricism; a new emphasis on counterpoint. Around 1802 Beethoven had declared that he was going to enter on a new path, what became the Second Period. The sonatas of Op. 102 are heralds of a second new path, toward the incomparable late works.
ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ALESSIO BAX

- Pianist Alessio Bax—a First Prize winner at both the Leeds and Hamamatsu International Piano Competitions, and the recipient of a 2009 Avery Fisher Career Grant—has appeared with more than 100 orchestras, including the London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Houston Symphony, Japan’s NHK Symphony, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, and City of Birmingham Symphony. In summer 2017 he launched a three-season appointment as artistic director of Tuscany’s Incontri in Terra di Siena festival, having also appeared at such festivals as Music@Menlo, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Switzerland’s Verbier Festival, Norway’s Risør Festival, Germany’s Klavier-Festival Ruhr and Beethovenfest, and England’s Aldeburgh Festival, Bath Festival, and International Piano Series. An accomplished chamber musician, he regularly collaborates with his wife, pianist Lucille Chung, superstar violinist Joshua Bell, Berlin Philharmonic principals Daishin Kashimoto and Emmanuel Pahud, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, where he is an alum of The Bowers Program. This season brings the release of Italian Inspirations, Bax’s eleventh recording for Signum Classics, whose program is also the vehicle for Bax’s solo recital debut at New York’s 92nd Street Y. This season, he undertakes Beethoven’s complete works for cello and piano at CMS and on a forthcoming Signum Classics release with Paul Watkins. At age 14, Mr. Bax graduated with top honors from the conservatory of Bari, his hometown in Italy, and after further studies in Europe, he moved to the US in 1994.

PAUL WATKINS

- Acclaimed for his inspirational performances and eloquent musicianship, Paul Watkins enjoys a distinguished career as concerto soloist, chamber musician, and conductor. He performs regularly with major British orchestras, and has made eight concerto appearances at the BBC Proms, most recently in the world premiere of the cello concerto composed for him by his brother Huw Watkins. He has performed with prestigious orchestras worldwide including the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Netherlands Philharmonic, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, and the Orchestra Nazionale Sinfonica della RAI Torino. The 2019-20 season sees his debut with the Minnesota Orchestra, a tour of Sweden and the UK with Västerås Sinfonietta, chamber recitals with Simon Crawford-Philips, Lawrence Power, and Marianne Thorsen in Switzerland, and performances with pianist Alessio Bax at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Festival Incontri in Terra di Siena. A dedicated chamber musician, he was a member of the Nash Ensemble from 1997 until 2013, when he joined the Emerson String Quartet. Since 2014, he has been artistic director of the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival in Detroit. He also maintains a busy career as a conductor, with recent highlights including appearances with the Detroit Symphony, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, and
The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

BEETHOVEN STRING QUARTETS: PART I
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 7:30 PM  ALICE TULLY HALL
The Danish String Quartet performs the quartets in the order that Beethoven composed them, between 1798 and 1826. The festival begins with Op. 18, Nos. 1-3.

BEETHOVEN STRING QUARTETS: PART II
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 5:00 PM  ALICE TULLY HALL
The Danish String Quartet performs the quartets in the order that Beethoven composed them, between 1798 and 1826. The festival continues with Op. 18, Nos. 4-6.

BEETHOVEN STRING QUARTETS: PART III
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 7:30 PM  ALICE TULLY HALL
The Danish String Quartet performs Beethoven’s “Razumovsky” Quartets.

Kristiansand Symphony. He has held the positions of music director of the English Chamber Orchestra and principal guest conductor of the Ulster Orchestra. Mr. Watkins plays a cello made by Domenico Montagnana and Matteo Goffriller in Venice, c. 1730.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT CMS