

ABBHEY CHURCH EVENTS

In the Benedictine tradition of nurturing the arts and learning

2022 Season



Thomas Mesa

Cello

Ilya Yakushev

Piano



PROGRAM

- Sonata for Cello and Piano in E minor, Op. 38Johannes Brahms
Allegro non troppo (1833-1897)
Allegretto quasi Menuetto - Trio
Allegro
- Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. Posth.Frédéric Chopin
Lento con gran espressione (*for solo piano*) (1810-1849)
- SevenAndrea Casarrubios
(*for solo cello*) (b. 1988)
- Prelude for Cello and Piano Op. 47, No. 12 Lera Auerbach
(b. 1973)
- Spanish Suite (Seguida Española) (*excerpts*) Joaquín Nin
Vieja Castilla (1879-1949)
Murciana

INTERMISSION

- Sonata for Cello and Piano in G minor, Op. 19Sergei Rachmaninoff
Lento - Allegro moderato (1873-1943)
Allegro scherzando
Andante
Allegro mosso



Thomas Mesa and Ilya Yakushev appear by arrangement with Lisa Sapinkopf Artists
www.chambermuse.com

Attendees are required to wear a mask.

15th January 2022
8:00 p.m.

Saint Martin's Abbey
Lacey, Washington

About the Artists

The Mesa-Yakushev Duo is Cuban-American cellist **Thomas Mesa**, winner of the \$50,000 First Prize in the 2016 Sphinx Competition, and Russian pianist **Ilya Yakushev**, with many awards and honors to his credit. The duo's career was launched in part by their extremely successful showcase for presenters at Weill/Carnegie Recital Hall, the result of winning APAP's highly competitive 2017 Young Performers Career Advancement audition.

Since then, they have performed across the U.S., receiving reviews such as this one: "The pair's playing was grounded in storytelling, as great musical performances often are . . . Mesa and Yakushev always played on equal footing, never with the piano serving as the accompanist to the cello . . . a musical performance that encapsulates the best that good drama has to offer."

After the pandemic caused the cancellation of two dozen of their '20-21 concerts, their first live performance, at the Wildflower Festival in PA, received this presenter feedback: "Thomas and Ilya were stupendous! I cannot say enough good things about these two superlative musicians and how much the audience loved them. They had the audience eating out of their hands from the moment they walked on stage until the last note. Not only are they wonderful performers, they are terrific to work with. . ." —*Judi Mortensen, Director*

Thomas Mesa

The brilliant young Cuban-American cellist Thomas Mesa is quickly establishing himself as one of the most charismatic and engaging performers of his generation. Mr. Mesa was the winner of the Thaviu Competition for String Performance (Chicago) and the Alhambra Orchestra Concerto Competition, among others. His performances of Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl were seen by an audience of over 30,000, and his performance with the Cleveland Orchestra received this rave review from the Cleveland Plain Dealer: "A listener with closed eyes would have been hard pressed to distinguish [Mesa's] shapely, expressive performance from that of another gifted artist two or three times his age."

As a driving force in the Sphinx Virtuosi orchestra, He has been featured as soloist on tour in the concerto Dance for a New Day by jazz trumpeter-composer Terence Blanchard. The Sphinx Organization, in conjunction with Carnegie Hall and the New World Symphony, has also commissioned for Mesa a solo concerto by Jessie Montgomery.

As a recording artist, Mr. Mesa was featured on the GRAMMY-nominated album, "Bonhoeffer" with the multiple GRAMMY-winning ensemble, The Crossing Choir. He has appeared with them as soloist at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC, Longwood Gardens, The Winter Garden (broadcast on WNYC) and the Theological Seminary in New York City. Mr. Mesa and The Crossing also collaborated on the American premiere of Astralis for choir and solo cello by Wolfgang Rihm, with more collaborations and premieres scheduled for future seasons.

Other recordings in progress include the piano and cello music of Brahms and Beethoven; an album dedicated to the music of Debussy; and a special project in collaboration with PARMA Recordings in a "Call for Scores" that will bring

together and record new works for solo cello and cello/piano. This project will include an album release concert at The DiMenna Center in New York City and the album will be available on all commercial streaming platforms.

Mr. Mesa tours with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and is the cellist of the renowned St. Petersburg Piano Quartet. He has toured with Itzhak Perlman and Protegés both nationally and internationally. Other appearances have included the Mainly Mozart Festival (San Diego), Bargemusic (NYC), Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert Series (Chicago), Columbia University, Carnegie Hall, the U.S. Supreme Court, The Heifetz Institute, Meadowmount School of Music, Strad for Lunch Series (NYC), and the International Beethoven Project.

