THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC
presents

Kacy Clopton

Cello

Ralitza Patcheva

Piano

JULY 7, 2018. 8 PM

GILDENHORN HALL

THE CLARICE

PROGRAM

Suite for Cello No. 1, Op. 72 *(1964)* Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Canto primo
I. Fuga
II. Lamento
Canto secondo
III. Serenata
IV. Marcia
Canto terzo
V. Bordone
VI. Moto perpetuo e canto quatro

Sonata for Cello and Piano in D minor, H 125 *(1913-1917)* Frank Bridge (1879-1941)

I. Allegro ben moderato
II. Adagio ma non troppo – Molto allegro agitato

~ Intermission ~

Sonata for Cello and Piano in D minor *(1915)* Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

I. Prologue: Lent, sostenuto e molto risoluto
II. Sérénade: Modérément animé
III. Final: Animé, léger et nerveux

Sonata in C for Cello and Piano, op. 65 *(1961)* Benjamin Britten

I. Dialogo
II. Scherzo - pizzicato
III. Elegia
IV. Marcia
V. Moto perpetuo

Benjamin Britten's **Suite for Cello No. 1, op. 72** is the first in a series of three suites he composed for solo cello, all of which were dedicated to and specifically written for Mstislav Rostropovich. Having completed it in December of 1964, Britten presented the piece to his friend and colleague, Rostropovich, as a Christmas present, and it was premiered at the Aldeburgh Festival in Snape Maltings, England on June 27, 1965. This suite is to be performed completely *attacca* with no pauses between the nine movements. We begin with a *Canto primo* or "first song" which serves as a brightly declamatory and sweeping introduction of the three *canti* to follow. These intermittent *canto* movements act as thematic landmarks, always resembling each other but morphing and developing as we traverse the six suite movements. Modeled after the dances commonly found in baroque solo instrumental suites, the six main movements evoke a variety of cultural dances, including a German *Fuga*, a Spanish *Serenata*, an Italian *Marcia*, and an Indonesian/Balinese-inspired *Bordone*. The *Fuga* emerges from the *Canto primo*, expertly designed in its display of the instrument and its four open strings: A-D-G-C. Heavily influenced by Bach's solo cello suites in form and timbre, Britten utilizes each of these four open strings throughout the composition, perhaps as both an homage to the cello's resonance itself, and also as a tool which enable the performer to accompany oneself.

Following the idiomatically clever *Fuga* comes a *Lamento*, which conjures eventual resignation amidst terraced pangs of sorrow; Britten marks *piangendo*, an uncommon Italian marking which translates as "crying". This lament bleeds into the brief *Canto secondo*, evoking a surrender as if to the sea's tranquil and inexorable depths. We gently move into the *Serenata* in which the performer briefly transforms into a guitarist, strumming a passionate flamenco accompaniment. Much like his mentor, Frank Bridge, Britten was a fervent pacifist, which is perhaps presented through his frequent use of march movements. This particular *Marcia* begins with the sound of distant pipes and drums through the use of harmonics and *col legno* (in which the string is percussively struck with only the wood of the bow). It is as if we embark upon this military march from a seemingly jocular place, as imminent danger draws closer and closer. Finally, the dramatic horror reaches an apex in the middle of this movement, from which we can only retreat back into the pipes and drums, eventually numb with loss and resulting in a final funerial bugle call. The *Canto terzo* which follows displays a darker tumultuous struggle within. Born of some primordial ooze, this movement centers around the tritone (the interval of maximum tension) and we finally surface, exhaustedly resolved on the open D string. This open D string now functions as the drone for the *Bordone*. Trading two conversational voices above and below this drone, this ancient-sounding movement of intimate discourse appears to reflect Britten's time traveling in the Far East, studying musical traditions of Japan, India, Indonesia and Bali. Finally, the devilish *Moto Perpetuo e Canto Quarto* explodes out of this meditative stasis in a flurry of chromaticism spanning the range of the instrument, no doubt a nod to the composition's virtuosic dedicatee.

Out of this volcanic turmoil, the luminous voice of the *Canto primo* bursts forth through the thicket of presto sixteenth note duplets. A dualistic struggle for prominence commences between the fury of the *Moto Perpetuo* and the optimism of the *Canto.* These two voices blur and ultimately unite in a blazing finish. This First Suite in particular features nearly every possible extended string technique known in the mid-twentieth century and still proves to be extremely challenging for its performer. While these suites were still somewhat of a rarity in programming twenty years ago, they are quickly and thankfully becoming a staple ingredient of the modern cellist's musical repertoire. Rostropovich recorded this Suite No. 1 in 1970.

