



**2025/2026**

**78<sup>th</sup> SEASON**

**Friends of Chamber Music present David Finckel & Wu Han in concert  
at the Vancouver Playhouse, Sunday, February 15, 2026, at 3:00 pm**

**Concert sponsored by a member of FCM's board of directors**

**David Finckel – cello**

**Wu Han – piano**



Cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han, Musical America's *Musicians of the Year*, are among today's most distinguished classical artists. Their careers encompass world-class performances, acclaimed recordings, and visionary artistic direction. From New York to concert halls across the US, Europe, and Asia, they captivate global audiences. Their repertoire includes classical standards, contemporary commissions, and almost all of the chamber music literature for cello and piano. As artistic directors, they curate over 300 concerts annually.

Finckel and Han founded ArtistLed in 1997, the first internet-based, artist-controlled classical recording label. With over 20 acclaimed releases, ArtistLed features both standard works and new repertoire.

Since 2004, Finckel and Han have been the Artistic Directors of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS), the world's largest chamber music presenter. During their tenure, the organization has significantly expanded its reach, enhancing its offerings in performances, educational programs, and recordings. They produced over 270 digital events during the pandemic, sustaining chamber music communities nationwide in the USA.

As founders and Artistic Directors of Music@Menlo from 2002 to 2025, they have established the festival as a model of innovative programming and educational excellence. The festival label, Music@Menlo *LIVE*, has released over 130 high-quality CDs.

Dedicated to music education, Finckel and Han transformed the CMS Two Program into the Bowers Program, which supports exceptional young musicians. They also lead the Chamber Music Institute at Music@Menlo and taught at the Isaac Stern Chamber Music Encounters in Israel, New York, and Japan. Their website offers a unique, free resource for students and arts organizations.

Wu Han, born in Taiwan, serves as Artistic Advisor for Wolf Trap and the Society of the Four Arts. She was appointed Artistic Director of La Musica in Sarasota in 2022. David Finckel, originally from New Jersey, was the first American student of Mstislav Rostropovich and is the former cellist of the Grammy Award-winning Emerson String Quartet, with which group he played for 34 years. He currently teaches at

The Juilliard School and Stony Brook University. Finckel and Han, married in 1985, divide their time between touring, New York City, and Westchester County.

David Finckel and Wu Han played a recital for Friends in November 2000, and from 2011 to 2025 have played 11 concerts for us as two thirds of the Han Finckel Setzer Trio (with violinist Philip Setzer), as well as being half of the piano quartet from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (with violinist Daniel Hope and violist Paul Neubauer) that played for us in April 2015. Both musicians have frequently appeared for us as members of other CMS of Lincoln Center ensembles.

David Finckel and Wu Han appear by arrangement with David Rowe Artists: [www.davidroweartists.com](http://www.davidroweartists.com)

## **Programme**

### ***Sonata in D major, BWV 1028***

***Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)***

**Adagio  
Allegro  
Andante  
Allegro**

J.S. Bach wrote this work as his second Sonata for viola da gamba and harpsichord. Of course, we will hear it performed on cello and piano. From the first notes, it is clear that Bach wrote this piece for a virtuoso gambist. The musical and technical demands set out in the score are far above average. The intended harpsichordist must also have been a very experienced musician and it is highly likely that J.S. Bach himself played the keyboard part. A rough consensus amongst scholars dates this composition to within his Leipzig period, especially given that the harpsichord takes on both the upper part and the accompaniment – the sort of innovation that Bach was experimenting with while in Leipzig. He premiered a great deal of instrumental music there between 1729 and 1739, usually at the Café Zimmermann with his collegium musicum, with fellow musicians, pupils, and family.

### ***Fantasiestücke, Op. 73 for cello and piano***

***Robert Schumann (1810-1856)***

**Zart und mit Ausdruck  
Lebhaft, Leicht  
Rasch und mit Feuer**

Robert Schumann composed the *Fantasiestücke* for clarinet and piano, Opus 73, in 1849. While originally written for clarinet and piano, Schumann indicated that the clarinet part could be also performed on violin or cello.

These pieces were written in just two days in February 1849. Schumann originally called them "Soirée Pieces" but changed their title to *Fantasiestücke* ("fantasy pieces"). The composer used this title for several of his works. This use of "fantasy" is in line with the Romantic belief that creative expression is the product of the artist's unrestricted imagination. In addition, the connotations of "fantasy" justify the sudden mood changes.