Mr. Mesa is a sought-after educator for his ability to connect with students and teach them to teach themselves. He recently joined the faculty of the SUNY Purchase School of Music, and has given masterclasses at institutions such as UC Berkeley, Boston Conservatory, Northwestern University, DePaul University, University of Nevada-Las Vegas, University of Miami, Meadowmount School of Music, Walnut Hill School and has held faculty positions at Sphinx Performance Academy, The Heifetz Institute, Music Mountain Festival and School, Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, Montecito International Music Festival, St. Petersburg International Music Academy, and the Mozart Academy at John Jay College in New York City.

Thomas Mesa received his BM from The Juilliard School and his MM from Northwestern University. He is a doctoral candidate at the Manhattan School of Music. His principal teachers were Timothy Eddy, Julia Lichten, Hans Jorgen Jensen, Mark Churchill, Ross Harbaugh, and Wells Cunningham.

He plays a gorgeous cello made by Richard Tobin in 1820, an instrument that was used in soundtracks for the first sound movies ever made.

Ilya Yakushev

Russian pianist Ilya Yakushev, with many awards and honors to his credit, continues to astound and mesmerize audiences at major venues on three continents.

In 2014, the British label Nimbus Records released Yakushev's CD, "Prokofiev Sonatas Vol. 1" CD. The American Record Guide wrote, "Yakushev is one of the very best young pianists before the public today, and it doesn't seem to matter what repertoire he plays – it is all of the highest caliber." Volume 2 of the Prokofiev Sonatas was published in 2017, as was an all-Russian CD.

Highlights of Ilya's '21-22 season include appearances as soloist with the Wisconsin Philharmonic, La Crosse Symphony, and Fort Wayne Philharmonic, as well as recitals in PA, CA, CT, TN, AZ, MD, FL and CO.

In past seasons, he has performed in various prestigious venues worldwide, including Great Philharmonic Hall (St. Petersburg), Victoria Hall (Singapore), Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall (New York), Davies Symphony Hall (San Francisco), and Sejong Performing Arts Center (Seoul, Korea). His performances with orchestra include those with the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, BBC Concert Orchestra, Boston Pops, Rochester Philharmonic, Utah Symphony, and many others. His critically-acclaimed duo with cellist Thomas Mesa is in great demand.

Winner of the 2005 World Piano Competition which took place in Cincinnati, OH, Mr. Yakushev received his first award at age 12 as a prizewinner of the Young Artists Concerto Competition in his native St. Petersburg. In 1997, he received the Mayor of St. Petersburg's Young Talents award, and in both 1997 and 1998, he won First Prize at the Donostia Hiria International Piano Competition in San Sebastian, Spain. In 1998, he received a national honor, The Award for Excellence in Performance, presented to him by the Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation in Moscow. Most recently, Mr. Yakushev became a recipient of the prestigious Gawon International Music Society's Award in Seoul, Korea.

Mr. Yakushev attended the Rimsky-Korsakov College of Music in his native St. Petersburg, Russia, and subsequently came to New York City to attend Mannes College of Music, where he studied with legendary pianist Vladimir Feltsman.



Program Notes:

Brahms: Sonata No.1 begins with an expansive sonata form first movement. The quiet and expressive first theme in the cello is supported by a simple chordal piano accompaniment. The forte second theme is built of an arpeggiated chord. This exposition section closes softly. Motives from both themes are explored in the development section. The recapitulation brings a return of the two principal themes in minor, and the coda concludes in major.

The Allegretto quasi Menuetto is in typical minuet form. A stately dance in the minor mode is followed by several variants. This section ends with pizzicatos in the cello. A contrasting trio possesses some qualities of music by Robert Schumann, Brahms's mentor. The minuet music returns exactly as before.

Brahms's finale is a fugue marked Allegro. The piano introduces the subject in the bass register. This is answered first in the cello and then in the treble register of the piano. Melodic similarities between this fugue subject and one composed by Bach in his Art of Fugue have been noticed by several scholars. This subject is developed by means of several fugal techniques, including inversion and stretto (close imitation of the fugue subject). —*Antoine Lederlin*

Chopin: Chopin's nocturnes span almost his entire creative career – the earliest were written in the late 1820s, when the composer was still in his teens, the last in 1846, three years before his death. That period also coincided with massive advances in the technology of the piano itself; the instruments that Beethoven and Schubert wrote for – the kind that Chopin would have known in his youth – were very different in their tonal capabilities and power from those that he was able to play and compose on in the last decade of his life.

Chopin dedicated his Nocturne in C-sharp minor to his older sister as an exercise to prepare for the study of his second concerto. It was first published posthumously in 1875. The Nocturne was famously played by Holocaust survivor Natalia Karp for a Nazi concentration camp commandant, leaving him so impressed that he spared her life. The piece was featured in many films, the most popular being *The Pianist*.

