

CMS Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

TUESDAY EVENING, JULY 16, 2024, AT 7:30 ▶ 4,453RD CONCERT

Alice Tully Hall, Starr Theater, Adrienne Arsht Stage
Home of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

SITKOVETSKY TRIO

WU QIAN, piano
ALEXANDER SITKOVETSKY, violin
ISANG ENDERS, cello

Summer Evenings III

**WOLFGANG
AMADEUS MOZART**
(1756–1791)

Sonata in G major for Violin and Piano, K. 379
(1781)

▶ Adagio—Allegro
▶ Tema con variazioni (Andantino cantabile)
SITKOVETSKY, WU QIAN

**LUDWIG VAN
BEETHOVEN**
(1770–1827)

**Trio in D major for Piano, Violin, and Cello,
Op. 70, No. 1, “Ghost”** (1808)

▶ Allegro vivace e con brio
▶ Largo assai ed espressivo
▶ Presto
WU QIAN, SITKOVETSKY, ENDERS

INTERMISSION

**FELIX
MENDELSSOHN**
(1809–1847)

***Lied ohne Worte* in D major for Cello and
Piano, Op. 109** (1845)

ENDERS, WU QIAN

MENDELSSOHN

**Trio No. 1 in D minor for Piano, Violin, and
Cello, Op. 49** (1839)

▶ Molto allegro ed agitato
▶ Andante con moto tranquillo
▶ Scherzo: Leggiero e vivace
▶ Finale: Allegro assai appassionato
WU QIAN, SITKOVETSKY, ENDERS

The Summer Evenings Audience Engagement Initiative is underwritten, in part, by **Rita E. Hauser**. Additional support provided by **Judy and Tony Evnin**, **Leon Levy Foundation**, **The Seth Sprague Educational and Charitable Foundation**, and a **generous anonymous donor**.

The Chamber Music Society acknowledges with sincere appreciation Ms. Tali Mahanor's generous long-term loan of the Hamburg Steinway & Sons model “D” concert grand piano.

Jerome L. Greene Foundation is the 2024–2025 CMS Season Sponsor.

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ABOUT TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

Dear Summer Evenings Listener,

This letter always gives us a chance to share fun facts with you that might not make it into the more scholarly notes in this program book. That's not to say that you shouldn't read them: if you can squeeze at least one piece in before the concert, do so! You also have intermission, and please feel free to take the program book home and read more about what you've heard. We do that often and find it both enlightening and entertaining.

It occurred to us that a perspective of a different sort could illuminate this program in an interesting way, and it has to do with the instruments themselves. When we see the names Mozart, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn, we immediately think "composers" and then possibly "pianists." But would we ever think "violinist" or "cellist"? Probably not, at least until now.

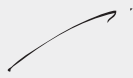
By the time Mozart was six, his parents realized that they had a major musical prodigy on their hands. By the time he was ten, all those who heard him realized he was more than a major prodigy: he was regarded as the greatest musical genius in history. With a musician-promoter father who relentlessly exploited his son's talents, young Mozart toured Europe during the first decade of his life with incomparable success, impressing royalty and stunning the musically learned with almost supernatural technical and compositional skills. And here's the little-known part: one of Mozart's skills was playing the violin, not just well, but better than all around him. He held the job of concertmaster of the court orchestra in Salzburg before heading to greater callings in Vienna; thus, his violin sonata we hear tonight comes from the hand of one who knew deeply how to hold the bow as well as strike the keys.

The young pianist Beethoven, upon arriving in Vienna from his native Bonn to make a career for himself, endeavored to learn the intricacies of string instruments to compose for them more skillfully. He took violin and cello lessons, owned a

quartet of instruments, and played the viola in chamber music readings. So, once again, we hear music for strings conceived by a composer who was intimately acquainted with their qualities and potentials.

And finally, in Felix Mendelssohn, we have a composer with a large musical family, including a sister who played piano and a brother who played cello. Felix also studied and performed on the violin at the highest level. Tonight, we have his brother Paul to thank tonight for inspiring the beautiful *Song without Words* for cello, as well as the gorgeous cello writing in the Piano Trio.

