

# *The Marriage of Sounds*

## PROGRAM NOTES

J. S. BACH (1685-1750)  
Sonata No. 2 in D Major, BWV 1028  
(originally for viola da gamba)

Probably the most famous of Bach's sonatas are the six sonatas for unaccompanied solo violin. Bach also wrote six almost equally famous partitas for unaccompanied viola da gamba. His three sonatas (in G Major, D Major and G Minor) for gamba and harpsichord are "trio" sonatas because, although they were written for two instruments, they have three distinct voices. For the harpsichord, Bach wrote two separate parts – one for left hand and one for right hand. Therefore, two instruments, three voices. Because of the exceptional tessitura of the gamba part, Bach had in mind a seven-string instrument. Although these instruments, especially the gamba, are relatively rare today, these sonatas remain in the repertoire as works for virtuoso performers on modern instruments, the cello and piano.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)  
Twelve Variations on a theme from Handel's Oratorio, *Judas Maccabeus*, WoO45

Like many early works by Beethoven, the 12 Variations for Cello and Piano lack an opus number. The Variations now exist as WoO45 (Work ohne Opuszahl, or work without opus number). Known by many as the hymn "Thine Is the Glory," the theme used for this set of variations originally appeared with the words, "See the conqu'ring hero comes," in Handel's oratorio *Judas Maccabeus*. On several occasions during a trip to Berlin in 1796, Beethoven performed for the king of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm II. Was it a co-incidence that Beethoven wrote 2 cello sonatas and the 12 Variations for the king, himself an accomplished amateur cellist? Was the choice of theme ("See the conqu'ring hero comes") a "courteous nod towards the throne"? (Groves) It must have worked, since the king rewarded Beethoven with a gold snuffbox.

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)  
Sonata in G Minor, Op. 65

It is certainly unusual that a great composer would devote his entire compositional output to works centered around one instrument. Yet, Chopin is such a composer. Having written about 200 works for solo piano, the prolific, young composer (he died at age 39) ventured out to other instruments only occasionally, but always included the piano as part of the ensemble. For example, he wrote two concertos, both for piano and orchestra; he wrote only two chamber works for strings, but included the piano; and he wrote about 20 songs, which were, of course, for voice and piano. So a sonata for cello (and piano) is a real rarity for Chopin. We at this performance are the fortunate beneficiaries.

*Program notes by Robert D. Herrema*