Frank Bridge composed his **Sonata for Cello and Piano in D minor** between the years of 1913 and 1917. The sonata was premiered in 1917 by Felix Salmond and William Murdoch in London's Wigmore Hall. We hear elements of Fauré, Brahms, and Rachmaninoff, among others, in this vividly pastoral and intoxicating work. The first movement is structured in typical sonata form, marked *Allegro ben moderato,* and opens with the cello embodying a restless and melancholy theme stretched across the landscape of oscillating figures in the piano. A haunting second theme soon appears, in which Bridge continues to employ Brahmsian triplet-duple tension as the rhythmic interplay grows more intricate and the melodies more impassioned. After an elongated and exalted development of these initial themes, the opening material recurs from which a coda blossoms in a briefly triumphant D major celebration only to recoil quickly into the submission. In the final *tranquillo e meno mosso* this movement comes to rest as the opening theme once again melts back into D minor, concluding just as we began.

According to Antonia Butler, a cellist who gave the first performance of the work in France in 1928, Bridge was in utter despair over the futility of the First World War and the state of the world; and would "walk round Kensington in the early hours of the morning unable to get any rest or sleep". It was at this time that the idea of the slow movement came to him, which he wrote during the war. This contemplative and harmonically lush *Adagio ma non troppo* is an intimate and sensuously sung duo between the two instruments. Just when one believes the resolution of a harmony is finally realized, Bridge shifts the foundation once more, creating a sense of floating dreamily through each phrase. A brief *Andante con moto* gently nudges the Adagio forward with a lilting and tender tune in 9/8 meter. The motor of the *Molto allegro e agitato* breaks the spell and churns forth, in what is often referred to as the third movement of the sonata. This bustling texture travels through enharmonic tonicization and chromaticism to illustrate its intrinsic conflict with little comfort of resolution. However, left to its own devices for a brief moment, the cello issues an invitation to the piano to return home to a version of the opening exquisite beauty of the *Adagio ma non troppo,* this time featuring the triplets of the *Andante.*

Bridge seems to possess an affinity for bringing all his themes together rhapsodically throughout each section of this movement, for we now journey back to the first movement's declamatory motives. All of the internal struggle comes to a frenzied and anguished climax in an expansive and ever-climbing melodic line in the cello, juxtaposed with windy and swirling nontuplets in the piano. Now exhausted and emotionally drained, the rocking comfort of the *Andante* returns to soothe the listener, perhaps reflective of the illusory dream-world we experienced at the opening of the second movement. The final coda, returns to the opening theme of the piece now in triumphant D major, bringing the sonata to a reassuring and vigorous conclusion. The Great War was reported to be a shattering experience for Bridge, and his music changed dramatically both during and after this Sonata was completed. One of the most exquisitely beautiful pieces in the cello and piano repertoire, Bridge's Sonata embodies the height of European romanticism of the time with an unmistakable dash of impressionistic flare added as well. Britten exemplifies a deep understanding of this pedagogical heritage. Britten and Rostropovich recorded Bridge's Sonata together in 1968.

Another **Sonata in D minor for Cello and Piano** was written at approximately the same time by celebrated French composer, Claude Debussy. Completed in 1915, and a mere eleven minutes in length, this three-movement work is packed to the brim with exciting, evocative, and electric colors and textures. This piece was composed as one of a cycle of six sonatas Debussy intended to publish. As it happens, he was only able to complete three sonatas before he passed away in 1918: one for flute, viola and harp, one for violin and piano, and one for cello and piano. Demoralized by the carnage of World War I and fighting his own battle against cancer, Claude Debussy found himself cruelly faced with his own mortality. In a letter to the conductor Bernardo Molinari from October 6, 1915 he writes, "I spent nearly a year unable to write music...after that I've almost had to re-learn it. It was like a rediscovery and it seemed to me more beautiful than ever!"

Almost classical in shape, it still came as a major surprise even to Debussy that the Cello Sonata, while utilizing a rich palette of timbres and achieving exquisite subtlety and technical virtuosity, structurally relied mostly on sonata form. The *Prologue*, initiated by an introductory fanfare in the piano, relies on a specific melodic-rhythmic figure that originates in the music of the French Baroque. Subsequently, the cello introduces a theme that takes its character from a Baroque operatic lament and introduces a theme that alternates between the minor and major tonalities. In a long musical arc, the fanfare and lamenting themes are repeated, with the fanfare providing the satisfactory conclusion. The *Sérénade* movement evokes the imitations of a singing puppet, accompanied by the stylized strumming of a guitar. This movement flows seamlessly without pause into the *Final*, that offers an inexhaustible array of instrumental effects while dancing between

