

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Albert Combrink takes us *Inside the Concert* with notes on the programme

Introduction

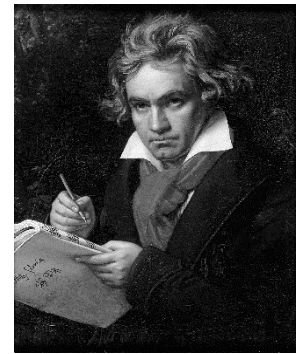
Benedict Kloeckner presents a recital on his 1680 cello by Francesco Rugeri, encompassing an enormous emotional range. It comprises two major Cello Sonatas, beginning with the happy and lyrical 3rd Sonata of Beethoven - still believing that the recent French Revolution was going to fix the world - and ending with the dramatic Grieg Sonata - a triumphant response to an intense period of writer's block and depression. In between we have the exuberance of South African composer Ndodana-Breen's Solo *Soweto Cello Riffs*, the pomp and virtuosity of Dvořák's *Polonaise* and a moment of deep meditation and reflection with *Fratres* by Estonian Arvo Pärt.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Cello Sonata No. 3 in A major, Op. 69

1. Allegro ma non tanto (*Fast, but not too much*)
2. Scherzo: Allegro molto (*Very fast*)
3. Adagio Cantabile – Allegro Vivace (*Slow in a singing style – Fast and Lively*)

Beethoven, the composer, emerges from the closing door of the classical era - taught by an aging Haydn, no less, and of whom Mozart exclaimed: "Mark that young man; he will make himself a name in the world!" - and departs, on the other side of his life, having walked right up to the door of Romanticism, opening it up just enough for others to see the future, but not quite passing through the door himself.



In his third Cello Sonata of 1808, we encounter Beethoven about one-third through the journey between those two doors. The first two Cello Sonatas still followed the classical model of a dominant piano-part with cello in a slightly subservient role, but Beethoven had a relentless developmental instinct, and consciously or subconsciously added layers of emotional, technical or stylistic complexity to each of his new works, chronologically, in each genre. The Third Sonata stands as the sole Middle-Period Beethoven work for the cello.

1. When the first notes of the sonata start gently and in pleasant spirits, on unaccompanied solo cello, it might feel intimate and good-humoured. However, it struck Beethoven's audience as daringly modern and provocative, making a strong statement about the cello's role in the upcoming proceedings. The spirit of improvisation is invoked in the opening cadenzas, but soon a tightly controlled but robust, sprawling movement follows, with more than a hint of "Gypsy" rhythms which Beethoven had encountered from Austro-Hungarian street musicians he heard in Vienna.
2. Rhythmic gymnastics set the challenge for the second movement, with more gypsy inspired material that would later resurface in the Triple Concerto. Like the "hocket" effect of the *Eroica Symphony*, the syncopations make for an intellectual challenge for the listener, unsettling the audience before a more lyrical Trio section gives some respite from the Scherzo-rhythm. Beethoven truncates the movement by avoiding traditional repeat-points as was customary before. The movement sheds notes and texture, thinning itself out, until it dies in a few plucked notes: a faint memory of itself.
3. A song of great beauty and simplicity opens the last movement, but Beethoven seems content with creating a short, introductory emotional rest-point in the sonata, before embarking on a carefree holiday chasing butterflies down the Rhine. The two instruments chase each other up and down the scales and arpeggios but never compete with each other. The sheer ebullience of the work belies its virtuosity and tight classical structure.

This cello sonata was dedicated to a student and close friend, Baron Gleichenstein. Gleichenstein, eight years Beethoven's junior, was the only one of Beethoven's noble correspondents that he addressed familiarly. When he sent Gleichenstein a printed copy of the sonata, he inscribed it "Inter lacrimas et luctum" ("Between tears and sorrow"): by the end of the year the walls of Vienna would collapse under the inexorable might of Napoleon's invading army, just as it crushed Beethoven's faith in French Revolutionary Principles (a united democratic world where all humans were equal), causing him to tear up the dedication page to Napoleon in his Third Symphony.

Bongani Ndodana – Breen (1975) **Soweto Cello Riffs**



Soweto Cello Riffs is a vibrant short work for solo cello based on riffs from Afropop and South African township jazz.

Cellist Benedict Kloeckner commissioned and released a recording of *Soweto Cello Riffs* by Bongani Ndodana-Breen on his new album, published on the Brilliant Classics label. In this three-disc set he tackles the sacred summit of the solo cello repertoire - the Bach Solo Cello Suites - rightly pointing out that the lack of original manuscripts for the Six Suites leaves them especially open to individual interpretation. Yet he takes a further step in making this recording his own, interpolating between each of the suites, some miniature compositions for solo cello that he commissioned from composers on six different continents under the motto "Sounds of Light", thereby placing Bach's Western European masterworks in dialogue with music from across the globe in our own time.

