

FACULTY RECITAL

THE FISCHER DUO

NORMAN FISCHER, Cello

JEANNE KIERMAN, Piano

with

KATHLEEN WINKLER, Violin

Wednesday, January 30, 2008

8:00 p.m.

Lillian H. Duncan Recital Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

***Sonata in A Minor for
Cello and Piano (1894)***

Mit Leidenschaft

Andante

Allegretto

*Alexander Zemlinsky
(1871-1942)*

Sonata for Cello and Piano (1948)

Moderato

Vivace, molto leggiero

Adagio

Allegro

*Elliott Carter
(b. 1908)*

INTERMISSION

***Trio for Piano and Strings
in C Major, Op. 87 (1882)***

Allegro

Andante con moto

Scherzo: Presto

Finale: Allegro giocoso

*Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)*

The reverberative acoustics of Duncan Recital Hall magnify the slightest sound made by the audience. Your care and courtesy will be appreciated. The taking of photographs and use of recording equipment are prohibited.

PROGRAM NOTES

We are so pleased that you have joined us for what is really a personal celebration of not only our fifteen years of being on the Shepherd School faculty but also twenty years that the Fischers and Kathy Winkler (and Timothy Pitts) have been faculty colleagues (we were all on the Oberlin College faculty together for five years before we headed south). It has been such a privilege to work at this distinguished institution and with such wonderful colleagues and students. We thank you all!

The program tonight is the kind that is not unfamiliar to those who have attended Fischer Duo events in the past — a mixture of the modern scores, musical rarities from the past, and old chestnuts.

We are delighted then to introduce this “new” Viennese score by Alexander Zemlinsky that has just been found and published. Zemlinsky’s music is seen more frequently these days as his unique compositional qualities have been heard and appreciated by the musical public. Before this he was just a footnote as the composition teacher of Arnold Schoenberg. In fact Zemlinsky was a major figure in Viennese musical life, mostly known as a first-rate conductor. This early cello sonata certainly captures the style and qualities of the music of fin-de-siècle.

The tale of the “discovery” of this sonata is quite the romantic one. Scholars knew of the existence of this sonata and that it was premiered in Vienna in 1894, but no trace of the music existed. The British cellist Raphael Wallfisch was looking through some old sheet music in his father’s (the pianist Peter Wallfisch) collection and came across a difficult-to-read photocopy of the manuscript of this sonata sent to the elder Wallfisch by musicologist Fritz Spiegl. The manuscript had been a gift to Spiegl from the family of the dedicatee, cellist Friedrich Buxbaum, and the copy had deteriorated with time and was eventually deciphered by the Zemlinsky scholar Antony Beaumont. We are so pleased to be able to present the first Houston performance of this marvelous work! (Our colleague cellist Brinton Averil Smith and pianist Evelyn Chen gave the first Houston performance of the Zemlinsky **Three Pieces** in a marvelous recital just eight weeks ago.)

The Sonata of Elliott Carter is certainly the most important American cello and piano works of the 20th century. It has been in our repertoire for about twenty-five years, and every time we come back to it, it offers the same joys of rediscovery as our old masterwork friends like the Brahms or Beethoven Sonatas. So it is a pleasure and privilege to come back to this score and engage with the brilliance of Carter’s inspired music in his 100th year... yes indeed, he will have his 100th birthday on December 11 of this year. Elliott is in excellent health, thank God, and is still writing wonderfully inspired music. This summer at Tanglewood, the Festival of Contemporary Music will be handed over completely to the music of Carter where there will be forty-six works played including two premieres!