D major and D minor sonorities yet again in a sizzling conclusion. The sonata for cello and piano is one of Debussy's most forward-looking and most aggressively experimental works. The rhythmic language is full of surprising interjections, short bursts of accented notes, and frequent sudden changes of tempo, indicative of a written-out improvisation at times. And the harmonic language veers far away from tonality for long stretches, leaning heavily instead into modal and pentatonic scales. Special effects in the cello writing—harsh pizzicato, glassy ponticello and floating flautandi in higher registers – assert a composition of startling modernist originality. Britten and Rostropovich recorded Debussy's Sonata in 1968.

The final work on tonight's program is Benjamin Britten's **Sonata in C for Cello and Piano, op. 65**. Upon seeing Rostropovich perform live for the first time on September 21, 1960 at a concert at the Royal Festival Hall in London, Britten became an immediate and ardent admirer of the famous cellist. And Rostropovich, already established as an obsessive commissioner of new works, quickly pleaded with Britten to write him a piece for cello. The composer consented, and a year later (1961) produced the Cello Sonata. It was premiered in Aldeburgh, England in July of 1961. As their friendship deepened, this would mark the beginning of an era. It became Britten's first of six major works written for Rostropovich over the course of the next fifteen years. Britten follows a four-movement classical sonata blueprint quite closely with the slight deviation of the insertion of an extra movement (the Marcia).

The Sonata opens with a clearly conversational *Dialogo*, in which the cello offers fractured musings of what would otherwise flesh out to a fully realized melodic line. Instead Britten initiates a playful and sensitive interaction between the two voices featuring quick and successive swells. The character abruptly shifts to more abrasive surges of major seventh/minor second intervals, which peter out into gently exploratory parallel thirds in contrary motion – some sliding down, others drifting upwards in harmonics, only to now shift into a lively 4/4 meter. The cello and piano switch roles once more and through the lolling recapitulation, the movement comes to a quiet close. The second movement, *Scherzo-pizzicato,* is entirely as the title indicates: a plucky and somewhat percussive joke. Britten's use of sharp wit and humorous intervallic playfulness is continued cleverly in this movement. In the *Elegia* the parallel thirds return, now chromatically modified, to form a natural ebb and flow to the lilting and meditative melancholy. The climactic mid-section leads us into emotional turmoil with anguished cries and recedes into a Bridge-inspired wistfulness as the primary theme concludes this elegy. The grotesquely bitonal *Marcia* takes off in a buzzing haste, introducing regular use of quintuplets to propel itself forward. Teasing rhythms in the piano invite mocking harmonics in the cello. The finale, *Moto perpetuo,* is cast in a kind of abstract rondo form whose *saltando* (bouncing spiccato) cello articulations are chased around a chromatic wilderness by the piano until, at last, C major appears in a manically triumphant conclusion. Britten and Rostropovich recorded this Sonata in C together in 1970.

This recital is being presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Musical Arts. Kacy Clopton is a student of Dr. Eric Kutz.

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presents

Kacy Clopton

Cello

Ralitza Patcheva

Piano

SEPTEMBER 5, 2018. 8 PM

ULRICH HALL

THE CLARICE

PROGRAM

Suite for Cello No. 2, Op. 80 *(1967)*
Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

I. Declamato: *Largo*
II. Fuga: *Andante*
III. Scherzo: *Allegro molto*
IV. Andante lento
V. Ciaccona: *Allegro*

Fünf Stücke im Volkston, op. 102 *(1849)*
Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

I. Mit Humor ‘Vanitas vanitatum’
II. Langsam
III. Nicht schnell, mit viel Ton zu spielen
IV. Nicht zu rasch
V. Stark und markiert

~ Intermission ~

Pohádka *(1912, rev. 1924)*
Leoš Janáček
(1854-1928)

I. Con moto – Andante
II. Con moto – Adagio
III. Allegro

Sonata in A minor “Arpeggione” for Cello and Piano, D. 821
(comp. 1824, arr. for cello and piano in 1871)
Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

