

Faculty Recital:
Jeffrey Solow, cello
A Harvest of Saint-Saëns

“I produce music as naturally as an
apple tree produces apples.”

- Camille Saint Saens

Sunday, April 30, 2023 · 7:30 PM
Rock Hall Auditorium
1715 North Broad St.
Philadelphia, PA 19122

Program

Jeffrey Solow, cello
Yoni Levyatov, piano

Sonata No. 1 in C minor, Op. 32

I. *Allegro*

II. *Andante tranquillo sostenuto*

III. *Allegro moderato*

Romance, Op. 51

Serenade, Op. 16, No. 2

Priere, Op. 158

Allegro Appassionato, Op. 43

Concerto No. 1 in A minor, Op. 33

Allegro – Allegretto con moto –

Un peu moins vite – Molto allegro

About the Artists

Cellist **JEFFREY SOLOW**'s impassioned and compelling playing has enthralled audiences throughout the United States and Canada, Europe, Latin America, and Asia in performances as recitalist, orchestral soloist, and chamber musician. Born and raised in Los Angeles, he studied with the distinguished cellist Gabor Rejto and earned a degree in Philosophy *magna cum laude* from UCLA while studying with and then assisting the legendary Gregor Piatigorsky at USC.

Mr. Solow's concerto appearances include performances of more than forty different works with orchestras including the Los Angeles Philharmonic (also at the Hollywood Bowl), Japan Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, Prime Symphony Orchestra (Korea), Milwaukee Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, VNOB (Hanoi), and the American Symphony (with whom he also recorded), and he has been guest artist at many national and international chamber music festivals. He has recorded for the Columbia, New World, ABC, Centaur, Delos, Kleos, Laurel, Everest, and Telefunken labels and received two Grammy Award nominations.

Mr. Solow is active in other areas of music besides performing. *The Strad*, *Strings*, and *American String Teacher* magazines have published his articles and reviews, he was editor of the *Newsletter* of the Violoncello Society, Inc. (NY), the nation's second oldest cello society, and served as VCS president. Recognized as an authority on healthy and efficient cello playing, he is a past-president of the American String Teachers Association, was chair of ASTA's National Solo Competition, and served on their Executive Board. For the past 34 years he has been professor of cello at Temple University in Philadelphia.

YONI LEVYATOV, winner of the San Jose International Piano Competition, is recognized as a soloist with “an appealing electricity” (The New York Times). The Russian-born Israeli pianist and composer made his recital debut at the Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center, and his New York City concerto debut performing the Schumann Piano Concerto under the baton of Philippe Entremont. He has also been heard with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, Manhattan Chamber Orchestra, the Bogota Philharmonic, Denver Brass, and the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Americas.

His compositional oeuvre includes works for solo instruments, chamber ensembles, and orchestra, and has been performed throughout Europe, the United States, and Israel. Beyond the classical realm, he has toured with the JP Joffre Hard Tango Band across the US and internationally. Highlights have included the Panama Canal, as well the Vermont Music Festival performing the Bacalov Triple Concerto for Piano, Bandoneon, Soprano, and Orchestra. Touring Alaska, he has been featured at the Sitka Music Festival and Juneau Jazz and Classics, presenting the first-ever concert in the Inuit village of Chevak.

Mr. Levyatov was a recipient of the Dorothy McKenzie Artist Recognition Award, Harold Bauer Award, and was a Silver Medalist at the International Boesendorfer Piano Competition. He was awarded the Clairmont Prize in Tel Aviv and has been a scholar of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation since 1990. Recent appearances have included performances at Steinway Hall, Barge Music, United Nations and the Prestige Series at IKIF, Mannes School of Music, NYC; Music in the Mountains, Colorado; St.-Mary College of Maryland; Thornton School of Music at USC, San Francisco; Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles; Musical Instrument Museum, Phoenix; Xavier University, Cincinnati; Menora Hall in Manchester, England; Philharmonic Hall in St.Petersburg, Russia; Spiegelsaal in Rheinsberg, Germany; Auditorium de Cajacanarias in Tenerife, Spain; Jerusalem Music Center and the Tel Aviv Museum of Arts.

Program Notes

A Harvest of Saint-Saëns

"I produce music as naturally as an apple tree produces apples."

-Camille Saint-Saëns

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921), who in his own characterization, produced music as naturally "as an apple tree produces apples," believed that art exists for and of itself and "in its self-sufficiency lies its greatness." Although his long life spanned the years of high romanticism in music, he was at heart a classicist. "Form is for me the essence of art. The music-lover is most of all enchanted by expressiveness and passion, but that is not the case for the Artist. An artist who does not feel a deep sense of personal satisfaction with elegant lines, harmonious colors or a perfect progression of chords has no comprehension of true art." Romain Rolland, writing in 1908, said: "He brings into the midst of our modern restlessness something of the sweetness and clarity of past periods, something that seems like fragments of a vanished world." Perhaps even more true today.

