

# Karlsruher Konzert-Duo

Reinhard Armleder, cello; Dagmar Hartmann, piano  
Sunday, October 27, 2019, 3:00pm

**Ludwig van Beethoven** – Seven Variations in E-flat Major (WoO 46) on a theme from W.A. Mozart's opera "The Magic Flute"

**Johannes Brahms** – Sonata No. 2 in F Major, Op. 99

**Robert Schumann** – Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70

**Clara Schumann (geb. Wieck)** – from Three Romances, Op. 22

**Sergei Rachmaninoff** – Danse orientale in A minor, Op. 2, No. 2

**Sergei Prokofiev** – Waltz, Op. 65, No. 6

**Nikolai Kapustin** – Burlesque, Op. 97

**Astor Piazzolla** – Le Grand Tango (1982)

## **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) – Seven Variations in E flat major (WoO 46) on a theme from W. A. Mozart's opera "The Magic Flute"**

Of Beethoven's three collections of variations for cello and piano, two were written on themes from Mozart's *Magic Flute*. All belonged to the composer's early works.

The cycle of seven variations, a piece with no opus number, on the theme *Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen* ("In men, who feel love"), was created in 1801 and published in the following year. Exact circumstances of its origin are unknown; only the dedication shows that it was a gift to Count Johann von Brown-Camus, described by the author as "the first patron of my muse".

The theme of the variation, taken from the duet of Pamina and Papageno in the first act of Mozart's opera, allowed the instruments to conduct a dialogue on equal terms; the cello and piano are partners in the duet. The structure of the cycle is straightforward and conventional: the middle variation stands out with its minor mode (E flat minor), the last three are all in different time. The melody of the theme (Andantino, E flat major), with its dancing features, all but vanishes in virtuosic figurations in both instruments and only returns in the final variation. The most song-like and lyrical variation (Adagio) precedes a joyful and extensive finale (Allegro).

## **Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) – Sonata No. 2 in F major, Op. 99**

Although it's a product of his middle years, this F major work is marked by a youthful boldness and symphonic approach to the piano writing, while never sacrificing a generous, easy lyricism.

If the First Sonata shows Brahms the young man presenting his credentials as a scholar and a mature gentleman, the Cello Sonata No. 2 in F major, Op 99 is the work of an older man composing music with all the passion and sweep of youth. Written – along with the Second Violin Sonata and Third Piano Trio – during a productive summer in Switzerland in 1886, the F major Sonata was composed for Hausmann, who was renowned for his large and virile tone.

The first movement is extraordinarily bold, the two instruments pitted against each other in a wild, storm-tossed sea of tremolandi. Curiously, the slow movement, in the near-but-unrelated key of F sharp major, may derive from a discarded movement originally written for the E minor Sonata. That movement is now lost, but there are a couple of clues that at least suggest a connection; the similarity of the third subject of this slow movement to that of the E minor's first movement, and the importance of the minor

sixth in this middle section and coda, are striking – perhaps too much so to be coincidental.

The *Allegro passionato* is a wonderfully powerful and dark scherzo. The last movement, like that of the Second Piano Concerto, is almost startling in its lightness of touch, unexpected within this massive framework.

### **Robert Schumann (1810-1856) - Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70**

Schumann loved the cello. Time and time again, in the piano quintet and quartet, the three string quartets, the three piano trios and above all the spellbinding *Cello Concerto* of 1850, he wrote music that manifestly exhibits joy in the instrument's unique ability both to richly underpin and to soar in lyrical song. So it is strange that apart from the *Concerto* only twice did he compose music specifically designated for the instrument, and only one work has survived, the *Five Pieces in Popular Style* of 1849. Clara Schumann destroyed the *Five Romances* of 1853, almost his last composition, as evidence of her husband's insanity.

February 1849, a month of astonishing productivity, inaugurated a new interest in wind instrument sonorities with the *Adagio and Allegro*, Op. 70, for horn (or cello) and piano, quickly followed by the *Three Fantasy Pieces*, Op. 73, for clarinet (or cello) and piano, while December of the same year brought the *Three Romances*, Op. 94, for oboe and piano.