I. Allegro moderato
II. Adagio
III. Allegretto

Like its predecessor, **Benjamin Britten's Second Suite, op. 80** (1967) was inspired both by J.S. Bach's solo cello suites and the artistry of Mstislav Rostropovich, the piece's repeat dedicatee. These suites blend Baroque dance forms with Britten's modern sensibility. The first two movements, a Declamato and a fugue, are similar in structure to a Bach prelude and fugue. The Declamato has an improvised, rhapsodic feel, sounding like an impassioned speech; quiet, pleading passages are juxtaposed with bold and theatrical gestures. As Shostakovich and Britten were developing a meaningful friendship at this time – thanks to their mutual colleague and friend, Rostropovich – it seems that in this movement Britten pays rhythmic and gestural homage to the opening theme of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony. The slow, halting, almost entirely pianissimo Fuga follows. Britten makes extensive use of the style brisé here, which allows the composer to suggest, with melodic lines shifting between high and low pitch levels, counterpoint that cannot easily be expressed on a string instrument. Since the fugue is so slow, however, the melodic lines can be somewhat difficult to follow, giving the movement a mysterious air. A short Scherzo follows, featuring breakneck melodic motion occasionally interjected by a four-note motive that climbs upwards and is interrupted abruptly mid-flight – as if covering one's mouth in the midst of an excited outpouring. The whole movement seems to poke fun at its self-interrupted babbling, sometimes blustery, and occasionally coy or playful.

Britten makes use of a technique (which he previously employed in the Bordone movement of the First Suite) in the subsequent Andante lento, having the performer play a sustained melody on one string while plucking out the accompaniment on another. The winding, sad melody goes through a few variations, including one played entirely pizzicato, before ending up about where it started. It is worth mentioning that this fourth movement curiously lacks a Latin title, unlike its companions; perhaps Britten preferred to leave this haunting and emotional utterance a bit more to the imagination in its overarching sentiment. The final Ciaccona, a favorite form of both Bach and Britten, carries the most weight of the movements; it is by far the longest. The Ciaccona sounds more like a Baroque movement than any other, as it adheres relatively closely to proper chaconne form, heavily featured in Bach's violin partitas. The music moves quickly between emotional extremes, at one moment robust and joyous, at another tender and slower, but retains a forward momentum until the final exclamation. Exemplified by this last utterance in the finale, there is a somewhat humorous, even cheeky, thread which runs through much of this suite, as if Britten is purposefully writing clever little jokes for his friend, Rostropovich, sharing an idea specific to their personal musical language. Much like Britten's first cello suite, this second suite is a highly creative and displays the composer's characteristic inventiveness and fluency – perhaps with a slightly lighter flare than its siblings, the First and Third Suites – but no less evocative or artful in its creation.

Robert Schumann composed the ***Fünf Stücke im Volkston,*** or Five Pieces in Folk Style, in 1849 originally for cello and piano, and later published an alternative scoring for violin and piano. As a young man, Schumann took cello lessons; although it was not until much later in his career, his connection to the voice of the cello materializes as especially significant, indicated by his Cello Concerto, op. 129 and this set of Five Pieces, op. 102. In late 1832, Schumann realized that he had strained his right hand with his vigorous experiments at the piano and that he could no longer envision a career as a pianist. In light of this physical limitation, he again took up the cello, which, according to Schumann, "requires [more of] the left hand". It is likely that through this unique set of five miniature folk tales Schumann was attempting to establish his credentials (as in several of his vocal works) as a "man of the people". The *Fünf Stücke* were premiered in Leipzig by his wife, Clara Schumann, a gifted pianist herself, and its dedicatee, cellist Andreas Grabau on June 8, 1850, which happened to be Schumann's 40th birthday. His desire to compose in a more "popular" vernacular emerges not only in the title *"Im Volkston"* meaning "in a popular tone", but also through his utilization of simpler rhythmic and harmonic figures, which commonly emulate an element of folk music. There is a distinct sense that each little piece is telling a story, unpretentious and songful. Within the folk style, these pieces are not meant to be performed as a loud display of virtuosity; rather it is through the vibrant expression of an imaginative narrative which captures us.

The first piece is titled *'Vanitas vanitatum'* ("all is vanity" or "all is transient") – one of Schumann's favorite sayings. It may have been inspired by a poem by Goethe which tells the story of a drunken, one-legged soldier. A repetitive jocular theme permeates this movement, as we get the sense that the subject of the story knows not of their inconspicuous narrator. The second piece, set in a soothing F major, clearly resembles a lullaby, gently rocking through three- and four-bar phrases in which the simplest of melodies sways peacefully and delicately. A gorgeous countermelody emerges in the cello while the piano echoes the original theme; these lines subsequently trade places, intricately woven and expertly transparent together. The heart of the work lies in the third movement, with its sparse, tragic accompaniment recalling a song from *Dichterliebe:* 'Ich hab' im Traum geweinet' ('In a dream I wept'). Here we encounter an affirming middle section in A major, sandwiched between restless and meandering A minor surroundings. The fourth piece is joyous, carefree – even triumphant, somewhat resembling a patriotic anthem. But we are not in this contented self-satisfaction for long, for the finale is positively fierce. Brahms's E minor cello sonata contains moments of strong resemblance to this dark and restless, triplet-laden final movement.