Written when Carter was just forty, the Cello Sonata is a turning point in the composer’s output. Before this Carter was working in an American tonal style (similar to Copland or Virgil Thomson) but was looking for a new direction. In the Piano Sonata of 1943-46 he started exploring new concepts in rhythm and texture. The Cello Sonata starts with a basic dialectic in which the cello is a sustaining instrument and the piano a percussion instrument. How can the two meet? At the beginning of the first movement he presents the idea clearly with the piano marking a strict tempo in short notes and the cello playing a long line seemingly in a different speed and attitude from the

piano. Each player has opportunities to assert their character, but by the end, the two come together with short chords and a cadence based on mutual agreement. The second movement is jazzy, and it is the last movement that Carter wrote in a key signature. One will hear lots of allusions to minor thirds, and the *Dies Irae* comes frequently in the trio and coda of this movement. The third movement is a passionate statement with profound use of the two instruments, almost symphonic in its scope. The final movement is a tour-de-force of brilliant passagework and gymnastic rhythmic variants that somehow work out to the same cadential agreement that finished off the first movement. However, this time the piano is playing a long, singing line and the cello very short pizzicato notes.

The *Brahms Trio in C Major* is one of the master's enduring favorites. Brahms, with his usual modesty, told Simrock, his publisher, "You have not so far had such a beautiful trio from me and very probably have not published one to match it in the last ten years." The first movement begins with a noble unison clearly establishing the character of this movement. It has a certain restraint in tempo but fills the space with an inner passion. Brahms had written many Hungarian allegros as finales in chamber works, but this slow movement is a set of variations full of Hungarian flavor (complete with its "Scotch Snap"), and in many ways it is the emotional center of the work. The skittery scherzo yields its mysterious qualities to a beautiful trio section and is followed by a lyrical, uplifting finale.

— Notes by Norman Fischer

BIOGRAPHIES

With over thirty-five years of performing together, THE FISCHER DUO has been widely praised by music critics for their choice of repertoire. Thoroughly versed in the classical repertoire of Brahms, Beethoven, and Schumann, the Fischer Duo has acquired an equally impressive reputation for rediscovering neglected works of the past (Busoni, Boulanger, Foote, and Liszt). They have commissioned many new scores by gifted contemporary composers such as George Rochberg, David Stock, Robert Sirota, Augusta Read Thomas, Pierre Jalbert, Richard Lavenda, Anthony Brandt, Shih-Hui Chen, and Richard Wilson. "One felt like applauding the Fischer Duo before they even played a note for programming rarely-heard cello music by Chopin and Liszt," wrote a reviewer in the Washington Post. In October 2005, the Fischer Duo launched a new chamber music festival in Vermont with violinist Curtis Macomber.

The Fischer Duo is also known for enlightened residency work. In 1996, the United States Information Agency (USIA) selected the Fischer Duo as Artistic Ambassadors, and they toured South America and South Africa, receiving the highest ratings for musical maturity and open access to audiences.

The critic from the Toledo Blade summed up a concert experience with the Fischer Duo: "If there was a prize for Most Elegant Sound by a Chamber Group, the Fischer Duo would surely win it. The two together have a sort of slow-burning combustion on stage that makes for some really exciting and spontaneous music. This is a pair that really knows their repertoire, and more importantly, knows how to absorb an audience into their own musical universe."

The Fischer Duo has frequently performed on public television and National Public Radio. Their compact disc debut, *Imaginées: Music of French Masters*, was given Fanfare magazine's highest recommendation: "For fine

sound, on top of probing duo teamwork and elegant program-making." They have three other compact discs available on the Gasparo label. **American Music in the 1990s** [GSCD-349] includes commissioned works for the duo by George Rochberg, Pierre Jalbert, Samuel Jones, and Augusta Read Thomas. The *Strad* magazine said, "The duo gives thoroughly persuasive performances of all four works, scratching through the surface gesture to get to the heart of the music's expressive potential." Also available on Gasparo is **Robert Sirota: Works for Cello** [GSCD-350] and **Born in America in 1938** [GSCD-351] featuring works by William Bolcom, John Corigliano, Ellsworth Milburn, John Harbison, Joan Tower, and Charles Wuorinen. 2006 brought the release on Bridge Records [Bridge 9187] of the Duo's recording of the complete music for cello and piano by Frédéric Chopin and Franz Liszt. *Strings Magazine* states, "Technically effortless and secure; the playing is simple, direct, intense, and expressive. A most impressive record, both for the music and the playing." 2007 has seen the release of the complete cello music of William Bolcom on Naxos Records.

