Santa Fe CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

51ST SEASON

Sunday & Monday
6 p.m.

JULY 14 & 15

St. Francis Auditorium in the
New Mexico Museum of Art

*Due to unforeseen circumstances, pianist **Zoltán Fejérvári** is unable to perform at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival this summer. We look forward to welcoming him back to the Festival in a future season. We're grateful to **Jon Kimura Parker** for stepping in and performing the Beethoven and Mendelssohn works on today's program. For information about Mr. Parker, please see p. 87 of the Festival's 2024 Program Book.*

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM by Eric Bromberger

GYÖRGY LIGETI (1923–2006)
Six Bagatelles for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and Horn (1953)

Ligeti received his training in Budapest, but artistic life in Hungary in the mid-20th century was rigidly controlled by the Communist government, which insisted that the country's artists conform to the doctrine of Socialist Realism: Art was to serve the people and support the government, and it should be simple, easily understandable to the masses, and based on the correct political sentiments. Ligeti found himself limited to composing choruses, children's music, and pieces based on folk melodies, and he wasn't able to develop as the composer he wished to be until he fled Hungary in December 1956, two months after the Russians had crushed the Hungarian Revolution.

Beneath his surface obedience, however, Ligeti was already experimenting with new ideas about rhythm and harmony. Between 1950 and 1953, he composed a set of 11 short piano pieces titled *Musica ricercata* (*Music to Seek Out*). The first piece was built on just two pitches, and each subsequent movement added one more pitch until the final piece was built on all 12 notes of the chromatic scale. When, in 1953, the Jeney Quintet asked Ligeti to write music for them, Ligeti responded by arranging six of the movements from *Musica ricercata* for woodwind quintet and called the new work Six Bagatelles.

Bagatelle is the French word for *trifle*, and in music, it refers to a short instrumental piece. (Beethoven's *Für Elise* is one of his bagatelles for piano.) We should be very careful, however, not to consider Ligeti's Bagatelles actual "trifles": this is complex and ingenious music, and we already see hints of the mature composer in this work, which Ligeti wrote before he turned 30.

The Six Bagatelles are extremely concise: The six pieces run just a little more than 10 minutes total. The opening *Allegro con spirito*, built on only four pitches, is indeed spirited music, featuring rapid exchanges between the players. The second movement, *Rubato. Lamentoso*, is a dark lament, at moments reminiscent of Béla Bartók (1881–1945), whose music was, ironically, banned in Hungary at the time for being too dissonant.

The third movement, *Allegro grazioso*, is full of energy. The accompaniment figure, a staccato septuplet, can be heard in every measure until the very end, and above this sings a graceful flute melody that will be taken up by combinations of the other instruments. This movement proceeds without pause into the fourth movement, titled

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Presto ruvido ("Very fast and rough"), which powers its way energetically along its asymmetric 7/8 meter. The movement's basic theme-shape is shouted out by all the instruments in the final two measures.

Ligeti titled the fifth movement *Béla Bartók in memoriam* as a gesture of homage to his fellow countryman and composer. This slow movement is marked *Mesto* ("Sad"), which was one of Bartók's frequent performance markings, and it rises to a tolling climax before fading into silence.

The finale is almost madcap in its energy and dissonance. (Ligeti finally has all 12 tones to work with.) He marks it *Capriccioso*, and this brief movement combines equal measures of energy and a saucy sense of humor. It drives to a climax that Ligeti stresses he wants played *wie verrückt* ("as if insane") before trailing off to an understated conclusion.

It's a measure of just how repressive the Soviet regime in Budapest was that when the Six Bagatelles was premiered in September 1956, the government blocked the performance of its final movement (which is full of minor seconds), claiming it was "too dangerous."

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)
Sonata in A Major for Cello and Piano, Op. 69 (1807–08)

The year 1807 was a busy one for Beethoven. The previous year, he'd written his Fourth Piano Concerto, Fourth Symphony, three *Razumovsky* Quartets, and Violin Concerto, and now he was pressing on, completing his *Coriolan* Overture in March 1807 and working on his Fifth Symphony. He paused to write his Mass in C Major and then, in the fall, completed the Fifth and began to write his Sonata in A Major for Cello and Piano, which he finished early the following year. Beethoven dedicated the sonata to his longtime friend Baron Ignaz von Gleichenstein, who not only handled the composer's financial affairs but also was a skilled amateur cellist. Baroness Dorothea von Ertmann, a pianist, and cellist Nikolaus Kraft—two distinguished performers who were also friends and colleagues of Beethoven—gave the first public performance of the sonata on March 5, 1809.