If each vignette narrates a piece of folklore, then this finale, Stark und Markiert (strongly and marked), certainly tells the tale of a grizzly and stormy character who brings this set to a ferocious and tantalizing conclusion.

The germination of **Janáček's *Pohádka*** was a long one. First composed in three movements in 1910, originally intended to be part of a larger work, it was revised in 1912 to include a tranquil fourth movement. It was revised a second time in 1923, resulting in its final three-movement version which we will perform today. Leoš Janáček demonstrated a sincere admiration of Russia, particularly the music and literature of Russia. He quite often composed music either to Russian text or under the influence of Russian authors, such as Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and Žukovsky. This 'tale' is inspired by Žukovsky's story, *A Tale About Tsar Berendyey*, which tells of a bearded Tsar Berendyey, his son Ivan the Tsarevich, the Immortal Kaschei (Lord of the Underworld), and the wise Tsarievna Maria (Kaschei's daughter). Janáček works out his 'Tale' in three parts; the part of the story represented in *Pohádka* concerns the handsome Prince Ivan (initially conveyed by the cello in a dotted pizzicato motif), who falls in love with the beautiful Princess Maria. The only slight complication to this otherwise ideal match is that her father is none other than Kaschei the Undead, King of the Underworld – perhaps not the ideal father-in-law for a young prince of good prospects. Nor does Kaschei consider Ivan the son-in-law of his dreams. In fact, for convoluted reasons that only an Undead father-in-law could concoct, he feels that he owns Ivan's soul and strongly objects to the match.

The dreamy opening of the first movement, apparently representing the magical lake at which Ivan and Maria meet, leads to a touching love-duet; but after that the urgency increases, culminating in a passage of violent syncopations as Kaschei chases the young lovers on horseback. The second movement also begins with a strong sense of magic. The young lovers have reached safety at the palace of a neighboring Tsar; but alas, all is not well, since this Tsar and Tsarina are rather too taken with young Ivan, fancying him as the perfect match for their own daughter and putting a spell on him, causing him to fall in love with said daughter. Maria reacts just as any normal adolescent girl would under these circumstances: she turns into a blue flower. The good news is that this draws from Janáček (near the opening of the movement) a tenderly beautiful melody. And then, someone has the brilliant inspiration to summon a wise magician, who breaks the spell. One can hear Ivan's recovery in the return of his initial dotted rhythm, now played arco (bowed) rather than pizzicato (plucked). To demonstrate Ivan's return to health, the cello vigorously shoots up to a searing high B-flat. In the last movement, Ivan and Maria have reached the sanctuary of Ivan's parents' palace, where they tell of their love and their adventures, celebrate, and live happily ever after – well as happily as one can live in the key of G-flat major.

In 1824 **Franz Schubert** composed the **"Arpeggione" Sonata** for piano and the recently invented *arpeggione,* a fretted six-stringed instrument (tuned E-A-D-G-B-E) that was essentially a cello and guitar hybrid. The arpeggione was held between the knees, like a cello without an endpin as was typical in the baroque era, was strung and fretted like a guitar, but most importantly, was played with a bow. The instrument somewhat resembles a viola pomposa or a baryton; like those more intimate and delicate instruments, it was not able to sustain itself among its much louder and versatile string predecessors and so the arpeggione was quickly forgotten after ten years. The incorporation of frets was designed to make playing easier and intonation more accurate; Schubert makes full use of the instrument's natural ease in expressing fast runs and arpeggios, its softer, more intimate soundscape, as well as the extra strings which surely resonated sympathetically throughout the E major and A minor sonorities. There were, however, potential flaws of this new instrument. In particular, the difficulty of crossing strings cleanly or playing in a louder dynamic proved troublesome because of the reduced differential angle of the bridge and due to the smaller body of the soft-spoken arpeggione. One would inevitably hit other strings while attempting to play one at a time if too much weight was applied. It is likely that Schubert wrote this sonata largely as a friendly gesture or perhaps it was commissioned by the instrument's inventor, Vincenz Schuster, who premiered it in November 1824. Today, the piece is heard almost exclusively in transcriptions for cello and piano or viola and piano, which were arranged after the posthumous publication circa 1871.