In the program notes for a 1919 Boston Symphony concert, the prolific and versatile musician is credited as "composer, pianist, organist, acoustician, archaeologist, playwright, comedian, caricaturist, *feuilletonist* [essayist], critic, traveler, amateur of art, mathematics, astronomy, man of the world." Like Mendelssohn, Saint-Saëns' stupendous and precocious musical gifts enabled him to crystallize his compositional style at an age when most composers are still searching for their own voice. Also like Mendelssohn, Saint-Saëns' style changed very little; his compositions may differ in artistic worth, but the difference is due more to the inspirational creativity that enlivens each work rather than to the period in which it was composed. Perhaps not one of history's titanic creative geniuses, "Nevertheless," noted Christopher Grier, a Scottish music critic who was especially knowledgeable about French repertoire, "if he rarely scaled the heights, he moved with admirable and enviable ease among the foothills."

Saint-Saëns' remarkable knowledge of instruments other than his own enabled him to be one of the very few composers who wrote concertos that remain in the active repertoire of violinists, cellists and pianists, as well as frequently performed sonatas for violin, oboe, bassoon and clarinet. In addition to two cello concertos, he enriched the repertoire with two sonatas, a suite for cello and piano or orchestra, many short pieces for cello with orchestra or piano, and numerous chamber works that include the cello.

Sonata No. 1 in C minor, Op. 32

Apollonian classicism expressed through instrumental brilliance perfectly describes the first his two cello sonatas, composed in 1872 when Saint-Saëns was 37. It was inspired by the death of his great aunt, Charlotte Masson, who not only helped raise Saint-Saëns after the early death of his father but introduced him to the piano and gave him his first lessons. (Saint-Saëns proved to be a stupendous prodigy: in his Paris debut at the age of 10, he offered as an encore any of Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas! The distinguish music critic and author Harold C. Schonberg wrote in 1969, "It is not generally realized that he was the most remarkable child prodigy in history, and that includes Mozart." Hector Berlioz famously quipped: *Il sait tout, mais il manque d'inexpérience* – "He knows everything, but lacks inexperience.")

Saint-Saëns' mother expressed dissatisfaction with the Sonata's original third movement, so he quickly wrote the current finale to replace it. *Apropos* of the new one, pianist Harold Bauer described in his memoir performing the sonata at a salon in Paris with Saint-Saëns, who was present, turning pages for him. Just before the third movement Saint-Saëns turned to Bauer and asked if he could take over the piano part "because everyone always plays it too fast." Bauer immediately switched places and relates that Saint-Saëns began the movement quite slowly but soon "his fingers took over and by the end the tempo was faster than anyone had ever played it." The composer turned to Bauer and declared, "You see—I am a musical pig, just like everyone else!"

Romance, Op. 51

When his friend Albert Libon died in 1876, he bequeathed 100,000 francs to Saint-Saëns “To free him from the slavery of the organ of the Madeleine and to enable him to devote himself entirely to composition,” not knowing that Saint-Saëns had already relinquished the post (and never again played organ in a church service). The bequest enabled him to increase his compositional output, resulting not only in the 1877 Romance in D major, written for the Belgian virtuoso Adolphe Fischer (who also introduced Édouard Lalo’s Cello Concerto in that same year), but also the Requiem Mass, op. 54, one of Saint-Saëns’ most unjustly neglected masterpieces.

Serenade, Op. 16, No. 2

Saint-Saëns’ 5-movement Suite for Cello and Piano, op. 16, was written for Henry Poëncet, who had won first prize at the *Conservatoire* in 1854, and who premiered it in the Salle Pleyel in April of 1866. The Suite was subsequently taken up by many of the cellists with whom the composer was associated, including Jules-Bernard Lasserre, August Tolbecque and Joseph Hollman, dedicatee of his second cello concerto, who encouraged Saint-Saëns to orchestrate it in 1919. The Serenade, the Suite’s charming second movement, is the earliest instance of Saint-Saëns’ several middle eastern flavored works, most notably the slow movement of his first trio, op. 18, the opera “Samson and Delilah,” and his fifth piano concerto, the “Egyptian.”

Prière, Op. 158

The Paris *Conservatoire*, where Saint-Saëns enrolled at age 13, encouraged pianists to study organ in case their dreams of a concert career did not pan out. Saint-Saëns, however, excelled on both instruments; not only a brilliant pianist, he took second prize for organ in 1849 (at 14!) and first prize in 1851. Upon graduating in 1853 he became organist at the church of Saint-Merri, and in 1858 was appointed to the most prominent organ position in France, La Madeleine. Upon hearing him there, Liszt declared him to be the greatest organist in the world. Immediately after composing his third *Fantasie* for organ in 1919, Saint-Saëns wrote the *Prière* (Prayer) for cello and organ. The very few pedal notes in the organ part are marked *ad libitum*, showing that performance on the piano was always in his mind.

