

The Kouzov Duo
Dmitry Kouzov, Cello and Yulia Kouzova, Piano

PROGRAM, HEMET

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

12 Variations for Cello and Piano on "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" from "Die Zauberflöte," Op. 66

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

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

Allegro non troppo

Allegretto quasi Menuetto - Trio

Allegro

Intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven

Sonata in C major, Op. 102 no.1

Andante - Allegro vivace

Adagio - Tempo d'andante - Allegro vivace

Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959)

Variations on a Theme by Rossini, Op. 290

Program notes:

Beethoven, 12 Variations for Cello and Piano on "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" from "Die Zauberflöte," Op. 66:

Beethoven's works for cello & piano, like his string quartets, fall into the three periods (early, middle, late) that are used as convenient categories of his output. In the first group are the two sonatas of Op. 5, and three sets of variations. Next comes his monumental Sonata in A, Op. 69, and then finally the two cryptic, late sonatas of Op. 102.

Twelve Variations on the Theme "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" (A Maiden or a Wife) from Mozart's *The Magic Flute* have the deceptive opus number 66, which would put it alongside the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, but in fact it was written in the mid- to late-1790s and therefore is solidly within Beethoven's early period. Jonathan Miller has written that Beethoven used these variations to depict the narrative and emotional progress of Papageno, whose aria this is.

The Op. 66 variations are the earlier of two sets which Beethoven wrote on themes from *The Magic Flute*.

Brahms, Sonata No.1 for Cello and Piano in E minor, Op. 38:

Brahms was based principally in his hometown of Hamburg during the 1860s, but he toured frequently throughout Germany and northern Europe as a pianist and accompanist during those years. Seeking to broaden the range of his professional activities, he first visited Vienna and gave a recital there in September 1862 and was cordially received. At the end of the year, he learned that he had been passed over as conductor of the Philharmonic Concerts in Hamburg. Miffed at the rejection by his hometown, he readily accepted an offer to become the director of the Vienna *Singakademie* the following summer and regularly visited thereafter until he settled in the city for good in 1870.

One of Brahms's first important contacts in Vienna was Dr. Josef Gänsbacher, an accomplished cellist, and it was for him that Brahms undertook his Cello Sonata in E minor in 1862. Three movements were written for the work in that year, but the *Adagio* was jettisoned even before Gänsbacher had seen it; it was not until three years later that Brahms returned to the Sonata and provided it with what now stands as its finale. (The original *Adagio* may have been reworked as the slow movement of the 2nd Cello Sonata.) Gänsbacher was eager to try the sonata out, but as he read through it with Brahms he complained that he was being drowned out by the piano part. "I can't even hear myself," he protested. "You're lucky," the curmudgeonly Brahms bellowed back. When the Sonata was published in 1866, it was the first of Brahms's duo sonatas that he made public, though there are known to have been earlier attempts that the composer destroyed without a trace.

Since Brahms deleted the proposed *Adagio* from the First Cello Sonata, the work has an unusual architectural plan: a large sonata-form structure followed by smaller movements in the style of a minuet and a fugue. "Hardly ever again did Brahms write such a movement as the first," wrote Walter Neumann, "so rich and fervent in its

inspiration, both human and spiritual." The cello announces the movement's main melancholy theme, reminiscent of the *Contrapunctus III* from Bach's *The Art of Fugue*.

The second movement is a microcosm of the history of the Austrian popular dance. The outer sections of its three-part form (A-B-A) are marked "quasi Menuetto," and exhibit the polite demeanor associated with that old dance. The central trio, however, more animated in character and more adventurous in its harmonic peregrinations, is one of the tributes to the Viennese waltz that Brahms embedded in a number of his instrumental works.