The first movement, in A minor, is imbued throughout with a touching blend of sadness and joy (as was Schubert's own life) – the beauty, sensitivity and lyricism of its first theme contrasting with the carefree nonchalance of the second, culminating in a weary sighing of resignation in the coda. The first movement's ending is punctuated by two resolute and final chords landing us firmly back in A minor, only to transition into E major at the start of the second movement. The theme of this Adagio unfolds gently like a love song and for a while imbues the atmosphere with simple tranquility. However, a sinister undercurrent emerges, threatening the restful beauty of this world and anticipating the icy bleakness of the *Winterreise*. The movement ends, like its predecessor, in an experience close to death, the pace slowing almost to a complete stop before finding the most fragile of lifelines to carry the music through to the finale. The last movement, marked Allegretto, begins as a joyful rondo, the theme predominantly bathed in the sunshine of A Major, interspersed with energetic, lively interludes with traces of folk idioms and demanding considerable virtuosity from both performers. We end with one of the many rising arpeggios that characterizes this work, a positive and satisfying end to a composition that has reflected the gamut of human experience. As with many of Schubert's compositions, the fragility present in this sonata is palpable. With this in mind, the intimate and fleeting nature of his musical language lends itself to this piece in a particularly beautiful light. As performer and listener, one can simply revel in the present moment, for all too soon, it will pass, and we are on to the next.

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Kacy Clopton

Cello

Jessica McKee

Piano

OCTOBER 31, 2018. 5 PM

GILDENHORN HALL

THE CLARICE

PROGRAM

Cello Symphony, op. 68 (1963)
Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

I. Allegro maestoso
II. Presto inquieto
III. Adagio – cadenza
IV. Passacaglia: *Andante allegro*

~ Intermission ~

Tema 'SACHER' (1976)
Benjamin Britten

Four Russian Songs
arr. Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1812-1886)

Under the little apple tree
Autumn
The grey eagle
Kontakion

Suite for Cello No. 3, op. 87 (1971)
Benjamin Britten

I. Introduzione: *Lento*
II. Marcia: *Allegro*
III. Canto: *Con moto*
IV. Barcarola: *Lento*
V. Dialogo: *Allegretto*
VI. Fuga: *Andante espressivo*
VII. Recitativo: *Fantastico*
VIII. Moto perpetuo: *Presto*
IX. Passacaglia: *Lento solemne*

Benjamin Britten's **Cello Symphony, op. 68** was the second work written for Mstislav Rostropovich, following the Sonata in C, op. 65. It was completed in 1963 and was premiered by Rostropovich with the Moscow Philharmonic at the city's Conservatory in March of 1964. It received an enthusiastic reception, particularly from the students in the gallery – so much so that they stomped and slow-clapped until Britten came on stage to conduct the finale again as an encore. He originally titled the piece 'Sinfonia-concertante' and later revised the title to 'Cello Symphony,' to make it clear that this is a piece for double forces: one solo, one orchestral. He intentionally steered away from the typical title of 'Concerto' which implies a much more heavily featured solo line to be set atop more "supportive" music. His musical ideas here seem destined for double discussion – sometimes expressed in conflict, other times a dialogue or, less commonly, in uniting forces. While it is a powerful work to be sure, it can take more than one listening to fully appreciate all that lies beneath its surface. However, even at first hearing, the piece is at once arresting and disturbing. A soothing aspect of this mammoth composition can be found in the challenging terrain traversed as it gradually evolves from darkness to light.

A musical interdependence extends through every aspect of the work. We begin with the typical roles of the solo cello and orchestra reversed, while the melodic material is featured in the orchestra and the chordal harmony is punctuated by the cello. A ground bass line is presented immediately in the lowest voices of the orchestra (contrabassoon, tuba, and double basses), along with a craggy figure which winds this ground bass back to its head. It is this figure precisely that, to me, evokes the image of a giant leviathan grumbling around in the very bottom of the ocean. Massive and pre-historic, this creature rules the deep – its power unmatched. As a balancing force, Britten casts the opposing smaller characters in the very highest instruments of the symphony (oboe, E-flat clarinet, and piccolo). He also does this, in a more practical light, to leave ample room for the mid-range of the solo cello to cut through some of the intensity of the orchestral sound.