Casarrubios: Spanish cellist and composer Andrea Casarrubios was born in San Esteban del Valle, a small village in the province of Ávila, in Castille, Spain, in 1988.

Praised by The New York Times for having "traversed the palette of emotions" with

"gorgeous tone and an edge-of-seat intensity" and described by *Diario de Menorca* as an "ideal performer" who offers "elegance, displayed virtuosity, and great expressive power," Casarrubios has played as soloist and chamber musician throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. First Prize winner of numerous international competitions and awards, Andrea has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Lincoln Center, the Piatigorsky International Cello Festival, Ravinia, Schleswig-Holstein, and the Verbier Festivals.

Andrea's album, *Caminante*, features some of her own compositions, was released on Odradek Records and was chosen as one of the "Best 2019 Classical Music Albums" by Australia's ABC Classic. As soloist at Auditorio Nacional in Madrid, Andrea performed her own Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, *Mirage*, among other works. The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and cellist Thomas Mesa recently performed the U.S. premiere of this concerto. *Seven (2020)* for solo cello, "a searching, intense, and elegiac tribute to the essential workers during the pandemic" (*New York Times*) was commissioned by Mr. Mesa, and presented at Carnegie Hall in 2021, among other venues. One of her latest works, *Amid a Place of Stone (2020)* for solo violin, funded by the Andy Warhol Foundation, was featured at the Albany Arts Museum's Fall 2021 Exhibit. Andrea's compositions have been heard in 78 countries, and presented by organizations such as the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, Boccherini Music Festival, World Heritage Festival, Sphinx Organization, Washington Performing Arts, Eastman School of Music, Decoda, Ensemble Connect, Canada's CKIA, and Spanish National Radio (RNE).

Andrea's solo appearances as a cellist include performances of Schubert's *Arpeggione Sonata in A minor* arranged for cello and orchestra, recital tours of a wide range of repertoire, and performances in Spain of several works for cello and orchestra including Haydn's *Cello Concerto in C major*. Andrea has been sponsored by the Wingate Foundation in the U.K., the Spanish Cello Forum, as well as *Juventudes Musicales* of Madrid. Her teachers have included Maria de Macedo, Lluís Claret, Amit Peled, Marcy Rosen, and Ralph Kirshbaum. As part of her doctorate degree, she also studied composition with John Corigliano.

A passionate mentor, Andrea has taught at The Juilliard School, University of Southern California, Eastman School of Music, Skidmore College, Queens College, University of Kansas, as well as at numerous festivals and masterclasses on tour. Her latest engagements include commissions and concerts in Canada, Spain, Brazil, Mexico, Germany, and the USA.

Auerbach: Lera Auerbach is a polymath in the original sense of the word. Apart from being a successful composer and concert pianist, she's a painter, sculptor, librettist and author of several books of poetry and prose. For Auerbach, all art forms are interconnected, and nourish and sustain each other.

Auerbach was born in 1973 in the Russian city of Chelyabinsk, near the border with Siberia. Prodigiously talented, she studied piano at the local music school, and after successfully participating in a number of national competitions, she was invited at the age of 17 to give a short tour of the US. The tour ended with a concert in New York City, and instead of heading back home, she insisted on staying in New York, enrolling at the Manhattan School of Music and then at the Juilliard School, where she studied composition with Milton Babbitt and Robert Beaser. Other than a year studying music in Germany, she has remained in New York ever since. Auerbach is the youngest composer on the roster of the prestigious international Sikorski music publishing company, home to Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and Schnittke.

Auerbach has been exploring the 24 Prelude format throughout her career. In addition

to the set for cello and piano, she produced sets for violin and piano, as well as transcribing Shostakovich's 24 Piano Preludes both for cello and piano and for viola and piano. The Preludes for Cello and Piano, composed in 1999, range from just 40 seconds to 5 minutes in length, and are considered to be among Auerbach's finest compositions. The San Francisco Chronicle said, "Each of these short pieces . . . is a lyric poem in music, creating a mood, a melodic notion, or a completely imagined microcosm. . . . The range of Auerbach's inspiration is phenomenal."

Nin: Pianist and composer Joaquín Nin y Castellanos was born in Cuba and taken to Spain as a child. After studies in Barcelona, he went to Paris in 1902 to continue piano studies with the Polish-German composer-pianist Moritz Moszkowski. Returning to Havana in 1910 to start a concert society and music periodical, he then left for tours of Europe and South America as a pianist. In 1939, a long period in Europe was interrupted by World War II. Eventually, he returned to Cuba, where he died in 1949.

