



SHEKU KANNEH-MASON ISATA KANNEH-MASON

UMS Digital Presentation
Hosted on UMS.org

Sheku Kanneh-Mason / *Cello*
Isata Kanneh-Mason / *Piano*

Sunday Afternoon, October 25, 2020 at 2:00
Streaming on demand through Wednesday, November 4

The Kanneh-Mason Home
Nottingham, United Kingdom

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PRESENTATION**

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This digital presentation of Sheku and Isata Kanneh-Mason is supported by Braylon Edwards. UMS also extends our gratitude to the University of Michigan for its partnership and support this season.

Sheku and Isata Kanneh-Mason appear by arrangement with IMG Artists in association with Enticott Music Management.

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven

Cello Sonata No. 4 in C major, Op. 102, No. 1 (excerpt)

I. Andante — Allegro vivace

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Sonata for Cello and Piano in g minor, Op. 19

Lento — Allegro moderato

Allegro scherzando

Andante

Allegro mosso



Following the digital premiere presentation on October 25, please join us for a live post-recital Q&A with the artists on Facebook Live.

**CELLO SONATA NO. 4 IN C MAJOR, OP. 102, NO. 1 (1815)
(EXCERPT)**

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 15, 1770 in Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna

UMS premiere: This piece has never been performed on a UMS recital.

Snapshots of History...In 1815:

- The War of 1812 officially ends
- New Jersey grants the first American railroad charter to John Stevens
- The first commercial cheese factory is founded in Switzerland

Beethoven wrote the last two of his five cello sonatas in 1815, and they were the only compositions he was able to complete that year. Now completely deaf, he was entering a personal and artistic crisis from which he only emerged several years later with the masterpieces of his late period — the Ninth Symphony, the *Missa Solemnis*, and the last piano sonatas and string quartets.

The earliest signs of this incredible creative renewal may be found in the two sonatas published as 102. They are highly innovative works that bewildered their first critics as they treated the conventions of the form with an unprecedented freedom. Beethoven explicitly called the C-Major work a “free sonata,” and it is easy to see why. It has only two movements, both fast but both preceded by lengthy slow introductions that almost seem like independent movements in their own right. In turn mysterious, resolute, and tenderly lyrical, the opening movement of Op. 102, No. 1 bears witness to the emotional turmoil Beethoven was going through during that time. More than 200 years after its completion, this music still has

plenty of surprises in store for the audience.

SONATA FOR CELLO AND PIANO IN G MINOR, OP. 19 (1901)

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Born April 1, 1873 in Semyonovo, Russia

Died March 28, 1943 in Beverly Hills, California

UMS premiere: Cellist Zara Nelsova with pianist Grant Johannesen; July 1967 in Rackham Auditorium.

Snapshots of History...In 1901:

- New York becomes the first US state to require automobile license plates
- The first Nobel Prize ceremony is held in Stockholm
- The Michigan Wolverines play their first season under Fielding H. Yost, compiling a perfect 11-0 record

Rachmaninoff's cello sonata shows the 28-year-old composer in full command of his creative powers. Written the same year as the Second Piano Concerto, it contains some echoes of that ever-popular work. The sonata was written for cellist Anatoly Brandukov, who had already been the dedicatee of two early cello pieces by Rachmaninoff.

The four-movement work opens with a dreamy slow introduction that segues into an "Allegro" dominated by a pair of sweeping melodies in which both instruments are made to sing in an almost operatic way. The entire movement displays an uncommon level of emotional intensity. The second movement is an "Allegro scherzando," but there is something darkly ominous about the character of the music. This mysteriously menacing quality is only temporarily relieved by the lyrical melodies introduced by way of contrast. An intimate nocturne follows as the third movement — a "love duet" of sorts between the piano and the cello. For the most part soft and introspective, this delicate "Andante" has only a few

more emphatic moments.

Rachmaninoff saved his most dynamic and energetic music for the fourth-movement "Allegro mosso," where the tonality changes from g minor to G Major. He also saved one of his most memorable melodies for this grand closing statement, in which tender passages alternate effectively with moments of great dramatic power.

Program notes by Peter Laki.

ARTISTS

Winner of the 2016 BBC Young Musician competition, **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** (*cello*) is in great demand from orchestras and concert halls worldwide. He became a household name in May 2018 after performing at the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex at Windsor Castle. In January 2020, Sheku released his second album, *Elgar*, featuring the Cello Concerto, which he recorded at Abbey Road Studios with Sir Simon Rattle and the London Symphony Orchestra. On its release, it reached No. 8 in the UK Official Album Chart, making Mr. Kanneh-Mason the youngest classical instrumentalist and the first cellist in history to reach the UK Top 10.

Mr. Kanneh-Mason has made debuts with orchestras such as the Seattle Symphony, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Netherlands Chamber Orchestra at the Concertgebouw, the Atlanta Symphony, Japan Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, and Baltimore Symphony orchestras. Forthcoming highlights include performances with the City of Birmingham Symphony, Toronto Symphony, BBC Scottish Symphony, and Stockholm Philharmonic orchestras.

