

# ZUILL BAILEY

## CELLO

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MUSIC REVIEW | ZUILL BAILEY AND SIMONE DINNERSTEIN

### Ardent Dialogue for Piano and Cello

By VIVIEN SCHWEITZER

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During a concert at the Greenwich Village club Le Poisson Rouge on Thursday, the cellist Zuill Bailey said that his instrument was usually treated as just “a glorified piece of furniture” when Beethoven wrote his first sonata for cello and piano in 1796.

Beethoven had little precedent; neither Haydn nor Mozart wrote for cello-piano duo. Other composers, like Boccherini, primarily used the cello’s highest range, because melodies and solos were typically allotted to soprano voices and instruments. Beethoven saw the potential for the cello’s rich lower range to serve as more than mere continuo accompaniment and gave both piano and cello important roles in these sonatas.

Mr. Bailey illuminated the cello’s substantial part while performing three Beethoven sonatas with the pianist Simone Dinnerstein, to celebrate their new Telarc release of the composer’s complete works for piano and cello.

Mr. Bailey and Ms. Dinnerstein have performed together for a decade, and their impassioned styles are ideally matched. They offered sonatas from three periods of Beethoven’s life: the early Sonata No. 1 in F, the Sonata No. 3 in A from 1808 and the Sonata No. 5 in D from 1815. Their ardent performance of the third sonata was the highlight of the evening. Mr. Bailey spun out the seductive opening melody with a rich tone, graciously complemented by Ms. Dinnerstein. They aptly contrasted the serene dialogue between piano and cello with the more turbulent elements, imbuing the Scherzo with plenty of excitement. Both musicians performed with sensitivity in the Adagio Cantabile and virtuoso panache in the concluding Allegro Vivace. But their intensity seemed a little misplaced in an unusually fist-shaking, tumultuous account of the genial two-movement F major sonata. The work’s sunnier moments were overshadowed by the performers’ aggressive energy and Ms. Dinnerstein’s heavy-handedness.

The concert concluded with the D major sonata, Beethoven’s final work in this genre, written in his late period, when he composed the Ninth Symphony and the final string quartets. Ms. Dinnerstein and Mr. Bailey offered a nuanced rendition of the opening Allegro and an introspective account of the poignant Adagio. Like other late works, this sonata ends with a fugue. The players’ vigorous rendition earned an enthusiastic response from the large crowd.

Photo: Hiroyuki Ito for The New York Times



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