When he started writing music, he mainly produced short pieces in the typical Spanish style, often making use of folk music from the various regions of the country. In the tradition of Spanish characteristic music of this type, going back to Isaac Albéniz, Nin used folk music from different parts of the country as the basis of his Spanish Suite and named each movement after its folkloric source.

The first movement, "Vieja Castilla" (Old Castille), has a relaxed feeling that brings back the age of chivalry in Spain or at least as imagined, since the melody originated in the time of Cervantes in the sixteenth century. The second movement, "Murciiana," is a dance from Murcia, a southern province whose main seaport is Cartagena. This is a strong, stamping dance and the cello uses strummed strings to imitate the guitar.

Rachmaninoff: Around the turn of the 20th century, Sergei Rachmaninoff was still going through the serious crisis of confidence which had been triggered by the disastrous 1897 premiere of his Symphony No. 1. The composer was unable to write almost anything in the following three years, until he began a course of hypnotherapy which eventually helped him overcome his block.

Among the first major works to emerge after his recovery was the Sonata for Cello and Piano in G minor Opus 19, completed in November 1901. Unfortunately for this piece, Rachmaninoff had only just premiered his mighty second Piano Concerto the month before, and that work's huge success eclipsed the less ambitious sonata that followed soon afterwards.

Rachmaninoff dedicated the sonata to the eminent Russian cellist Anatoliy Brandukov, who gave the first performance in Moscow with the composer himself playing the terrifyingly difficult piano part. Brandukov, some 14 years older than the composer, was best man at Rachmaninoff's wedding, and the two of them gave numerous concerts together.

In four movements, and like the piano concertos, the sonata is filled with the character so typical of Russia's Romantic era. Few composers before Rachmaninoff could have so deeply explored the cello's capacity for expressive tenderness and intensity. And doubtless Brandukov's playing brought every nuance and feeling out of the page.

When he wrote this marvellous sonata, Rachmaninoff surely could not have known that this would be his last chamber music work. From that time on, however, he would only dedicate his skills to solo piano pieces, and the larger scale orchestral and choral pieces. So this is a piece to be discovered and treasured as representing both a beginning and an end to a phase of Rachmaninoff's career—and a testimony to a musical friendship.

In the spirit of the fifteen-hundred-year-old Benedictine tradition of nurturing the arts and learning, in 1980 the monastic community of Saint Martin's Abbey established Abbey Church Events, an annual music and lecture series. For more than forty years, Abbey Church Events has been bringing gifted musicians and recognized academics to the Abbey Church. Since its establishment, Abbey Church Events has presented Pacific Northwest debuts, among which was that of soprano Dawn Upshaw. Poet Jane Hirshfield and the late pianist/scholar Charles Rosen have presented lectures on the series. Pianist Richard Goode and violinist/violist Scott St. John have concertized here. This 2022 Season is a belated celebration of our ruby anniversary. Pianist Ilya Yakushev returns this season collaborating with cellist Thomas Mesa. Anthony Trionfo, flutist, and Albert Cano Smit, pianist, make their Abbey debut. Etienne Gara, violinist, and Sung Chang, pianist, come to the Abbey in March. Our 2022 Season concludes in April with The Queen's Six, direct from Winsor Castle, where they accompany the liturgical celebrations at St. George's Chapel.

Saint Martin's Abbey was founded in 1895 by the Benedictine monks of Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota. Benedictines are a monastic order of the Roman Catholic Church. Today, as in years past, the Benedictine monks of Saint Martin's Abbey pray, work and live together in community, seeking God and responding to Him in their life of prayer. The monk is a man who seeks in the monastery an environment in which he might live the Christian life to the fullest. Under the leadership of their elected abbot, the monks of Saint Martin's Abbey gather together for common prayer several times daily in the Abbey Church, and individually spend time each day in private prayer and spiritual reading.

For centuries, the apostolate of education has characterized many Benedictine communities as their principal work. The monks of Saint Martin's, together with their lay colleagues, are involved in a wide variety of work within Saint Martin's University. Some monks also exercise their priestly ministry in communities within the Pacific Northwest. The principle of "unity in diversity in Christ" is as characteristic of the Benedictine community of Saint Martin's Abbey today as it was at the time of its founding over a century and a quarter ago.

While Abbey Church Events lectures and concerts are offered free of charge to the public, a freewill offering is suggested. The series is underwritten by the interest on a small endowment established by Saint Martin's Abbey, as well as by freewill offerings at events, bequests, and occasional grants. During this 2022 Season we are especially grateful for the continued support of Olympia Federal Savings, a gift from the late Brownlee and Carmen C. Waschek, the Annaliese Soros Educational Residency Program of Young Concert Artists, and for special services provided by students from Saint Martin's University.

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