Aspen Music Festival and School
Robert Spano, *Music Director*
Alan Fletcher, *President and CEO*

The 2020 Mercedes T. Bass Sunday Concert Series

A Recital by Alisa Weilerstein, *cello* and Inon Barnatan, *piano*

Sunday, July 26, 2020 3 pm

BEETHOVEN
(1770–1827)

Cello Sonata in A major, op. 69 (1807–08) 22'

Allegro ma non tanto
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Adagio cantabile—Allegro vivace

Cello Sonata in D major, op. 102, no. 2 (1812; 1814–15) 21'

Allegro con brio
Adagio con molto sentimento d'affetto
Allegro fugato

With special thanks to **Amy Margerum Berg and Gilchrist Berg, Mimi Wang and Martin Carver, Gail and Alfred Engelberg, Mona Look-Mazza and Tony Mazza, Gael Neeson,** in memory of **Stefan Edlis, the Steel Family,** and **The Marc and Eva Stern Foundation, Erika Aronson Stern and Adam Stern, Suzanne Stern Gilison and Steve Gilison**

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Photo credit: Marco Borggreve

"A young cellist whose emotionally resonant performances of both traditional and contemporary music have earned her international recognition, … **Alisa Weilerstein** is a consummate performer, combining technical precision with impassioned musicianship," stated the MacArthur Foundation, when awarding American cellist Alisa Weilerstein a 2011 MacArthur Fellowship. In her new role as Artistic Partner of Norway's Trondheim Soloists, Weilerstein launched the 2019-20 season with the ensemble, playing sextets by Tchaikovsky, Richard Strauss, and Schoenberg on a European tour culminating at London's Southbank Center.

In recital, she gives solo performances of Bach's complete cello suites in California, Barcelona, Manchester, and joins her frequent duo partner, Inon Barnatan, for Brahms and Shostakovich at London's Wigmore Hall and other destinations in Europe and Russia. To celebrate Beethoven's 250th anniversary, she rejoins the Israeli pianist for a U.S. recital tour of all five of the composer's cello sonatas, as well as Beethoven's Triple Concerto with Guy Braunstein, Barnatan, and the Dresden Philharmonic. Her recording of the Concerto, featuring Alan Gilbert, Stefan Jackiw, Barnatan, and the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, was released by Pentatone in October 2019, following last season's *Transfigured Night* with the Trondheim Soloists on the same label. A pairing of Haydn's First and Second Cello Concertos with Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, this was proclaimed "an essential album" by the *Times of London*.

"One of the most admired pianists of his generation" (*New York Times*), **Inon Barnatan** is celebrated for his poetic sensibility, musical intelligence and consummate artistry. He inaugurated his tenure as Music Director of California's La Jolla Music Society Summerfest in 2019.

Barnatan is a regular soloist with many of the world's foremost orchestras and conductors. He recently served for three seasons as the inaugural Artist-in-Association of the New York Philharmonic and recreated Beethoven's legendary 1808 concert with the Cincinnati Symphony.

The recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant and Lincoln Center's Martin E. Segal Award, Barnatan is also a sought-after recitalist and chamber musician. He recently made his solo recital debut at Carnegie's Zankel Hall and reunited with frequent cello partner Alisa Weilerstein. Passionate about contemporary music, he has commissioned and performed works by many living composers, premiering pieces by Thomas Adès, Sebastian Currier, Avner Dorman, Alan Fletcher, Joseph Hallman, Alasdair Nicolson, Andrew Norman and Matthias Pintscher.

This season he released Beethoven's complete piano concertos, recorded with Alan Gilbert and Academy of St Martin in the Fields on Pentatone. Barnatan's acclaimed discography also includes *Rachmaninov & Chopin: Cello Sonatas*, recorded with Weilerstein for Decca Classics, and *Darknesse Visible*, named one of the *New York Times*'s "Best of 2012."

