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Ensamble Arte: Beethoven, Brahms, and Bernstein

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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The Department of Music Presents in Concert

Ensamble Arte

Beethoven, Brahms, and Bernstein

Emily Riggs, soprano
Marlene Ballena, cello
David Ballena, piano

Wednesday, March 7, 2018
7:30 p.m.
Camp Concert Hall

MUSIC.RICHMOND.EDU
PROGRAM

Sonata in A Major for Piano and Cello, op. 69
Ludwig van Beethoven
Allegro ma non tanto
Scherzo. Allegro molto
Adagio cantabile – Allegro vivace

Die Mainacht, op. 43, no. 2
Dein blaues Auge, op. 59, no. 8
Vergebliches Ständchen, op. 84, no. 4
Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

INTERMISSION

Geistliches Wiegenlied, op. 91, no. 2
Brahms

Zigeunerlieder, op. 103
Brahms
1. He, Zigeuner, greife in die Saiten
2. Hochgetürmte Rimaflut
3. Wisst ihr, wann mein Kindchen
4. Lieber Gott, du weisst
5. Brauner Bursche führt zum Tanze
6. Röslein dreie in der Reihe
7. Kommt dir manchmal in den Sinn
11. Rote Abendwolken ziehn

"Just a Little Bit in Love"
Leonard Bernstein
from Wonderful Town
(1918-1990)

"Somewhere"
from West Side Story

"Dream with Me"
from Peter Pan

Please silence cell phones, digital watches, and paging devices before the concert.
NOTES

BEETHOVEN's Sonata in A Major for Piano and Cello, op. 69, was written in 1808 and dedicated to his close friend, cellist Baron Ignaz von Gleichenstein. The years between 1806 and 1808 were relatively fruitful years for the composer, who just prior had been grappling with several issues in his personal life and the frustrating experience of completing his first (and ultimately last) opera, Fidelio. Following these tumultuous years, Beethoven entered 1806 rejuvenated and embarked on a period of composition that would yield some of the composer's most well-known works, including his Piano Sonata, op. 57 ("Appassionata"), the Fifth Symphony, op. 67, his Mass in C, op. 86, and his Choral Fantasy, op. 80. Within this sonata, one can hear the excitement of this period of creative prosperity. Musicians and historians attribute the sonata's historical significance to the composer's ability to set a new standard by writing a cello sonata that treated both instruments with equal importance.

JOHANNES BRAHMS considered himself a student of the past—an extension of Beethoven more than a champion of the new. This put him at odds, often publicly, with contemporary progressives like Liszt and Wagner. His songs can be divided into two types: Lieder (those in the folk style) and Gesänge (composed in an elevated style). Although he was a gifted composer of both chamber music and Lieder, Brahms wrote very few examples of vocal chamber music. Perhaps the best-known examples are his Liebeslieder Waltzes, op. 52, scored for four voices and piano four hands, and his Zwei Gesänge (originally scored for voice, viola, and piano). Brahms's own skills as an accomplished pianist are evident in his chamber music. His textures are thick and polyphonic and many of the passages present major technical challenges. While still maintaining virtuosity in the piano part, Brahms is able to elevate the other parts to a level of importance on par with that of the piano. In this way Brahms achieves the realization of what many composers before him had strived to accomplish—a complete interdependency of parts in which no single voice is more important than the next.

Published in 1884, Brahms's Zwei Gesänge was composed for his close friend Joseph Joachim and his wife, mezzo-soprano Amalie Schneeweiss. The original version was composed on the occasion of their wedding, with a later revision dedicated to the couple during a tumultuous

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time in their marriage. The composer intended the songs to provide an opportunity for healing—a noble hope that appears to have had little effect, as Joachim and his wife were divorced not long after. In “Geistliches Wiegenlied,” told from the perspective of Mary, the cello enters with a graceful quotation of the familiar German Christmas carol “Joseph, lieber Joseph mein.” The voice enters with new melodic material set to a poem by Lope de Vega and translated into German by Emanuel Geibel. The middle section changes to the minor and is more agitated than the opening stanzas. It’s in these verses that the text grapples with the tumult and burdens of the physical world. The final section returns to the calm of the original carol, leaving the audience with a sense of peace and hope.

Zigeunerlieder, op. 103, is a cycle of traditional Hungarian folksongs translated into German by Hugo Conrat. The original op. 103, completed by the composer in 1887, consists of eleven songs for vocal quartet (or choir) and piano. Numbers 1-7 and 11 were later arranged for solo voice and piano and have made their way into the standard repertoire for mezzos and sopranos alike.