Enjoy the concert,



David Finckel
ARTISTIC DIRECTORS



Wu Han



NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Sonata in G major for Violin and Piano, K. 379

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

- ▶ Born January 27, 1756, in Salzburg
- ▶ Died December 5, 1791, in Vienna

- ▶ First CMS performance on March 8, 1991, by violinist James Buswell and pianist Alan Feinberg
- ▶ Duration: 19 minutes

Composed in 1781

In March of 1781, Mozart departed Salzburg for Vienna with the rest of Prince-Archbishop Hieronymus Graf Colloredo's court retinue. While there, he begrudgingly carried out his duties as Colloredo's court organist. At this point, the composer was 25 years old, had gotten a taste for fame from his extraordinary childhood as the wunderkind of Europe, and was developing an increasingly strong appetite for creative autonomy. He convinced himself he was being treated and paid unfairly, and his agitation leaps off the pages of his letters to his father during this trip. On April 11, he complained about the low pay he received from the "small-minded prince," the most egregious example of which was the final concert, for which he had written a new violin sonata and two rondos and was paid nothing. He openly pondered the feasibility of leaving the court and remaining in Vienna as a freelancer— which he did within three months.

The sonata referenced in the April 11 letter was the Sonata in G major for Violin and Piano, K. 379. Throughout his life, from the age of six until three years before his death, Mozart wrote 36 violin sonatas. As such, they provide fascinating insight into his compositional development, as well as a unique window into how

advancements in instrument-building inspired transformations in form and genre. Today, we take for granted that a violin sonata would feature the violin more than the piano, but the form was actually born out of a now-extinct genre: the accompanied piano sonata. Early keyboard instruments had little to no ability to sustain a note, so a violinist would accompany a pianist to add body and lyricism to the melody. As advancements were made in fortepiano engineering, allowing for broader and more nuanced expression, composers adjusted to writing increasingly independent, conversational parts for each instrument.

Mozart would stop writing violin sonatas in 1788, shifting his attention to quartets and quintets, making K. 379 one of his later works for the genre. Several of his violin sonatas consist of two movements, but K. 379 consists of three, with the first two dovetailed into each other without pause. Opening the work is a lyrical *Adagio* beautifully carried by the violin, followed by a fiery, rhythmically driven *Allegro*. Ending the work is a theme with five variations, the first of which omits the violin entirely to showcase the keyboardist. The middle three cycle through a variety of moods, including one in a minor key, and the last variation blatantly flips the violin to

an accompanying role. The overarching format here is A–B–A, with the theme returning at the end. ♦

Kathryn Bacasmot writes about music and is a regular program annotator for CMS.

Trio in D major for Piano, Violin, and Cello, Op. 70, No. 1, “Ghost”

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

- ▶ Baptized December 17, 1770, in Bonn (likely born December 16)
- ▶ Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna

- ▶ First CMS performance on November 24, 1972, by pianist Richard Goode, violinist Charles Treger, and cellist Leslie Parnas
- ▶ Duration: 27 minutes

Composed in 1808

Beethoven’s first set of piano trios was written in 1795 for Prince Lichnowsky, one of his first important patrons in Vienna after his arrival three years earlier. The move was buoyed by the lofty ambition to “receive the spirit of Mozart through Haydn’s hands,” as Count Waldstein pronounced. Deliberately designating them his Op. 1, No. 1, though they were not his first official published works, the young composer was clearly earmarking them as his starting point. In 1808, he returned to the genre, writing two trios grouped as Op. 70. The first of those trios, “Ghost,” and the Op. 97, “Archduke,” written a few years later, emerged for posterity as audience favorites.

The nickname “Ghost” became attached to the work after one of Beethoven’s most famous students, Carl Czerny, remarked that the middle movement reminded him of a Shakespearean ghost—different accounts seem to remember differently if he thought of *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*. Whether or not that extramusical drama was intended by the composer has not been documented, though it is known that Beethoven did entertain the idea of writing an opera based on

Macbeth around that time. (It never materialized.)

However, the insistence on connecting Beethoven to Shakespeare reveals something intriguing about the Enlightenment-Romantic perception of the composer. As “canons” of literature and music emerged, the concern over who would be included, and the idolization of the candidates, commenced. Shakespeare emerged as a pinnacle author for his ability to express the human condition in such totalizing terms. Thus, masters in other disciplines began to be associated with the author. Various individuals began to be referred to as the “Shakespeare of music,” including Beethoven (musicologist Lawrence Kramer jokingly coins it the invention of “Shake-toven”). Numerous other works by the composer have been associated with Shakespeare (the *Tempest* piano sonata, for one example), though none of them substantiated beyond word of mouth. Given this tenuous association with an Elizabethan play, it is of interest that, 167 years later, the middle movement of Op. 70, No. 1, was actually used as the dramatic and poignant soundtrack for a play by Samuel Beckett created

for, and broadcast on, BBC television, fittingly called *Ghost Trio*.