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) **Polonaise for Cello and Piano in A major, B94**

The *Polonaise* (French for "Polish", but with a feminine adjective) is a stately Polish processional dance, performed by couples who walk around the dance hall; the music is in triple meter and moderate tempo. Much like the "Prelude" grew from an introductory piece to a larger suite into a larger, free-standing piece, the "Chodzony" was an introductory dance at a ball or social event, which grew in popularity across Europe to the point where its original name is no longer used and the "Polonaise" has become a free-standing concert-work implying virtuosic opportunity for display, flair and stepping out in one's finery.



The piece was written quite quickly for practical reasons: at a concert in Turnov in 1879, Dvořák was presenting the premiere of his *Piano Trio in G Minor*. For the second half, the concert organiser wanted each member of the trio to perform a solo piece, resulting in this delightful work dedicated to cellist Alois Neruda.

Arvo Pärt (1935) **Fratres**

"In troubled times, music can help." - Arvo Pärt

Known for his serene, slow-moving music, the 88-year-old Estonian composer has attracted a legion of fans far beyond classical borderlines who love his sound-world: from complex twelve-tone writing after World War 2, he gradually turned to his Estonian roots, exploring Orthodox choral music, bells and echoes, and defined his style as "Tintinnabuli" – the scaling down of sound to its minimum elements of step-wise melody, basic triads outlining simple 3-note harmonies, cast in a slow and meditative tempo.

The composer writes: "Tintinnabulation is an area I sometimes wander into when I am searching for answers – in my life, my music, my work. In my dark hours, I have the certain feeling that everything outside this one thing has no meaning. The complex and many-faceted only confuses me, and I must search for

unity. What is it, this one thing, and how do I find my way to it? Traces of this perfect thing appear in many guises – and everything that is unimportant falls away. Tintinnabulation is like this. . . . The three notes of a triad are like bells. And that is why I call it tintinnabulation.”

Fratres (Brethren) was composed in 1977 ending a profound period of personal, artistic and spiritual crisis that had begun in the 1960s. Spiritually, it reflects his re-engagement with the mystical and contemplative rituals of the Russian Orthodox Church. The original score designates no specific instruments. This piece allows many different settings because it is not bound to a specific *klangfarbe* (tone colour).

The composer writes: “The highest virtue of music, for me, lies outside of its mere sound. The particular timbre of an instrument is part of the music, but it is not the most important element. If it were, I would be surrendering to the essence of the music. Music must exist of itself ... two, three notes ... the essence must be there, independent of the instruments.”

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

Cello Sonata in A minor, Op.36

1. *Allegro agitato (fast and agitated)*
2. *Andante molto tranquillo (At a walking pace and very tranquil)*
3. *Allegro molto e marcato (Very fast with accents)*

Edvard Grieg was Norway’s most popular and famous composer. His *A Minor Piano Concerto* remains an international virtuoso-staple to this day, *Peer Gynt* and *the Holberg Suite* are always on compilation discs, and the *Lyric Pieces* are study and concert material for pianists at every level from Grade 1 to competition winner. Yet, in the winter of 1883, Grieg was burnt out, depressed, and desperate to reach the creative and reputational heights that he had experienced earlier in his career. A second piano concerto was abandoned, for sounding too much like the first, and yet the material gave him emotional comfort and he played and extemporised on it again and again as if attempting to force a birth of something new.

The result was the tempestuous and dramatic Cello Sonata. To write it off as the “Ugly Sister of the Cinderella of the Piano Concerto in A Minor” – as many commentators have done – is to do the work a disservice. He redefines Sonata-Form, using structural repetitions of ideas rather than conventional “development” of the material.

1. Measured tremolandos in the fast piano introduction create a stormy sea on which the cello bobs and darts like a hapless sailor, caught in an ocean which threatens to engulf them at any moment. The skies suddenly clear for a *Molto Tranquillo* section that outlines the skyward-reaching lines of the melodies from the Piano Concerto. But it is the Cello that is allowed the lead, and even has a cadenza. Drama and lyricism, storm and calm, form the conversational polar-points of the movement, which builds to a concerto-like end.
2. A simple melody of mostly repeated notes is coloured in a text-book array of harmonic devices. Unlike perhaps Beethoven or Chopin, Grieg is not interested in a lyric slow movement in one overarching atmosphere – violent outbursts become more painful and intense until the opening theme appears in a climax worthy of Rachmaninoff, and in fact very reminiscent of the latter’s own Cello Sonata slow movement climax.
3. A ghostly solo-cello soon gives way to a “Halling”, a vigorous Norwegian folk dance for couples. The name derives from Hallingdal, a valley in southern Norway. Two or three males may dance in rivalry, performing difficult leaps, kicks, and other acrobatic stunts to demonstrate vigour and virility. The melody inverts the slow-movement theme and creates music that builds repeatedly to a series of dramatic climaxes. The opening ghost appears once more in its solo cello form before it returns in the end, transformed into a heroic song of victory.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS:

Benedict Klöckner, born in 1989, is one of the outstanding artists of his generation. He has won numerous competitions and awards, most recently the OPUS Klassik 2021.