This sonata is a remarkable work. Given its proximity to the Fifth Symphony, you might expect it to be charged with that same molten energy. Instead, it's characterized by a nobility, breadth, and relaxed quality that has made it, by common consent, the finest of Beethoven's five cello sonatas. Beyond issues of content, this sonata is notable for Beethoven's solution to a problem that plagues anyone who writes a cello sonata: how to balance the two instruments. Beethoven keeps the cello part in the rich mid-range of that instrument and never allows the piano to overpower or bury the cello, despite the piano being an active co-participant in the piece.

The *Allegro ma non tanto* opens with an unusual touch: The cello plays the movement's poised main theme all alone, and the piano joins in only after the theme is complete. Beethoven marks both entrances *Dolce*, and while there's plenty of energy in this lengthy sonata-form movement, that marking might characterize the movement as a whole. (Characteristically, the marking at the beginning of the development is *Espressivo*.)

The second movement, *Allegro molto*, is a scherzo with a syncopated main idea and a double-stopped second theme (also marked *Dolce*). These alternate in the pattern ABABA before a brief coda rounds off the movement; the very ending is a model of ingenuity and understatement.

There's no slow movement in this sonata, but the final movement opens with an extended slow introduction marked *Adagio cantabile* before the music leaps ahead at the *Allegro vivace*. This is not the expected rondo-finale but rather another sonata-form movement. It's typical of this sonata that the opening of the fast section is marked *Pianissimo*, and throughout the movement Beethoven reminds both players repeatedly to play *dolce*.

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–47)
Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 49 (1839)

From 1835 to 1847, Mendelssohn was the conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Those years were the happiest and most productive of his life, and they provided one of history's most distinguished associations between a conductor and an orchestra. During his tenure, Mendelssohn lengthened the orchestra's season, raised the musicians' performance standards and salaries, and worked hard to introduce unfamiliar music to new audiences, seeking out the work of both contemporary and forgotten composers. When his busy concert season ended, Mendelssohn used the summer to rest and compose.

In the summer of 1839—shortly after he conducted the world premiere of Schubert's Symphony No. 9—Mendelssohn took his wife and young children to Frankfurt. He'd long intended to write chamber music that would include the piano, and on June 6, he set to work on the Piano Trio in D Minor. Mendelssohn finished the score on July 18, but he continued to tinker with it until the end of the summer. Since the moment it premiered on February 1, 1840, this trio has been a great favorite of both audiences and performers. Passionate, songful, and gracefully written for all three of its instruments, it's one of Mendelssohn's finest works, and Robert Schumann extravagantly praised both it and its composer in a review, saying:

> It is the master trio of today, as in their day were those of Beethoven in B-flat and D, as was that of Schubert in E-flat; a wholly fine composition that, when years have passed away, will delight grandchildren. Mendelssohn is the Mozart of the 19th century, the brightest among musicians, the one who looks most clearly of all through the contradictions of time and reconciles us to them.

What Schumann meant by that final line has been open to some debate—Mendelssohn's music hardly seems to admit the existence of contradictions let alone resolve them—but there is no denying this music's popularity.

The opening sonata-form *Molto allegro ed agitato* doesn't sound especially agitated to 21st-century ears, which are more likely to be struck by the movement's continuous flow of melody. This movement is a favorite among cellists (the cello introduces both of its themes), but the real glory of this piano trio lies in its middle two movements.

The serene *Andante con moto tranquillo* belongs largely to the piano, which has the movement's main theme, while the violin and cello are frequently cast in supporting roles, decorating and embellishing the piano's music. The *Scherzo* is one of those fleet and graceful fast movements that only Mendelssohn could have written and that he apparently could write at will. Although it's built on two themes, the scherzo here lacks the trio section of the Classical scherzo.

In the *Finale*, Mendelssohn returns to the mood and manner of the opening movement. It's in ABABA form and has a quietly driving first section and a lyrical contrasting episode.

ERIC BROMBERGER earned his doctorate in American literature at UCLA and for 10 years taught literature and writing courses at Bates College and San Diego State University. Then he quit teaching to devote himself to his first love, music. Bromberger, a violinist, writes program notes for the San Diego Symphony, the La Jolla Music Society, San Francisco Performances, the University of Chicago Presents, Washington Performing Arts at The Kennedy Center, and many other organizations. He was a pre-concert lecturer for the Los Angeles Philharmonic for more than 20 seasons.