NORMAN FISCHER first graced the international concert stage as cellist with the Concord String Quartet, a group that won the Naumburg Chamber Music Award, an Emmy and several Grammy nominations, and recorded over forty works on RCA Red Seal, Vox, Nonesuch, Turnabout, and CRI. The *New York Times* recently said, "During its sixteen years, the supervirtuosic Concord String Quartet championed contemporary work while staying rooted in the Western tradition." In addition to performing the major concertos, Mr. Fischer has premiered and recorded many new scores for cello and orchestra. Recitals of unaccompanied cello works have received rave reviews such as "Inspiring" (*New York Times*) for his New York debut recital of the complete Bach Suites in one evening, and "Coruscating" (*Boston Globe*) for his performance of Osvaldo Golijov's *Omaramor* at the opening of the 1998 Tanglewood festival. His chamber music expertise has led to guest appearances with the Audubon, Blair, Cavani, Chester, Chiara, Ciompi, Cleveland, Emerson, Ensō, Juilliard, Mendelssohn, and Schoenberg string quartets, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Chamber Music International, Chamber Music Ann Arbor, CONTEXT, and Da Camera of Houston.

A devoted teacher and mentor to younger players, Mr. Fischer has taught at Dartmouth College, the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and currently is Professor of Violoncello at the Shepherd School of Music. Since 1985, he has taught at the Tanglewood Music Center, where he is the Coordinator of Strings and Chamber Music.

JEANNE KIERMAN is a leading advocate of the piano as a collaborative instrument. A graduate of Oberlin College, the Dalcroze School, and the New England Conservatory, she studied with master pianists Miles Mauney, Victor Rosenbaum, William Masselos, and Menahem Pressler. Ms. Kierman is equally adroit as a collaborator with voice or instrument and is in great demand as a recital partner. She has performed for Da Camera of Houston, Chamber Music Ann Arbor, Mohawk Trail Concerts, Skaneateles, and the Marrowstone Festival among others. Since 1992 she has shared her chamber music expertise with students at the Greenwood Music Camp. Formerly on the faculties of Dartmouth College and the Oberlin Conservatory, Ms. Kierman currently serves as Artist Teacher at the Shepherd School of Music.

The artistry of KATHLEEN WINKLER has earned her the plaudits of critics and audiences alike worldwide since her solo debut at the age of seventeen with the Philadelphia Orchestra. She has been heard with such orchestras as the Detroit Symphony (with which she has toured on many occasions), the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Danish Radio Orchestra, the Odense Byorkester, the Polish Slaska Philharmonic, the Grand Rapids Symphony, the Savannah Symphony, and the Phoenix Symphony, to name a few. She has toured throughout the United States and Canada as well as having performed in Sweden, Poland, Germany, Spain, and the Canary Islands. The recipient of numerous awards, Ms. Winkler took first prize in the First International Carl Nielsen Violin Competition which led to her sponsored debuts in Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center, London's Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room, the Kennedy Center and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and numerous radio broadcast performances on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the International Voice of America.

Through a national search, Kathleen Winkler was selected by the United States Information Agency to represent the U.S. as an Artistic Ambassador on concert tours throughout the world. Her initial tour took her to Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Korea, and New Zealand. Another extended tour saw Ms. Winkler's performances representing our country in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Algeria, Tunisia, Nigeria, and Kenya. A third tour took Ms. Winkler throughout Australia and South America.

The Philadelphia-born artist attended Indiana University where she received her Bachelor of Music degree, magna cum laude, as well as the coveted Performer's Certificate. She also attended the University of Michigan, where she received her Master of Music degree, summa cum laude. Formerly on the faculty of the Oberlin Conservatory, Ms. Winkler is currently Professor of Violin at the Shepherd School of Music. During the summer she is on the artist faculty of the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, California, where she holds the Léni FéBland Chair in Violin.

Ms. Winkler is married to Timothy Pitts, Principal Bassist of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, and is mother to nine-year-old Nina and seven-year-old Kiri.



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