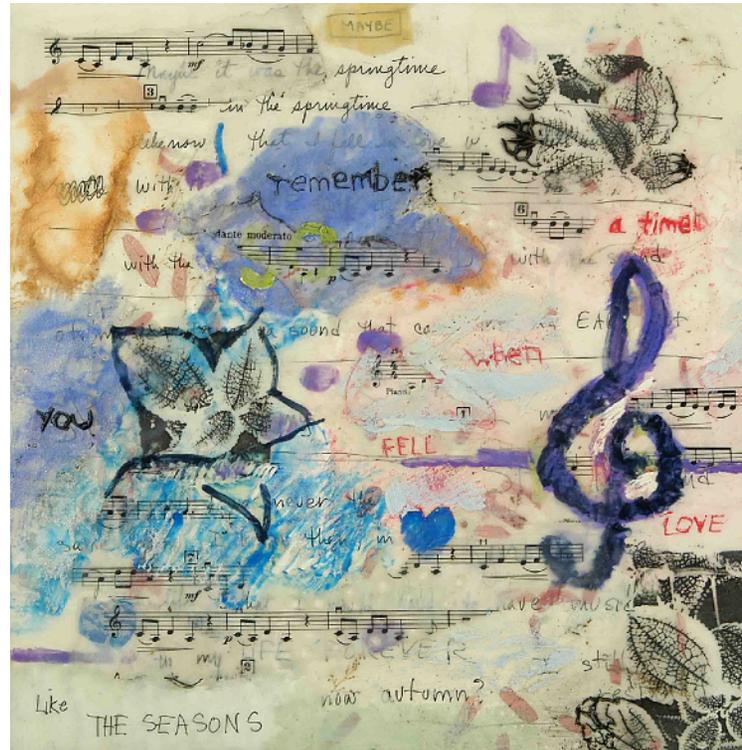


Musica Viva!



Remember—Marilyn Banner

Wednesday, April 17

7:30 PM

Banner Arts

7502 Flower Avenue

Takoma Park

dcmusicaviva.com

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven (Dec. 17, 1770—Mar. 26, 1827)

Sonata No. 3 in A major, Op. 69 (1808)

- I. Allegro ma non tanto
- II. Scherzo. Allegro molto (in A minor)
- III. Adagio cantabile – Allegro vivace

Bohuslav Martinů (Dec. 8, 1890—Aug. 28, 1959)

Cello Sonata No. 3 (1952)

- I. Poco andante—Moderato
- II. Andante
- III. Allegro, ma non presto

Johannes Brahms (May 7, 1833—April 3, 1897)

Sonata No. 1 in F minor, Op. 38 (1865)

- I. Allegro non troppo, in E minor
- II. Allegretto quasi Menuetto, in A minor
- III. Allegro, in E minor

Bonnie Thron, cello **Carl Banner, piano**

PROGRAM NOTES

Beethoven, cello Sonata in A major. The single Sonata of Op 69 was sketched in 1807, some ten years after the Op 5 pair and concurrently with the Fifth Symphony (Op 67). It was completed in the spring of 1808 in Heiligenstadt and contracted to the publishers Breitkopf & Härtel in September, who issued it the following April in an edition full of printer's errors. The dedication of the Sonata was to Count Ignaz von Gleichenstein, a Secretary at the War Department and a trusted friend of the composer. It had been performed for the first time



a month earlier, in March 1809, by the cellist Nikolaus Kraft (the son of Anton Kraft and a member of Schuppanzigh's famous string quartet) and Baroness Dorothea von Ertmann, one of the greatest of the first generation of Beethoven pianists.