This Allegro maestoso first movement, in full sonata form, begins as if already amidst a raucous and dangerous brawl, which quickly boils over into a shrill and searing outpouring from both orchestra and solo cello. Once tempers have cooled a bit, a rocking and bubbling theme oscillates between cello and winds, leading us into the secondary *tranquillo* theme. Here Britten reiterates a similar figure utilized in his *Sonata in C* with a two-note cell commencing a pleading tune which is cut off mid-stream, as if a quiet wailing is repeatedly choked to a halt, never to be fully expressed. The counterpart to this figure takes place in the strings of the orchestra as they gently "pluck" with the bow (in a short *martellato* stroke) a trickling, suspenseful, almost expressionless theme. Soloist and orchestra later trade these roles in the recapitulation. The struggle soon resurges to disrupt this milder mood and one can sense there is still a much larger internal battle raging on, ascending in waves throughout the development. Upon the arrival of the recapitulation, once again Britten exchanges the roles of soloist and orchestra, now with cello joining forces with the leviathan ground bass instruments while the treble factions take on the chords. As the movement nears its conclusion, the hope of a more optimistic moral to the story wanes (besides a final resolution in D major); instead, the beginning is reframed in much quieter, more reflective terms. This time, the soloist strums the opening chords while the leviathan ground bass begrudgingly resigns itself to meander back into the depths of the abyss from whence it came.

The Scherzo second movement, marked *Presto inquieto,* is a restless "unquiet" experience, to be sure; the cello is muted through the entire movement, creating yet another submerged sensation. The movement begins with furtive and irregular spurts of energy from the cello, quickly followed by an orchestra interval (usually a major second), momentarily suspended in time. In a major key under sunnier skies, this movement could pass for a friendly and bright little waltz. But in this muted, scampering, somewhat shadier context, its grotesque and mangled form is tangible. In the irregular scale passages leading to chaotic dissolution near the end of the movement, Britten demonstrates how greatly Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto proved to be an inspiration. As the strings scurry around in the dark with a flutter of measured tremolo, a bolt of lightning streaks across the sky in the form of glissandi false harmonics in the solo cello. This little exchange mirrors the beginning of the Scherzo and resolves as would a dark comedy – that is to say, questionably humorously.

The third and fourth movements are bonded together in form and time, acting as a balance to the first and second movements. The music finds its mirror image in the smallest details. The Adagio, with its soaring tune in thirds and irregular phrase lengths (fives and sevens), reveals a more traditionally Britten-esque composition. The timpani is heavily featured throughout this movement, as it calls to order and announces each new utterance of repeated motifs. A hauntingly beautiful melody emerges in the stratosphere of the cello in conversational and tonal communion with the horn. This melody foreshadows the final Passacaglia, as it is the theme upon which all its variations will be based. The Adagio proves to be the elegiac emotional center of the Symphony, consequentially reflected in an extensive cello cadenza. Said cadenza acts as a developmental bridge that makes one entity of the last two movements. Here the cello mimics the timpani in a kind of drumroll pizzicato interspersed with the original thematic material. As the cadenza carries us into the fourth movement, another similarity to Shostakovich's Cello Concerto is revealed.

In this final Passacaglia, six variations long, the theme initially introduced in the Adagio is celebrated in many facets, more light-heartedly in character than we have yet seen in this Symphony. Thus, the dark intricacy of the first movement and its nervous, shifty scherzo companion are answered by the glowing Adagio and finally the triumph of this fourth movement. A deeply distraught and painful thread has simmered throughout the work, straining to be resolved, and finally it seems to burst through the surface into the unexpected sunlight of the fourth movement. Britten's immense skill with this form of composition is well-featured here, with many versions to enjoy. The coda highlights the orchestra in soaring broad triplets atop the cello's growing arpeggiation of the opening ground bass. In what could be called an "apotheosis" the cello and orchestra join forces in a grandiose and expansive conclusion to this epic journey.

Tema 'Sacher' was Britten's final composition for Rostropovich. It came about as a result of their mutual friendship with the Swiss conductor, Paul Sacher. Sacher founded the Basel Chamber Orchestra and was known for promoting works of new composers, particularly through this ensemble. The links between the three musicians intensified in the early 1970s when both Britten and Sacher were concerned for Rostropovich's plight in the wake of his support for Solzhenitsyn; at this time, it appeared that the cellist might not be permitted to continue to give performances outside of the Soviet Union. After Rostropovich was essentially forced out in 1974, he sought refuge in various homes abroad, particularly in the UK and the US. Sacher celebrated his 70th birthday in 1976, and to mark the occasion Rostropovich asked Britten to write *Tema 'Sacher,'* a theme based on the letters of the conductor's surname which could be used as a basis for a set of variations which would later be contributed by a roster of distinguished contemporary composers. This was not exactly what followed – the other composers concerned wrote independent pieces rather than variations, but all still based on the musical spelling of Sacher's name. This is one of the twelve compositions Rostropovich performed as part of the birthday tribute to Sacher. This set is now quite well-known to cellists. The musical equivalent of S-A-C-H-E-R in pitches: E-flat – A – C – B – E – B-flat. Britten makes clever use of these pitches in a variety of orientations, making particular use of quintuplet rhythmic groupings. While brief, this single page of music is densely packed, typical of Britten's skill at building quite a lot with very little material. Rostropovich premiered this one-minute theme in Zurich on 2 May 1976, just seven months before Britten died.