He performs worldwide as a soloist with renowned orchestras such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra London, the Deutsche Radiophilharmonie, the Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, the NDR Radiophilharmonie, the MDR-Sinfonieorchester, the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie, the Kremerata Baltica, the Camerata Oslo and the Munich Chamber Orchestra and works with renowned conductors such as Daniel Barenboim, Christoph Eschenbach, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Cristian Măcelaru, Ingo Metzmacher, Michael Sanderling, Clemens Schuldt, Heinrich Schiff and Sir Simon Rattle.

He has appeared in concert halls such as the Berlin Philharmonie, Carnegie Hall New York, Kennedy Center Washington, Symphony Hall Chicago, Arts Center Seoul, Suntory Hall Tokyo, Musikverein Vienna, Gewandhaus Leipzig, Tonhalle Zurich, Gasteig in Munich, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Rudolfinum Prague, Athenaeum Bucharest and the Wigmore Hall London.

In the 2022/2023 season he performed all 6 Bach Suites at the Berlin Philharmonie and the Alte Oper Frankfurt.

In the 2023/2024 season he will also make his debut at the Philharmonie Paris and the Kölner Philharmonie and return to Kennedy Center Washington, Festspielhaus Baden- Baden and several times to Philharmonie Berlin. Among others, he will be also on Europe tour with the Romanian Chamber Orchestra conducted by Cristian Măcelaru and give his debut with the Armenian National Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Fedoseyev.

Benedict Kloeckner is a welcome guest at festivals all over the world.

His chamber music partners have included Emanuel Ax, Lisa Batiashvili, Yuri Bashmet, Christoph Eschenbach, Vilde Frang, Gidon Kremer, Anne Sophie Mutter and Sir András Schiff.

Benedict Kloeckner regularly works with the great composers of our time. In 2018 he performed the world premiere of Wolfgang Rihm's Double Concerto for 2 Cellos and Strings. At the Seoul Arts Center, he premiered Eun Hwa Cho's Cello Concerto together with the Korean Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Christoph Poppen. With the Mozarteum Orchestra under Peter Tilling, he also gave the Austrian premiere of Dai Fujikura's Cello Concerto in Salzburg.

His CD recordings have been highly praised by the international press and won prizes such as the OPUS Klassik award and the Supersonic Award, among others. His recordings were made in collaboration with artists such as Gidon Kremer, the conductors Heinrich Schiff and Michael Sanderling, the pianists Danae Dörken, Anna Fedorova, Yu Kosuge, Mario Häring, Ragna Schirmer und José Gallardo, the violinists Kirill Troussov, Ragnhild Hemsing and the composer Wolfgang Rihm.

Most recently in 2023, he released a CD with Brahms Cello Sonatas with YU Kosuge on Sony. Since 2014, Benedict Kloeckner has been also the founder and artistic director of the "International Music Festival Koblenz" IMUKO.

Benedict Kloeckner received his artistic education from Martin Ostertag at the Karlsruhe University of Music and from Frans Helmerson and Gary Hoffman at the Kronberg Academy, made possible by the Angela Winkler Scholarship. He received important impulses and valuable support for his artistic development from Gidon Kremer, Steven Isserlis, Michael Sanderling and Sir András Schiff.

He gives masterclasses around the world and taught at the Hochschule für Musik Karlsruhe. Benedict Kloeckner plays the "Ex Maurice Gendron" cello by Francesco Ruggeri (1680), a generous loan.

Mr Kloeckner's appearance is made possible by exclusive arrangement with Primavera Consulting LLC.

Acknowledged as one of South Africa's leading concert pianists and musicians, **François du Toit** is an Associate Professor of Piano and Head of Practical Studies at the University of Cape Town. He received tuition in South Africa with Meryll Preston and Laura Searle and with Arie Vardi and Bernd Goetzke in Germany.

During his period of study, he distinguished himself in several international competitions, taking top prizes in Hannover, Rotterdam and Athens.

He has over 40 concertos in his repertoire, ranging from Bach to Scharwenka and has also performed the concerto premieres of South African composers, Hendrik Hofmeyr and Adrian More, collaborating with conductors including Bernhard Gueller, Omri Hadari, Alun Francis, Thomas Sanderling, Piero Gambo, Arjan Tien and Alexander Lazarev.

François recorded all five Beethoven piano concertos with the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Victor Yampolsky. In 2017 he received the Creative Works Award from UCT.