The lyrical A major world of this third Sonata conveys as well as any other work of the period the self-confident mood that Beethoven was in during the latter half of the first decade of the nineteenth century, before his life was disrupted by the French invasion of Vienna in the middle of 1809. The first movement opens rather like the slightly earlier Fourth Piano Concerto (1806) with, in this case, the cello entering softly and unaccompanied with a theme that gradually builds to a short piano flourish, repeated with the roles reversed. A vigorous bridge passage leads to the second subject, a combination of rising scales and downward arpeggios, again repeated with the instrumental roles inverted. The triplets of the bridge return with the codetta to the exposition which is dominated by an attractive idea new to the movement. The development concentrates on the music of the first subject which in a foreshortened form eventually opens the recapitulation, before reappearing at the end of the movement. There follows the only Scherzo of these Sonatas and it is typical of the form as Beethoven developed it during his 'middle period' works, with its length approaching that of the outer movements, achieved by repeating the almost waltz-like 'trio' between three statements of the syncopated main scherzo theme. The slow introduction to the finale is shorter than those to the first movements of the two earlier sonatas, with more of a cantabile continuity to it. The Allegro vivace recalls the opening of the first 'Rasumovsky' String Quartet in both the configuration of its opening theme and in its sunny mood which continues into the restrained second subject where cello and piano alternate short phrases.

Martinů, Cello Sonata No. 3. Martinů's three sonatas for cello and piano are in a sense markers of his American years. The earliest, composed in Paris in 1939 and introduced there the following year, was his last creative effort before leaving the city that had been his home for some 17 years and making his way, with his wife, to America. The second one



was composed shortly after his arrival here, for another fellow Czech, a cellist who lived in Queens. The third and last was composed during the end of his American period, but not in America: he wrote it France in 1952, during his first trip back since his departure a dozen years earlier; he then returned to the United States just long enough to get his things together for a permanent return to Europe the following year. He never returned to America, and never saw his homeland again.

This work was composed in 1952 in memory of Hans Kindler, the founding conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra. The Dutch-born Kindler had been a cellist before he took up conducting; he served as principal cellist of the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski, and he also had a successful solo career, in which he gave the premiere of Bloch's *Schelomo* and became associated with Ravel, some of whose works he either introduced or otherwise helped bring into existence. Either Martinů or the source of the commission evidently felt that the medium of Kindler's own instrument would give the musical memorial piece a more intimate significance than a work for larger forces. The premiere was given in New York in 1953 by the cellist George Ricci and the pianist Earl Wild.

Like Martinů's two earlier cello sonatas, this final one is laid out in three movements, but, while the two others follow a simple fast-slow-fast sequence, the first movement of this one is a somewhat restrained *Moderato* with a formal introduction marked *Poco andante*, and the succeeding movements are also rather less pronounced forms of slow and fast, respectively, being an *Andante* (in contrast to the

First Sonata's *Lento* and the Second's *Largo*) and a concluding *Allegro* bearing the cautionary *ma non presto*.

Richard Freed (slightly edited)

Brahms, Sonata No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38. The Cello Sonata No 1 in E minor Op 38 was started in 1862, when Brahms was not yet thirty, with the finale being added to the long-completed first two movements in 1865. This, his first surviving duo-sonata, is an important work, in some ways a turning-point. His previous sonata had been the Third Piano Sonata, Op 5, a work of tempestuous youth, written in 1853 and prefaced by a quotation from the romantic poetry of Sternau. The cello sonata is utterly different; it is almost an 'historical sonata', its roots firmly planted in the music of the past—as if Brahms was turning his back on his wild young self. The only obvious quotation is from Bach's *Art of Fugue* (although the main theme of the menuetto bears a strong resemblance to that of the scherzo of Beethoven's famous Cello Sonata in A major). This is Brahms staking his claim as the greatest 'classical romantic' composer of chamber music, a worthy successor to his heroes from other epochs.



The first movement, with its glorious sunset coda in E major (Brahms was the master of musical sunsets) is linked to the other two movements chiefly through the dominance of the expressive minor sixth that makes its first appearance in the second bar of the work, and continues throughout the sonata. The second movement, a charming minuet and trio, seems to pay nostalgic tribute to the world of Mozart—or perhaps to that of Schubert, with whose music Brahms was somewhat obsessed at this period. The last movement, a robust mixture of fugue and sonata form, takes its main theme from *Contrapunctus 13* from the *Art of Fugue*—as if Brahms is looking further backwards in time as the sonata progresses.

THE ARTISTS

Bonnie Thron, Cello. Bonnie has been principal cellist for the North Carolina Symphony since 2000. She has received bachelors and masters degrees from Julliard, and has performed extensively throughout the Americas. Bonnie is currently a member of the piano quartet Quercus and frequently plays with the Mallarme Quartet.