Britten's **Third Suite for Solo Cello, op. 87** was the final volume in the set of three written for Slava. Though completed in 1971, it did not receive its premiere until 1974 due to Rostropovich's political confinement. In 1970, he publicly defended and housed Solzhenitsyn, the Nobel-prize-winning author, who had been discredited and shunned by the Soviet leadership. This noble decision to publicly support his friend and speak out against the Communist Party resulted in a harsh consequence – Slava was no longer allowed to travel outside of the Soviet Union. So the premiere finally took place in Aldeburgh on 21 December 1974, three years after the piece's completion.

Britten chose to build his Third Suite around four pre-existing Russian themes: three tunes taken from Tchaikovsky's volume of folk-song arrangements, and the Kontakion, the Byzantine chant for the dead taken from the Russian Orthodox liturgy. Rostropovich considered himself Russian Orthodox, and one can appreciate the impact of Britten presenting a score based on this theme as a gift to his dear friend. The Third Suite also serves as a dual tribute to Shostakovich. The second movement, *Marcia,* includes the signature "anapest" rhythm found in Shostakovich's symphonies; the seventh movement, *Recitativo,* features a direct quote from the slow movement of Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto, and in a subtle yet ingenious linking, the final statement of the Kontakion in C minor employs the notes C–B–E-flat–D: a reordered allusion to Shostakovich's famous four-note D–S–C–H signature (D–E-flat–C–B).

Britten goes about weaving the Russian-themed motifs in inconspicuous ways as one might bury treasure throughout the nine movements. The suite as a whole is often obscure, but the Russian tunes break through the clouds every now and again like focused beams of light. The Kontakion and the folk song melodies are not heard in their pure, intact state until the end of the final movement, at which point they occur one at a time in direct succession. This technique, known as "hidden variation", can be thought of as a theme and variations in reverse.

Throughout Britten's life and work several consistent themes reappear. Operas like *Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd*, and *Death in Venice* idealize youthful innocence and mourn the corrupting effects of such adult trappings as war, jealousy, and intolerance. In this suite, nostalgia for the past, affection for its Russian dedicatees, and perhaps a meditation on death are revealed in multiple facets. A distant, primal chant appears as we encounter something sacred in the *Introduzione,* punctuated by bells or drums in the C string pizzicato. Next, we encounter a bit of Shostakovich's symphonic snare drum figures as conflict gradually emerges and intensifies in the *Marcia*. The mourning folk song "Under the little apple" makes its first obvious appearance in the *Canto.* Britten pays his most overt homage to the Bach Cello Suites in the *Barcarola,* where we explore the Prelude from Bach's First Suite in slight variation, even introducing groups of three and five. This serenity is quickly dissolved as we melt down into the *Dialogo* with a grotesque first subject introduced in 6/8. The strummed chords in a 2/4 attempt to respond by soothing this rough and obnoxious primary voice. The dialogue continues in a tense and somewhat sarcastically *grazioso* waltz.

From this contentious argument comes the *Fuga*, the mournful song returns in a more somber setting, gaining momentum in rich harmonies as the choral effect Britten employs develops. The simplicity of the opening theme returns, leading us into an improvisatory *Recitativo,* which features a little bit of every effect on the cello and wraps up with the street folk song, "The grey eagle". Over in a flash, the following *Moto perpetuo* resembles a set of fighting bumblebees quietly whizzing about, perhaps with a parry and thrust of their stringers. In the concluding movement, we near the heights of passion and tragedy reflected in the duality of the *Passacaglia.* And now we finally hear the elemental building blocks of the Suite – the three folk songs and Hymn for the Departed in their original forms. The cumulative effect for the audience is that of déjà vu by the time the borrowed melodies are fully unveiled.

The suite ends on a low C – this is the same note that began the suite and permeated the introduction, as a pizzicato, distant drumbeat or ringing of a bell, to announce the birth of something. Now we return to the same note that represents our purest origins, the earth from which we came – particularly for cello, the low open C epitomizes our bass, the deepest of our roots. The journey finally brings us full circle to our true origins and an acceptance of death. Marked with a *diminuendo* and *ppp*, the sound literally dies away, as if it is releasing its very last breath.

This recital is being presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Musical Arts. Kacy Clopton is a student of Dr. Eric Kutz.

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