The first performance of the trio took place in 1809 at the home of Countess Erdödy, to whom Op. 70 was dedicated, with the composer at the keyboard. It stands out for its unusual structure of only three movements, rather than the traditional four. There is also a clear emphasis on the middle movement as the deliberate centerpiece, where the music lingers longest. The opening movement announces itself with a unison flourish, introducing one of the main themes that will be developed

throughout. Then comes the *Largo*, with its ghostly mystery. If you listen carefully, you will notice that the music is created almost exclusively out of one musical motive, presented fully, abbreviated, or elongated; yet Beethoven is able to build suspense and tension throughout the duration. After such an extended reverie, the finale abruptly drops us into a completely different emotional terrain, one full of exuberance that continues to its lighthearted conclusion. ♦

— Kathryn Bacasmot

***Lied ohne Worte* in D major for Cello and Piano, Op. 109**

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

- ▶ Born February 3, 1809, in Hamburg
- ▶ Died November 4, 1847, in Leipzig

- ▶ First CMS performance on December 10, 1988, by cellist Lynn Harrell and pianist Lee Luvisi
- ▶ Duration: 5 minutes

Composed in 1845

Felix Mendelssohn certainly wasn't the first composer to suggest that music is a means of expressing a deeply human impulse without recourse to our usual tool of language. But he did coin a catchy turn of phrase to describe the many sets of short, lyrical piano miniatures he published over the course of his life. These *Lieder ohne Worte*, or "Songs without Words," display remarkable depths of thought, narrative, and communication on the keyboard, an instrument that is often associated with mechanistic virtuosity and with harmony rather than singable melody.

Was he cheating when, in the mid-1840s, Mendelssohn wrote one of these "Songs without Words" for cello and piano, rather than for keyboard alone? The cello consistently ranks high on

lists of voice-like instruments (though the winners tend to be winds, like the oboe, which use breath to directly control sound). Strings are capable of shaping individual notes, leading dynamically to the next tone and creating potentially endless song-like lines. In this *Lied*, Mendelssohn plays with these capacities: the phrases presented by the cello at the start of each short part of the piece are quite brief, hardly in need of the instrument's remarkable sustaining potential. As the sections develop, Mendelssohn builds longer statements until the cellist is presenting tunes that are longer than most voices would be able to carry.

Mendelssohn wrote much of his early music for cello, like the *Variations concertantes* and his first sonata, thinking of his brother Paul, a

banker and skilled amateur. This *Song without Words* had a different, more accomplished performer in mind: Lisa Cristiani, a French cellist who went to Leipzig in 1845 on her debut tour and, by some accounts, was accompanied in her concerts there by Mendelssohn. Her career took off in the following years. She had promising collaborations with fellow French cellist Adrien-François Servais and quite a lot of concert engagements, but she died of cholera at the age of

25 while on her way to a tour of remote towns in Siberia. It was only in the 1860s, after both Mendelssohn and Cristiani were dead, that this *Lied* was published with its dedication to her, a late acknowledgment that she alone inspired him to write a wordless song for an instrument other than his own. ♦

Cellist, writer, and music researcher Nicky Swett is a PhD Candidate and Gates Scholar at the University of Cambridge.

Trio No. 1 in D minor for Piano, Violin, and Cello, Op. 49

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

Composed in 1839

- ▶ First CMS performance on February 3, 1974, by pianist Richard Goode, violinist Kyung-wha Chung, and cellist Leslie Parnas
- ▶ Duration: 30 minutes

In early 1840, Robert Schumann wrote an effusive review of a new work by his friend Felix Mendelssohn in the journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. He thought the D-minor Piano Trio (Op. 49) was “the master trio of today as in their day were those of Beethoven in B-flat and D; as was that of Franz Schubert in E-flat; a lovely composition which years from hence will still delight grand- and great-grandchildren.” Schumann went on to insist that Mendelssohn “has raised himself so high that we can indeed say he is the Mozart of the Nineteenth Century.”

Mendelssohn had the work of Beethoven and Schubert in mind when he entertained composing a trio for piano, violin, and cello in 1838. He wrote to his friend Ferdinand Hiller that this instrumentation, “a very important branch of pianoforte music which I

am particularly fond of . . . is quite forgotten now, and I greatly feel the want of something new in that line.” He got around to writing his Trio in D minor in the first half of 1839, but he made substantial alterations to it after playing it for Hiller. His friend suggested “modernizing” the piano part, recommending to the composer that “an unusual form of arpeggio may not improve the harmony, but neither does it spoil it—and it becomes more interesting to the player.”