The first piece is written in A minor and begins dreamily with hints of melancholy, but resolves with a sense of hope in A major, looking forward to the next movement.

The second piece is indeed composed in A major and is playful, upbeat, energetic and positive, with a central section modulating to F major featuring chromatic triplets in dialogue between cello and piano.

The final piece is again in A major. The pace suddenly drives into a frenzy of passion and fiery energy, at times quoting motifs from the previous pieces. The music pushes the players to their limits as Schumann labels each of the last two of the three sections of the coda "schneller" (faster). The piece ends exuberantly with a triumphant close.

***Sonata for cello & piano No. 1 in C minor, Op. 32***

***Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)***

**Allegro**

**Andante tranquillo sostenuto**

**Allegro moderato**

In early 1871, a consortium of French composers that included César Franck, Gabriel Fauré, Camille Saint-Saëns, and many others, established a new organization. Called the Société Nationale de Musique, it aimed to promote the performance, publication, and evolution of contemporary French music. The group's motto of *Ars Gallica*, or "French art," and its strict policies on performing music written outside France were taken by many to be an emblem of the anti-German sentiment in French culture that followed the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–1871. But in fact, the members of the Société were interested in exploring a productive artistic synthesis of the experimental composition practices of Wagner, Liszt, and Schumann and the unique lightness and melodic clarity of the existing French style.

The first of their major concert events occurred on December 7, 1872. It featured music of several young French composers along with premieres by some of the founders. Among the works to receive its first public hearing there was Saint-Saëns's Cello Sonata in C minor, Op. 32. He was on a cello kick that year, working on his ground-breaking Cello Concerto in A minor (Op. 33) at the same time. Both these pieces display his attempt to combine the "serious" instrumental genres of the cello sonata and concerto with the cyclic structures, uncompromisingly beautiful melodies, and fleeting textures that became markers of "musical patriotism" in France during that period.

The drama and C minor tonality of the opening movement of the Op. 32 Cello Sonata has led many critics over the years to see it as an homage to Beethoven. Still, its harmonic ambiguities, sweeping piano writing, and the use of whole-tone scales in transitional melodies are all characteristics that would be associated with French writing of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Saint-Saëns sticks to a traditional sonata form in this *Allegro*, but with a wonderfully varied, hushed recapitulation that lends haunting mystery to the cello's pizzicato sound.

The second movement recalls church music, with the cello and piano passing off an easy going, staccato bassline that supports a heavenly chorale. This is no accident; Saint-Saëns based this *Andante* on music he improvised at the organ, seeing the sonata as a chance to "reproduce the text of what I had extemporized." Many have commented on the similarities between the tune of this chorale and the chorus that closes Act I of Giacomo Meyerbeer's opera *L'Africaine*, where the lead character open heartedly begs for salvation and forgiveness after he is arrested. Whether or not the allusion was intended by Saint-Saëns, it is evocative to think of this movement as a series of prayers, first hopeful, then more desperate, and then full of faith and expectation once again.

When the sonata had its public premiere, the composer was not pleased with the finale he had written; apparently, he thought it was "not up to scratch" and in need of revision. This dissatisfaction may have related to the negative response to the movement shared by Clemence Saint-Saëns, the composer's mother, who according to fellow composer Charles-Marie Widor thought the original finale was "worthless". The revised *Allegro moderato*, completed by the end of December, 1872, includes a particularly virtuosic, perpetual-motion piano part. Toward the end, there is an apparent turn from the dominating, tense world of C minor to a resolution on a lyrical theme in a brighter key. But Saint-Saëns decides to revert to stormy, minor fortissimos to close out the work, reinforcing with each accented chord the seriousness that he and those of the Société Nationale wished to bring into French music.

## INTERMISSION

### *Ephemeral Objects for cello and piano (2019)*

*Pierre Jalbert (1967- )*

- I. Sustained, mysterious; Lively**
- II. Placid, lyrical**
- III. Playful and dramatic**
- IV. Freely, folk-like, like a medieval fiddle**
- V. Mysterious, other-worldly**
- VI. Timeless**
- VII. Driving**

*Ephemeral Objects*, a duo for cello and piano, contains seven contrasting movements. Each movement can stand on its own, or several can be grouped together to form a smaller set, or the entire set can be performed to form a larger work [the version we are hearing in Vancouver]. Each brief movement represents a different aspect of my musical language. The first movement pairs timeless, suspended music with more rhythmically aggressive music. The second movement is slow and lyrical, with long song-like lines in the cello. The third movement is a wild, rhythmic scherzo of sorts. The fourth movement is influenced by French-Canadian folk song. The fifth movement is more experimental in nature and makes use of the timbral possibilities of the instruments (including playing inside the piano). The sixth movement is based on Gregorian chant, and the last movement is a pulse-oriented, bravura-style finale to the work.