The finale is a fugue poured into sonata form, the sort of hybrid that also absorbed Beethoven in his last years. The subject, a ribbon of triplets, was probably modeled on the *Contrapunctus XIII* from Bach's *The Art of Fugue*. The movement bristles with precisely worked-out counterpoint in three and four voices, requiring a fullness of texture from the piano that prompted Daniel Gregory Mason to commiserate with the cellist: "When you set a single cello to competing like this with the two hands of an able-bodied pianist, the odds are certainly on the pianist." The cello asserts itself in the final pages, however, and leads through rousing statements of the themes to bring the sonata to a close.

Beethoven, Sonata in C major, Op. 102, no.1

Beethoven's last two sonatas for cello and piano, Op.102, were composed between the end of 1812 and 1817, during which time Beethoven, ailing and overcome by all sorts of difficulties, experienced a period of literal and figurative silence as his deafness became profound and his productivity diminished. Following seven years after the A Major Sonata No. 3, the complexity of their composition and their visionary character marks (with the immediately preceding piano sonata Op. 101) the start of Beethoven's "third period."

The short, almost enigmatic 4th Sonata demonstrates in concentrated form how Beethoven was becoming ready to challenge and even subvert the sonata structures he inherited from Haydn and Mozart.

Its overall structure is possibly unique in Beethoven's works, comprising just a pair of fast sonata-form movements, each with a slow introduction. Both movements recall the long-established convention of a slow introduction to a brisk main section in sonata form, but with significant modifications.

In the first movement the introductory portion entirely lacks the portentousness of a conventional slow introduction, consisting of a brief elegiac theme repeated several times without change of key and largely unvaried; it concludes with an elaborate cadence in C major that is then contradicted by the sonata portion being in the relative minor, largely avoiding the key of C major except at the opening of the development.

The second movement opens more in the manner of a traditional slow introduction, and eventually leads to a sonata-form portion in the "correct" key of C. However before this point is reached, the opening material of the sonata reappears for a final, almost

ecstatic variation; a procedure paralleled elsewhere in Beethoven's work only in the drama of the fifth and ninth symphonies.

Martinů:, Variations on a Theme by Rossini, Op. 290:

Bohuslav Martinů was the greatest Czech composer since Dvořák. A native of Policka, a small town in South Bohemia, Martinů's earliest years were spent, literally, living at the top of a church tower, surrounded by family affection but otherwise, with the exception of violin lessons, cut off from most of the influences that make up for a natural childhood. His earliest perception of the world—as something distant and magical—remained with him, although the world would treat him harshly. The fantastical always appealed to him, but while not averse to flirting with fashion he retained a taste for the simple, and towards the close of his life gave tender, almost mystic expression to recollections of his native land.

In 1923 Martinů took up residence in Paris, a voluntary exile that by force of circumstances was to become permanent. He was on the Gestapo blacklist, so he and his wife were forced to flee before the German advance of 1940. The couple made their way to America, arriving in New York in March 1941. A brief interlude in Europe in 1953 resulted in his final return in 1955 to become a peripatetic resident in Paris, Rome, Nice and, finally, Switzerland. He died in 1959 in the sanatorium at Liestal. It was twenty years before his remains were returned to the land he loved so dearly.

The bravura *Variations on a theme by Rossini*, composed October 1942, were written for and dedicated to the eminent Russian-born American cellist Gregor Piatigorsky, who premiered the work in 1942. The main theme is Moses' prayer from Rossini's opera *Moses in Egypt* (it was also used by Paganini in his *Moses Fantasy*). It was the first work in Piatigorsky's project of commissioning new and important repertoire for the cello.

Biographical Notes:

Dmitry Kouzov

Praised as "a true artist" by Maestro Mstislav Rostropovich, the young cellist Dmitry Kouzov won the First Prize at the International Beethoven Competition and the New York Cello Society "Rising Star" Award, and is a two-time laureate of Russia's International "Virtuosi of the Year" Festival-Competition.