Allegro Appassionato, Op. 43

Another of the composer's "dual-version" works, the *Allegro Appassionato* in B minor was written for the prominent French cellist Jules-Bernard Lasserre in 1872. The original version for cello and piano received its premiere performance in February of 1873 at a concert of the *Société Nationale de Musique* and it was subsequently orchestrated by Saint-Saëns in 1876. Pablo Casals regularly included this attractive work on his recital programs though professional cellists perform it much less frequently today.

Concerto No. 1 in A minor, Op. 33

Saint-Saëns dedicated his first cello concerto, also written in 1872, to his friend August Tolbecque (1830-1919), solocellist of the *Conservatoire* orchestra and like the composer, a man of many talents: cellist, music historian, author, violin maker and collector, and restorer of antique musical instruments. Perhaps under the influence of Liszt, who Saint-Saëns hugely admired, the concert's three movements are interconnected, and the principal theme runs through the entire work. This theme, comprised of legato running triplets, is a unique one that unites the cello's lyrical quality with the instrumental virtuosity that satisfies performers and pleases audiences. Saint-Saëns solves the balance problem, the greatest difficulty in writing a successful cello concerto, through careful scoring that often leaves the cello playing alone with the orchestra contributing only punctuating chords.

The Harvest Is Completed

In his later years, Saint-Saëns clearly retained the talents and tastes that he had developed early on and maintained throughout his long life. The American violinist Albert Spalding, described meeting the great French composer in 1906:

I had thought myself alone in the room, and I was startled to hear a high-pitched voice with a pronounced lisp address me. When I admitted to my host's query that I was, indeed, the violinist Spalding, I was given a cordial welcome.

Camille Saint-Saëns, stunted in height but impressive once you accustomed yourself to looking down on Majesty, could be genial when he wished. This morning it was apparent that he wished...

He sat at the piano playing accompaniments with a marvelous fleetness of fingers that belied his age. He asked me mine.

"Seventeen? That is a coincidence. One-and-seven. And I am just seven-and-one. It is an omen. We must have a concert together. Would you like it?"

His piano-playing was remarkable: rhythmically incisive, individual, and with a patrician disdain of every obvious effect...

He had an astounding parlor stunt in which he delighted like a child. This was the ability to *solfege* at an incredible speed. The opening sixteen[th-note] scales of the closing movement of one of his violin sonatas he lisped out with breath-taking rapidity as accurately as a finished virtuoso could have delivered them.

...later he asked me to join him in some Mozart sonatas. "No one was ever like Mozart!" he exclaimed, with childish enthusiasm. "One should really invent a new adjective when speaking of him. Transcending an artificial age, he is nature itself. Master of every form of technique, he is the soul of simplicity. What say you?" turning to me. "No, I suppose one-and-seven prefers Wagner. You have to be seven-and-one to understand and love Mozart!"

Boyer College of Music and Dance

The Boyer College of Music and Dance offers over 500 events open to the public each year. Students have the unique opportunity to interact with leading performers, composers, conductors, educators, choreographers and guest artists while experiencing a challenging and diverse academic curriculum. The Boyer faculty are recognized globally as leaders in their respective fields. Boyer alumni are ambassadors of artistic leadership and perform with major orchestras, opera and dance companies, teach at schools and colleges and work as professional music therapists, choreographers and composers. Boyer's recording label, BCM&D records, has produced more than thirty recordings, five of which have received Grammy nominations.

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The Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts

The Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts consists of the Boyer College of Music and Dance, School of Theater, Film and Media Arts, the George and Joy Abbott Center for Musical Theater and the Temple Performing Arts Center. The School of Theater, Film and Media Arts engages gifted students with nationally and internationally recognized faculty scholars and professionals. A hallmark of the School of Theater, Film and Media Arts is the Los Angeles Study Away program, housed at historic Raleigh Studios. The George and Joy Abbott Center for Musical Theater engages visiting performers, guest artists, set designers, playwrights and other Broadway professionals. The Temple Performing Arts Center (TPAC), a historic landmark on campus, is home to a state-of-the-art 1,200 seat auditorium and 200 seat chapel. More than 500 concerts, classes, lectures and performances take place at TPAC each year.

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Temple University

Temple University's history begins in 1884, when a young working man asked Russell Conwell if he could tutor him at night. It wasn't long before he was teaching several dozen students—working people who could only attend class at night but had a strong desire to make something of themselves. Conwell recruited volunteer faculty to participate in the burgeoning night school, and in 1888 he received a charter of incorporation for "The Temple College." His founding vision for the school was to provide superior educational opportunities for academically talented and highly motivated students, regardless of their backgrounds or means. The fledgling college continued to grow, adding programs and students throughout the following decades. Today, Temple's more than 35,000 students continue to follow the university's official motto—*Perseverantia Vincit*, or "Perseverance Conquers"—with their supreme dedication to excellence in academics, research, athletics, the arts and more.

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