



# More Than Chamber Music

By Brian Lauritzen

If you're tired of the same old same old when it comes to chamber music, you've come to the right place. This month's programs at The Wallis offer a wide variety of musical styles, genres, and philosophies. The only constants are virtuosity and artistry. The concert experiences will be anything but routine.

Joshua Roman has cello, will travel. In addition to his concertizing, Roman is a TED senior fellow, an advocate for social justice through music, and the artistic leader of several festivals and presenting organizations. His social media project "Everyday Bach" showcases Roman performing movements of the Bach cello suites in diverse settings around the world—from Skid Row in Los Angeles to a serene lake in the Catskills to a busy traffic circle in Sri Lanka.

While Roman's program does indeed feature the music of Bach, rather than one of the suites for unaccompanied cello, Roman picked a lesser-known Bach Sonata. Arvo Pärt's *Spiegel im Spiegel* (mirror in a mirror) refers to an infinity mirror where a pair of parallel mirrors create a series of smaller images that appear to fade into one another forever. A

slow repeated arpeggio in the piano provides a cushion for a simple but profound melody in the cello. For 10 minutes, time seems to stand still.

All five of Beethoven's sonatas featuring cello and piano are titled "for Piano and Cello." That's not a mistake: it's how Beethoven wanted it. The piano does not accompany the cello in his sonatas—the two instruments are equal partners. The Sonata No. 3 in A major, Op. 69, comes from an extremely productive period in Beethoven's life. He had just finished the "Waldstein" and "Appassionata" Piano Sonatas, the Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos, the Violin Concerto, his opera *Fidelio*, and a whole bunch of chamber music including the three "Razumovsky" String Quartets. He was working on the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies while he wrote this Sonata and sketches for it even show up on some of the margins of those manuscripts. It is vintage middle-period Beethoven: a sweeping opening movement with just enough swagger, a lyrical slow movement with just enough sentimentality, and a virtuosic finale with just enough pyrotechnics to make both players sweat.

Alfred Schnittke takes the traditional sonata movement order (fast-slow-fast) and inverts it. The literal centerpiece of his Sonata is a frenetic, playful, angry, jazzy, heavy metal, tour de force that has to be heard to be believed. Jaw, meet floor. The outer movements are a calm(ish) respite from the madness.

The two string quartets visiting The Wallis this month both present programs that are far from traditional. Brooklyn Rider is joined by Mexico City-born singer Magos Herrera—trained in everything from contemporary music to opera to improvisation—for an evening of music from Mexico, Cuba, Peru, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, and Spain. Quartetto di Cremona is joined by Berlin-based clarinetist David Orlovsky for a program of Klezmer-infused music, including works by Israeli composers Aviya Kopelman and Betty Olivero.

All of these programs promise to open ears, minds, and hearts to new and exciting sounds.

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Join Brian Lauritzen and other guest moderators for free pre-concert conversations in the Bram Goldsmith Theater with the artists prior to select classical music performances, along with a complimentary glass of wine provided by The Henry Wine Group.