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Brian Miller, Cello: Senior Violoncello Recital

Brian Miller

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**SETNOR
SCHOOL OF
MUSIC**

Brian Miller

Senior Violoncello Recital

Dr. Dan Sato, Piano

*We acknowledge with respect the Onondaga Nation,
firekeepers of the Haudenosaunee, the indigenous people
on whose ancestral lands Syracuse University now stands.*

In order to allow performers and audience members to have the best possible concert-going experience, please turn off all electronic devices and refrain from making extraneous noise, taking flash photographs, or moving about the auditorium during the performance. Thank you.



Setnor School of Music



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**Setnor Auditorium
November 17, 2019
8:00PM**

Syracuse University
College of Visual and Performing Arts

Program Notes

Sonata for Cello and Piano in D Minor

While interpreting the events of a composer's life as impetus for his creative work is always risky business, one important personal development from Shostakovich's life around the time of his Cello Sonata nevertheless remains inescapable. In the summer of 1934, Shostakovich fell passionately in love with Yelena Konstaninovskaya, a 20-year-old translator. Much to the dismay of his wife, Nina (despite their mutual agreement to an open marriage), the composer spent the majority of their summer holiday writing letters to his young mistress. "There is nothing in you which fails to send a wave of joy and fierce passion inside me when I think of you," he wrote. "Lyalya, I love you so, I love you so, as nobody ever loved before. My love, my gold, my dearest, I love you so; I lay down my love before you." The two lyrical flights that serve as the first and second themes of the opening movement's exposition are among Shostakovich's most unabashedly romantic melodic inspirations. The center of the movement, however, is much concerned with a somewhat premonitory repeated-note rhythmic figure, which the piano posits as a challenge to the songful nature of the cello's part. The order of the earlier themes is reversed upon their return in the recapitulation, and the movement ends with a rumbling ghost of the repeated-note motive from the development section. The second movement is a volatile scherzo whose central trio is marked by wave-form cello arpeggios in icy harmonics. The Largo is a deeply felt lament, solemn, almost tragic, in its emotion and darkly introspective in its harmony and instrumental coloring. The finale is a typically Shostakovian blending of the traditional, in its brilliant, energetic nature, clear texture, and rondo form, and the modern, in its cheeky main theme and acerbic, nose-thumbing chordal constructions.

Cello Sonata in C Major

The late 1930s saw very few public débuts of Prokofiev's works, save the Cello Concerto, Op. 58 (1938), and *Romeo and Juliet* (1936), both met with negative criticism. In the years following World War II, seeking to recover the Soviet "socialist realism" ideal of art, Andrey Zhdanov, the leading Soviet cultural policy maker, passed a series of resolutions affecting literature, art, film, and, finally, in 1948, music. This decree stunted artistic growth in the Soviet Union until Stalin's death, lasting out the remaining years of Prokofiev's life. The elderly composer grew ill and deeply insecure. Much of his work had been banned from public performance, and though still composing, he hardly was living the pampered lifestyle he had anticipated returning to Russia. Prokofiev's Sonata for Cello and Piano, remarkably, was permitted by the Committee of Artistic Affairs to receive a public première. It was debuted in 1950 by cellist Mstislav Rostropovich and pianist Sviatoslav Richter, with the first movement bearing the quote, "Mankind—that has a proud sound." Despite the sheer horror that besieged Prokofiev at the time of the work's composition, the work remains remarkably expressive. The first movement, marked *Andante grave*, opens with a resounding call by the cello, followed by a short call-and-response folk melody between the cello and piano. A throbbing interlude brings the main theme, a cheery and flippant duet. The movement slows as the cello rings out a beautiful harmonic cadence, and the second theme enters much more heavily mechanically than the first. The second movement, a playful Scherzo and Trio, follows suit. A percussive pizzicato entrance transmutes to a complacent romantic trio section. The final *Allegro ma non tanto* remains timid, with melodies and chordal structure based heavily on Russian folk music. The movement lacks neither energy nor drive, yet each climax, rather than developing in timbre and expressive nature, actually becomes more

simplistic; sometimes diminishing down to a single-note piano melody. The coda recounts the opening resonant notes of the cello in a grand duet statement, marking a turbulent and virtuosic conclusion.

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Sonata for Cello and Piano in D Minor, Op. 40 Dmitri Shostakovich
I. Allegro non troppo (1906-1975)
II. Allegro
III. Largo
IV. Allegro

Burlesque, Op. 97 Nikolai Kapustin
(b. 1937)

Intermission

Cello Sonata in C Major, Op. 119 Sergei Prokofiev
I. Andante grave (1891-1953)
II. Moderato
III. Allegro, ma non troppo

Program notes compiled by Brian Miller
Excerpts from notes by:
Patrick Castillo
Andrew Goldstien
Richard Rodda

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the degree Bachelor of Music in Music Education with Performance Honors. Mr. Miller is a student of Gregory Wood.