The *Adagio* has a calm character, the *Allegro* has a rhythmically concise main theme and a cantabile secondary theme. It seems that Schumann used the work as a study for his work that immediately followed on the *Konzertstück* for four horns and orchestra in F major, Op. 86. The original title was "Romanza and Allegro", but it was later changed to be less specific. The alternative instrumentation was the composer's idea and was not the request of the publisher. "The piece is brilliant, fresh and passionate, just the way I like it", wrote Clara Schumann in her diary after the premiere.

### **Clara Schumann, geb. Wieck (1819-1896) - Three Romances, Op.22**

Clara Schumann's remarks reveal time and again an astonishingly critical, if not negative judgement on her composing and that of women in general. It is true that she writes in her diary on October 2, 1846 that nothing compares to the pleasure of having written something and of listening to it, but this would "always remain/be the mediocre work of women, who never have the necessary power and occasionally not the imagination." Elsewhere she becomes even more drastic, pointing out that no woman at all had up to now been able to compose, so why she herself? It is undeniable that in general Clara's compositions cannot match the works of her husband (or other great composers), but here she is in good (male!) company. And without a doubt there is no need for her to hide from the large majority of composing men like Raff or Rheinberger, Herz or Hünten and their musical products. Her *Romances*, Op. 22 for violin and piano, written in 1853, gained repeated acclaim (and also from a competent authority); no less a person than Brahms wrote to Joseph Joachim about the pieces which Clara intended as a Christmas present for the great violinist, they were something beautiful and he could be looking forward to them without reservation. According to Joachim's report, King George of Hanover who was an amateur composer went "completely into ecstasies" when Clara and Joachim played the three pieces to him. There was also a positive review of Op. 22 in the "Neue Berliner Musikzeitung" in 1856, that reads: "All three pieces have a very heartfelt character and are executed in a tender, lovely manner: The melodies of the violin themselves may be simple, but they are treated very effectively by a very interesting basis of harmony and accompaniment as well as counter melodies, without being in the least overlaid. The characteristically charming atmosphere of every piece makes it quite difficult to prefer one of them."

### **Sergei Rachmaninov (1843-1873) - Danse orientale in A minor, Op. 2, No. 2**

The confidence in his cello writing in particular resulted from his collaboration for much of the previous

decade with the well known Russian cellist Anatoly Brandukov. Their partnership has shown its first fruits in 1882 with the *Two Pieces*, Op. 2. The latter was inspired by the oriental opera Aleko. The Danse orientale fits into the tradition of such pieces that so fascinated Rachmaninoff's older contemporaries, Balakirev, Glazunov, and Rimsky-Korsakov. The dark warmth and the exotic colors are pure Rachmaninov: the eighteen-year-old was already speaking in his own unique voice.

#### **Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) - Waltz, Op. 65 No. 6**

Prokofiev's Music for Children originated in 1935 as a work for piano solo. Composed a few years after Prokofiev returned for good to the Soviet Union, it exhibits all the melodic charm that he cultivated at the time. This gorgeous waltz was arranged for cello and piano by Prokofiev's fellow Russian Gregor Piatigorsky, who by then had fled Russia during the 1917 revolution and settled in the United States where he took citizenship.

#### **Nikolai Kapustin (\*1937) - Burlesque, Op. 97**

Nikolai Kapustin is a Ukrainian composer and pianist. Much of his music combines Russian tradition elements with jazz and other popular idioms. For over ten years he was the pianist in a light orchestra. The Burlesque is just such a synthesis which cheekily evokes the smoochiness of the dance-hall along with some traditional cello virtuoso elements.

#### **Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) - Le Grand Tango (1982)**

Astor Piazzolla is known as the greatest master of the Latin American Tango and a virtuoso of the bandoneón, a square-built button accordion very popular in Argentina and Uruguay. His education was varied, combining various influences and his music forms a meeting point where classical music and jazz come together in the traditional Tango.

*Le Grand Tango* was composed as a commission for the Russian cellist, Mstislav Rostropovich. The piece, in its original form for piano and cello, was premiered in 1990 by Rostropovich, and is arranged in three distinctive sections. The first section (*Tempo di tango*) combines strong rhythmic elements with modern dissonances and popular song-like melodies. The second (*Meno mosso: libero e cantabile*) is an eloquent but melancholic dialogue, and the last (*Piu mosso: Giocoso*) is a fiery, rhythmic dance-like tour de force for the cello and piano.