Photo credit: Marco Borggreve

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
Cello Sonata in A major, op. 69

Beethoven's third Cello Sonata, composed in 1807–08, is quite probably the earliest, truly great work written for cello and piano. It was dedicated to Baron Franz Ignaz von Gleichenstein, himself an able cellist, and it was perhaps commissioned by the Baron himself.

The independence of the cello is stressed in the opening measures, in which the unaccompanied cello plays a graceful, lyrical melody to be answered by the piano in a phrase that seems to have picked up the cello's air of resignation. After an exchange of roles, Beethoven begins an energetic transition in the minor, in which the syncopated melody is derived from the relaxed opening theme. Throughout the movement the piano never overpowers the cello; Beethoven manipulates textures with the greatest care and originality, alternating leading melodies in one part or another or combining them contrapuntally.

The Scherzo, with its principal theme running headlong one beat before the accompaniment, is a merry chase relieved by a gentler, hymn-like phrase, the character of which dominates the Trio. The Adagio cantabile is but a short introduction to the finale (a departure from the procedure of the Opus 5 Sonatas, in which a slow introduction leads into the first movement); it continues the songlike character of the rest of the sonata. The secondary theme provides a wonderful Romantic moment, especially in the sigh of the cello's falling seventh, but it is heard only twice each in exposition and recapitulation. For the rest, Beethoven finds prodigious varieties of material to develop from the principal theme, which remains at the center of attention throughout. —©STEVEN LEDBETTER

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
Cello Sonata in D major, op. 102, no. 2

At the end of December 1814 the palace of Count Razumovsky was struck by a disastrous fire. One effect of this conflagration was the dispersal of the count's personal string quartet, which had performed many of Beethoven's works. The cellist of the quartet, Lincke, spent the summer of 1815 at the estate of the Count and Countess Erdödy at Jedlersee. Beethoven was in close contact with the Countess and was a frequent house guest there. This probably explains why he wrote two sonatas for cello and piano during the course of the summer, the first dated (in the sketches) "July" and the second "August." The two sonatas, published the following year, were the very last duo compositions that Beethoven was to write.

They stand at the threshold of Beethoven's last period, which is marked by a growing interest in the power of pure melody, both folk-like tunes of direct simplicity and effective, slow, hymn-like melodies. Following the stormy outbursts that we so often think of as "typical" Beethoven (our view naturally colored by the Third and Fifth symphonies, the Razumovsky quartets, and some of the middle-period piano sonatas), the later music featured more intimate and delicate musical ideas, devoid of the rhetorical strokes that characterize the earliest music (and extend it to much greater length). Now Beethoven's muse feels free to abandon the formalistic devices of the past while distilling the content of the music to its very essence. Moreover, Beethoven considers the sonata as a whole when laying out his tonal plan.

While the two sonatas do indeed both stand at the threshold of Beethoven's last period, the second, in particular—with the profound ending of its slow movement and the fugal finale—fits firmly with the great works that closed the composer's career (the *Missa Solemnis*, the Ninth Symphony, and the last piano sonatas and string quartets). The sonata form of the first movement is unusually terse by the standards of middle-period Beethoven, but in that very quality it foreshadows his new interest in brevity and directness that is to be even more apparent in some of the piano sonatas and string quartets of the 1820s. The slow movement is a deeply felt Adagio in D minor, with a middle section in the major. Beethoven's amanuensis Schindler (whose memoir of his years with the composer is riddled with inaccuracies) was surely right on this occasion when he described the movement as "among the richest and most deeply sensitive inspirations of Beethoven's muse."

The slow movement ends with harmonic mystifications and a sustained dominant chord prolonging suspense. The final Allegro takes off immediately as the cellist plays a simple scale on the dominant, echoed by the piano. This seems to be a mere conventional gesture filling up the space until the composer is ready to get down to business, but we suddenly discover that the

scale is actually the beginning of a fugue subject. This must have astonished the first listeners: Beethoven had never before ended a sonata form work with a fugue—but he was to do so again and again in the next decade. Finding his way to this particular subject, simple as it seems, cost him a great deal of effort. In the end he makes magnificent use of the running scales, coupled with sustained trills, to achieve a climactic close. – © SL