Brahms’s settings cling closely to their Hungarian source material, maintaining the original song forms (typically strophic) and customary relationship between the voice and piano (providing vocal doubling, and functioning mainly as harmonic support). The songs in the cycle often transition from one to the next with no piano introduction or extended postlude. There are glimpses of Brahms’s characteristic use of thick harmonic textures and German contrapuntal technique, typical of his Gesänge, however, most of these flourishes are reserved for brief postludes or confined to single measures between vocal phrases.

American composer, conductor, pianist, and music educator LEONARD BERNSTEIN is a giant among 20th-century musicians. The vastness of his compositional oeuvre includes wonders of American theater (West Side Story, On the Town, Candide), a groundbreaking and controversial Mass, and innumerable symphonic and chamber works. Bernstein was the musical director of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra from 1958-1969, undoubtedly one of the most successful tenures in the orchestra’s history. An outspoken advocate for the arts and arts education, Bernstein was a faculty member at numerous institutions and music festivals, a frequent lecturer, and stood alongside President Dwight D. Eisenhower, as he conducted the NYPO at the groundbreaking ceremony for the
Lincoln Center project in 1959.

In 2018 we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the composer’s birth. We join music organizations and ensembles around the world in honoring the late composer with performances of his works throughout the year.

**THE ARTISTS**

**EMILY RIGGS**, soprano, is a native of Lancaster, PA and currently lives and teaches in Connecticut. Her research and performance focus on the art song of Latin America and she regularly appears with her husband, pianist David Ballena, in performances of this repertoire in venues throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic. Active as a soloist and recitalist, Riggs has collaborated with Grammy Award winning new music ensemble, Eighth Blackbird, and has been featured as a soloist in the US Naval Academy’s Distinguished Artist Series and with the West Hartford Symphony in Connecticut. She was praised by the *New York Times* for her 2012 collaboration with the Brooklyn Art Song Society in a four-hour marathon performance of Charles Ives’s 114 Songs. Riggs is a student of Mr. Marvin Keenze of Philadelphia and is Associate Professor of Music and co-chair of Performing Arts at Eastern Connecticut State University. She holds a D.M.A. in Voice Performance from the University of Maryland, an M.M. in Vocal Performance and Pedagogy from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ, and a B.A. in Music and Art History from the University of Richmond.

Peruvian cellist **MARLENE BALLENA** began playing the cello at age seven in her hometown of Lima. She served as a member of the Peruvian National Symphony and as principal cellist of the Piura Symphony Orchestra. In 2003 she was awarded a performance scholarship at the University of Louisville where she earned her Bachelor’s degree. Later on, she continued her studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music with Stephen Geber. During her time at CIM she

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joined the Matisse String Quartet and participated in the Intensive String Quartet Seminar working with members of the Cleveland, Cavani, Tokyo, Jerusalem, Juilliard, and Takács Quartets. After graduating, Ms. Ballena joined the graduate string quartet in residence at Kent State University working under the tutelage of the Miami String Quartet. She also served as a member of the Akron and Canton Symphony Orchestras and is a current member of the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra in North Carolina.

A native of Peru, DAVID BALLENA is in demand for his versatility as a soloist, chamber musician and coach. Dr. Ballena has performed throughout the U.S. and South America, including concerts at some of the nation's most prestigious venues; the Benedict Music Tent and Harris Concert Hall as part of the Aspen Music Festival's Summer Concert Series in Colorado, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, the Terrace Theater at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. In addition, he has appeared on the Lunch Time Classics live radio broadcast from the studios of WUOL in Louisville, KY and is in the final stages of a recording project featuring art songs from Latin America and Spain, with his wife, soprano Emily Jo Riggs. Dr. Ballena has served on the faculty of the Bel Cantanti Summer Opera Festival at the Catholic University of America and is a staff pianist at the Aspen Music Festival and School. He is currently a Lecturer at Eastern Connecticut State University. Dr. Ballena received his early training at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música in Lima, Peru. In 1997, he moved to the U.S. to study with Lee Luvisi at the University of Louisville where he earned his B.M. in Piano Performance. He received his M.M. and D.M.A in Collaborative Piano from the University of Maryland, where he studied with Rita Sloan. Further studies were with Emilio del Rosario, Victor Derevianko, Anton Nel, and Joseph Kalichstein.

Tonight's program was made possible by a University of Richmond Cultural Affairs grant.