— © Pierre Jalbert, composer

### *Sonata in g minor for Cello and Piano, op. 65 (1845–1846)*

*Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)*

- Allegro moderato**
- Scherzo: Allegro con brio**
- Largo**
- Finale: Allegro**

Composed between 1845 and 1846, Chopin's Cello Sonata represents an extraordinary effort on the part of a composer who, only a few years from the end of his life, determined to master a genre he had never before attempted. Only five chamber works by Chopin exist; three of them are for cello and piano. That the cello was Chopin's favorite instrument after the piano is not in doubt for me! In poor health and the middle of an anguished breakup with George Sand, Chopin found it within himself to labor extensively on this work, making numerous sketches and revisions. "...with my cello sonata I am now contented, now discontented." The result is a grand sonata on the scale of Chopin's most serious and significant works. A big, virtuosic cello part is counterbalanced by masterful piano writing in which Chopin never compromises his unique style. All cellists owe a debt of gratitude to Auguste Franchomme (1808–1884), Chopin's close friend during his later years, for whom the sonata was written.

#### ***I. Allegro moderato***

A melancholy piano solo foreshadows a long and complex story. A fragment of the main theme is introduced, supported by rich and intense harmonies, and gives way to an impressionistic flourish. The cello, interrupting, states the theme in its entirety, and both instruments proceed together through melodic episodes, culminating in a heroic transformation of the theme. The excitement quickly dissipates to allow for the appearance of the second subject, beautifully still and thoughtful, only ten notes long. As if sacred, this theme is not further developed and is heard again only in its original form. Chopin continues rhapsodically, bringing in new melodies in both the cello and piano, until a spectacular climax is reached in which

the two instruments play a rapid scale in opposite directions. The exposition is repeated, and the development is again introduced by a piano solo. A standard recapitulation is abandoned in favor of a sudden reappearance of the magical second subject. The movement concludes in an appropriately stormy fashion.

## ***II. Scherzo: Allegro con brio***

The second movement's energetic theme uses repeated notes in rapid succession, giving it a hammering momentum, especially when played by the piano. This scherzo is almost quirky, alternating lyrical phrases with thunderous chords and virtuosic flourishes. In the *cantabile* trio, the cello is given the upper hand the whole way, spinning out a seamless melody over plangent harmonies reminiscent of a folk song.

## ***III. Largo***

The heart of the work is indeed the gorgeous *Largo*, as tranquil and brief as its neighbors are troubled and lengthy. Words cannot adequately describe this little gem, the only really extended peaceful experience in the sonata.

## ***IV. Finale: Allegro***

The finale is again in a minor key, its main theme dramatic and complex. There is something of a martial air about the first and second subjects, which both utilize dotted rhythms. But seriousness soon turns to fun as the dotted rhythms, repeated over and over, are turned into a rollicking rollercoaster ride. The main theme then reappears, but Chopin has worked it into a canon, and a highly contrapuntal episode creates the development section. The second subject returns, curiously drained of its energy by the disappearance of the dotted rhythms. The rollercoaster leads us to an even faster coda, full of brilliant writing for both instruments. Chopin's great work ends triumphantly, its penultimate chord somehow reminding us of the magnitude of the experience.

— © David Finckel

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**Next concerts - both at the Vancouver Playhouse, 600 Hamilton Street, Vancouver, BC**

### **Takács Quartet (Hungary/USA)**

**Tuesday, February 24, 2026 – 7:30 pm**

Beethoven: String Quartet in G Major, Opus 18 No. 2

Beethoven: String Quartet No. 10 in E-flat Major, Opus 74 "Harp"

Beethoven: String Quartet No. 14 in C-sharp Minor, Opus 131

### **Mandelring Quartett (Germany)**

**Sunday, March 15, 2026 – 3:00 pm**

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, String Quartet in D Major, Op. 44 No. 1

Viktor Ullmann, String Quartet Nr. 3

Ludwig van Beethoven, String Quartet No. 7 in F Major, Op. 59 No. 1 "Razumovsky"

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