She was a member of the Peabody Trio, in residence at the Peabody Institute, at the time the group won the Naumberg chamber music competition. Early in her career she was assistant principal cellist of the Denver Symphony for a season and she played and recorded with the Orpheus Chamber Ensemble. She has had a long history with the Apple Hill Chamber Players as a guest artist and chamber music coach and was involved in the group's first Playing for Peace tour to the Middle East in 1991.

Bonnie has soloed with the North Carolina Symphony, the Orpheus Chamber Ensemble, the Julliard Orchestra, the Panama National Orchestra, the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, and various other orchestras in North Carolina and her original home state of New Hampshire. Not just devoted to music to the exclusion of all else, she also received a BSN from Johns Hopkins School of Nursing and worked as a nurse for several years at Johns Hopkins Hospital and as a case manager in home care nursing during which time she was a cello teacher at the Baltimore School for the Arts.

Carl Banner, piano. Carl began his musical career at age 7, taking piano lessons with his aunt, a well-known D.C. piano teacher, chamber musician and dance accompanist. Her husband was a violist, and the couple held weekly chamber music performances in their DC home, that young Carl often listened to (sometimes from under the piano). When his family relocated to St. Louis, he continued his lessons. In 1962,

he performed the Schumann Piano Concerto with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. This achievement was, he reflects, 'a significant milestone for me in many ways.' He stayed in St. Louis to study for a year after his parents returned to DC. He joined his family the next year, but traveled by train twice a month to St. Louis for lessons.



After study at Yale, Washington University in St. Louis, the Music Academy of the West in California and SUNY Buffalo, he returned to D.C. in 1970. 'Around this time,' he says, 'I decided to give up music and get a real job of some sort.' Following a PhD in cell biology at Harvard, he worked at NIH. But he never completely abandoned music, and after returning to DC in 1982, he 'assembled groups of very good amateurs,' among them the NIH Chamber Players and the Rock Creek Chamber Players, with whom he performed. Three years later, he formed the Millennium Ensemble and the Cezanne Trio, and initiated a regular concert series at several area venues.

In 1988 Carl and his wife formed the nonprofit Washington Musica Viva, 'to bring the kind and quality of chamber music that I dreamed of to the public.' Banner feels he is 'bringing some new life to the form' of the piano recital. He credits his approach 'more to my chamber music experience and exposure to non-classical music than to my pedagogical training.' He has departed from the assumptions, traditions and expectations of solo piano repertoire in ways that none of my teachers would have countenanced ... perhaps I love the piano because it is the romantic instrument par excellence, and I am a 19th century romantic at heart,' he muses. 'I am more interested in depth than brilliance, in emotion than impression, in truth than illusion ... I encourage the audience to close their eyes and relax into their own emotional space.'

Marilyn Banner. Marilyn is the artist whose music-related paintings grace the cover of these programs each month. She is a rising star among the artists who work in the “encaustic medium” in the DC



area. Spend a little time browsing her works here and on her web site at marilynbanner.com. Marilyn has participated in many individual as well as juried shows of her work, in the DC area and in New York. Also, her work is featured in the recently published **Encaustic Art in the 21st Century** by Anne Lee.

Washington Musica Viva produces high quality, unpretentious public performances of a broad range of classical, jazz-based, and contemporary chamber music. WMV began as a monthly multi-disciplinary performance series in the Kensington studio of visual artist Marilyn Banner. Now in our 16th season, WMV has produced more than 200 programs, including performances at the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage, the Czech Center in NY, the Embassy of the Czech Republic, the Embassy of Austria, Busboys and Poets, Twins Jazz Club, and the Brooklyn Conservatory. WMV is directed by pianist Carl Banner. Participants include professional musicians from Washington, Baltimore, New York, and elsewhere.

Washington Musica Viva, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization, and all contributions are fully tax-deductible. WMV can be reached at 301-891-6844 or dcmusicaviva@verizon.net. Our mailing address is WMV, 7502 Flower Ave, Takoma Park, MD 20912.

Program notes and composer pictures adapted from Wikipedia

Program design by Hugh Haskell
Suggestions for improvement are welcome at haskellh@verizon.net.