Mr. Kouzov has performed worldwide with orchestras, in recitals, and in chamber music performances. He made his New York orchestral debut at Alice Tully Hall in 2005 under the baton of Maestro Raymond Leppard, and has performed as soloist with such orchestras as the St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra (Russia), the State Academic Symphony Orchestra of the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, the National Symphony of Ukraine, the South Bohemian Chamber Philharmonic (Czech Republic), and the Cape Town and Johannesburg Philharmonic orchestras (South Africa), to name a few.

Mr. Kouzov has performed at such prestigious venues as Lincoln Center, the 92nd Street Y, (New York City), Sala São Paulo (Brazil), and at the most important venues in his native Russia, including both St. Petersburg Philharmonic Halls, the halls of the

Moscow and St. Petersburg Conservatories, and the Mariinsky Theater. He has appeared as a guest artist at many international festivals such as Caramoor and Kneisel Hall (USA), the Verbier and International Bach Festivals (Switzerland), the Schleswig-Holstein (Germany), "Janacek May" (Czech Republic), "Art-November" (Russia), and "Kiev Summer Music Nights" (Ukraine) Festivals. He has given command performances before Mikhail Gorbachev and Prince Andrew, Duke of York.

Mr. Kouzov's chamber music collaborators include Joshua Bell, Yuri Bashmet, Krzysztof Penderecki, Ilya Gringolts, Shmuel Ashkenasi, pianist Peter Laul, and major string quartets. Special programs include the complete Brahms and Beethoven sonata cycles and the Bach suites for unaccompanied cello. He is also the cellist of the Manhattan Piano Trio.

Mr. Kouzov's discography includes both Shostakovich concertos with the St. Petersburg State Symphony and the cello concerto by Sean Hickey on the Delos label (2013); concertos by George Walker with the Sinfonia Varsovia on the Albany label; the complete C.P.E. Bach gamba sonatas on Naxos; "Two Hundred Years of Cello Masterpieces" on Marquis; and the complete Schumann piano trios on Onyx Classics. His latest CD, on Delos, includes sonatas by Debussy, Franck, Ravel and Chopin.

In addition to his performing activities, Mr. Kouzov is on the faculty at the University of Illinois School of Music, and has just accepted a position to begin teaching at the Oberlin Conservatory next fall. He has previously taught at Juilliard.

Further information is available at www.dmitrykouzov.com.

Yulia (Fedoseeva) Kouzova

Known for her passionate and musical interpretations and impressive technical facility, the St. Petersburg-born pianist Yulia Kouzova enjoys a varied international career as soloist, chamber musician, and teacher. Yulia has performed recitals and concerti in the major cities in Russia, and regularly performs in Russia's most prestigious venues such as St. Petersburg Philharmonic Hall and State Capella. In addition to that, she has also performed throughout Europe in Holland, Portugal, France, Germany, Sweden, and the UK. Throughout her career, Yulia has received many awards, including a special prize at Jurmala International Piano Competition, Latvia and the Grand Prix and First Prize at the International Competition "Coast of Hope" in Bulgaria. In 2002, Yulia formed a piano duo Tatiana Brizhaneva. The duo appeared in numerous successful and critically acclaimed performances in St. Petersburg, Dusseldorf, and Munich, gave the Russian premiere of Germaine Tailleferre's *Jeux de plein air* in 2008, and won 1st prize at the Maria Yudina Piano Duo Competition in St. Petersburg and 2nd prize at the Bahchiev National Piano Duo Competition in Vologda, Russia.

Yulia combines her performing schedule with a passion for and commitment to teaching. She was on the faculty of the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory's Special School for Gifted Children and at the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory in St. Petersburg. In 2009, she was seen and heard in Phil Grabsky's new documentary, "In Search of Beethoven," which received its theatrical premiere at London's Barbican Theatre, its broadcast premiere on Sky Arts (UK), and has since been shown in cinema and on

television networks around the world. In 2011 Yulia was an official collaborative pianist at the International Tchaikovsky Competition, and will begin teaching at Oberlin next fall.