Recent recital performances include Wigmore Hall, Zurich Tonhalle, Lucerne Festival, Festival de Saint-Denis, Théâtre des Champs Élysées Paris, Teatro della Pergola Florence, and a critically acclaimed tour of North America with performances in Los Angeles, Berkeley, Saint Paul, Vancouver, Ann Arbor, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Sheku's recital debut at Carnegie Hall New York. Upcoming recital debuts include London's Barbican Hall, L'Auditori Barcelona, Madrid's Auditorio

Nacional, and the chamber hall of the Berlin Philharmonie.

Mr. Kanneh-Mason is passionate about making music accessible to all and is an ambassador for Music Masters and Future Talent. During the COVID-19 lockdown in spring 2020, Mr. Kanneh-Mason and his siblings performed in livestreams from their family home in Nottingham to audiences of hundreds of thousands.

Mr. Kanneh-Mason is currently a full-time ABRSM Scholarship student at the Royal Academy of Music, studying with Hannah Roberts. He began learning the cello at the age of six with Sarah Huson-Whyte and then studied with Ben Davies at the Junior Department of the Royal Academy of Music where he held the ABRSM Junior Scholarship. He has received masterclass tuition from Guy Johnston, Robert Max, Alexander Baillie, Steven Doane, Rafael Wallfisch, Jo Cole, Melissa Phelps, and Julian Lloyd Webber. In July 2017, he participated Verbier Festival Academy in masterclasses with Frans Helmerson and Miklos Perenyi. A keen chamber musician, he performs with his sister, Isata and brother, Braimah, as a member of the Kanneh-Mason Trio.

Mr. Kanneh-Mason was appointed a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2020 New Year's Honors List. He plays an Antonius and Hieronymus Amati cello c.1610, kindly on loan from a private collection.

Isata Kanneh-Mason's (piano) debut album, *Romance*, drew popular and critical acclaim, entering the UK classical charts at No. 1 when it was released in July 2019 and leading *Gramophone* magazine to extol the recording as "one of the most charming and engaging debuts" and Classic FM to

praise Isata as “a player of considerable talent.” Isata recorded the all-Clara Schumann disc for Decca Classics as an homage to the composer and pianist in the year of what would have been her 200th birthday, selecting works from across her compositional output including solo piano pieces, a sonata, chamber music with violinist Elena Urioste, transcriptions of two of her husband Robert’s songs, and the piano concerto, which she recorded with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Holly Mathieson.

Since her studies with Joanna MacGregor and Carole Presland at London’s Royal Academy of Music, Isata Kanneh-Mason has embarked on a successful and increasingly busy concert career as a solo artist, with concerto appearances, solo recitals, and chamber concerts throughout the UK and abroad. She also continues to perform with her siblings, including regular duo recitals with her brother, the cellist, Sheku Kanneh-Mason. Recent highlights include appearances at the Edinburgh Festival, Wigmore Hall, London, Théâtre des Champs Elysées, Paris, Teatro della Pergola, Florence, and an extensive 10-city North American tour, including their debut recital at New York’s Carnegie Hall and a return to the Vancouver Recital Society.

Ms. Kanneh-Mason has also performed in the Portland Piano Series in Oregon, the Barbican Centre’s Sound Unbound festival, The Color of Music Festival in South Carolina, at the Edinburgh, Cheltenham, and Bath festivals, the Snape Proms, the Musikfestspiele Saar, and in venues from Antigua and the Cayman Islands, to Perth. During the UK’s COVID-19 lockdown in spring 2020, she and her siblings performed in twice-weekly livestreams

from their family home in Nottingham to audiences of thousands around the globe. Her rendition of the first movement of Beethoven’s third piano concerto accompanied by a chamber ensemble comprised of her brothers and sisters garnered over one million views. Future live performances include at the Kissinger KlavierOlymp, BBC Radio 3’s Wigmore lunchtime concert series, the Salzburg Mozarteum, Klavier Festival Ruhr, the Kimmel Center Philadelphia, and with the Sarasota, Gothenburg Symphony, Hallé, Johannesburg Philharmonic, KwaZulu Natal Philharmonic, and Paris Mozart orchestras. Beginning this season, Isata will become Young Artist in Residence with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Ms. Kanneh-Mason reached her category final in the 2014 BBC Young Musician competition, winning the Walter Todds Bursary for the most promising musician. She has since performed several times on television and radio, including on BBC Radio 3 *In Tune*, *the South Bank Sky Arts Awards*, *The Andrew Marr Show*, the Radio 3 *RPS Awards*, *BBC2 Proms Extra*, *Radio 4 Front Row* and *Woman’s Hour*, *Al Jazeera TV*, *BBC World Service*, *Channel 4*, *The One Show*, *ITV Born To Shine*, *BBC2 Classroom Heroes*, and a feature for *CBS Sunday Morning*. She made her debut as a television presenter for the coverage of the 2019 BBC Proms.

She completed her undergraduate degree at the Academy as an Elton John scholar, and performed with Sir Elton in 2013 in Los Angeles. She is also grateful for support from the Nottingham Soroptimist Trust, Mr. and Mrs. John Bryden, Frank White, and Awards for Young Musicians.

UMS ARCHIVES

This digital presentation marks Sheku and Isata Kanneh-Mason's second appearances under UMS auspices. Mr. Kanneh-Mason and Ms. Kanneh-Mason made their UMS debuts in December 2019 in recital at Rackham Auditorium.