Such “unusual arpeggios” are the most distinctive textural feature of the first movement of the piece. The piano is in a near-constant state of accompanimental flare; running triplet figures traverse the keyboard in a span of a few beats while the strings present tune after tune that show off the composer’s Mozartean melodic gifts. The cello introduces the

main themes in this movement: first a D-minor lament in the husky middle range of the instrument, and then an extroverted, tenor aria. When, after a diverting development section, the main theme of the movement returns in the cello for a recapitulation, the violin plays a sublime countermelody on top—a Mendelssohnian touch that occurs in many of his symphonies and string quartets.

The main tunes of the second movement, a *Song-without-Words*-style *Andante*, are first presented by the piano. When the strings repeat those melodies, they add harmonic coloration that hints at how theme-and-variation strategies permeate many of Mendelssohn's more ambitious concert works. The light and angular *Scherzo* is an efficient mix of sonata and rondo forms, complete with a scampering main theme, a boisterous transitional tune, a skipping contrasting subject,

and an aggressive developmental section with lots of minor-key jabs.

In the *Finale*, a rondo with a prickly refrain, we hear a frenzied effort to restore the lyricism of the first and second movements. The main tune is memorable more for its militaristic rhythmic character than for its melodic shape; a moderately more vocal secondary theme, in which the angular gestures of the opening are refashioned into a smooth descending line, never reaches a satisfying cadence. It is only in a contrasting episode in the middle of the movement that we hear truly singable music, once again heralded by the cello. When the energy of the other themes is extinguished through a short recapitulation, that cello tune brings about a stunning modulation that brightens toward a coda and an uplifting close. ♦

— Nicky Swett

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SITKOVETSKY TRIO

► The Sitkovetsky Trio has established itself as an exceptional piano trio of today. Their thoughtful and committed approach has brought the ensemble critical acclaim and invitations to renowned concert halls around the world, including the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Frankfurt Alte Oper, Palais des Beaux Arts, Musée du Louvre, l’Auditori Barcelona, Wigmore Hall, and Lincoln Center.

Recently the Sitkovetsky Trio received the Chamber Music Award from *BBC Music Magazine*. Furthermore, they are first prize winners of the International Commerzbank Chamber Music Award and recipients of the NORDMETALL Chamber Music Award at the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival, as well as the Philharmonia-Martin Chamber Music Award. They have been supported by the Hattori Foundation, the Musicians Benevolent Fund, the Fidelio Trust, and the Swiss Global Artistic Foundation. Last season, the Sitkovetsky Trio received generous funding from the Initiative Musik as part of the Neustart Kultur program launched by the German government.

In 2014, the Sitkovetsky Trio released their first recording for BIS Records with works by Smetana, Suk, and Dvořák to much critical acclaim. This led to further releases of works by Brahms and Schubert on the Wigmore Live Label and another recording for BIS of Mendelssohn Trios, as well as Beethoven’s Trios, Op. 1 and Op. 70, and Allegretto in B-flat major for Piano Trio, WoO 39. The album received a Diapason d’Or ARTE and was released as Vol. 1 of a complete Beethoven cycle. In July 2021, the Trio’s fifth album—Ravel Trio and Saint-Saëns Trio No. 2—was released to great critical acclaim and received a Supersonic Award from *Pizzicato Magazine*.

Recent activities include a tour of South America, including concerts in Bogotá, Lima, and São Paulo. A special highlight has been the return invitation

to the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, as well as concerts at the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg and the Alte Oper Frankfurt. As part of their tours in the US, the trio has also performed at Lincoln Center in New York and in Los Angeles, Seattle, Tucson, Brevard, and West Palm Beach. Other recent appearances include concerts at Wigmore Hall in London and Philharmonie Haarlem, as well as a project with Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* with Andreas Ottensamer and Pablo Barragán, including concerts in Bilbao and Barcelona.

Alexander Sitkovetsky plays a Stradivari violin (Cremona, 1697), and Isang Enders plays a cello by Carlo Tononi (Venice, 1720); both instruments have been kindly loaned by the J. & A. Beare Violin Society.

ABOUT THE CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS) was founded in 1969 under the leadership and patronage of Alice Tully and the artistic direction of Charles Wadsworth, beginning a new era for chamber music in the United States. Through its many performance, education, and digital activities, CMS brings the experience of great chamber music to more people than any other organization of its kind. The performing artists constitute a multi-generational and international roster of the world's finest chamber musicians, enabling CMS to present chamber music of every instrumentation, style, and historical period. The Bowers Program, our competitive three-season residency, is dedicated to developing the chamber music leaders of the future and integrates this selection of extraordinary early-career musicians into every facet of CMS activities. CMS reaches a growing global audience through a range of free digital media, including livestreams, an online archive of more than 1,500 video recordings, and broadcasts that are distributed to millions of listeners around the world.

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of Lincoln Center

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