

# ZUILL BAILEY

## CELLO

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by **Mark J. Estren, Nov. 6, 2006**

**Zuill Bailey, Awadagin Pratt at Wolftrap**

To the eye, they were as different as A and Z: Fairfax native Zuill Bailey, cellist, with the shoulder-length hair of a 19th-century poet, dressed entirely in black; and Awadagin Pratt, dreadlocked pianist from Pittsburgh via Sierra Leonean ancestry, in a bright yellow patterned shirt.

But to the ear, they were as one -- a single sound of bowed and percussive components, balanced in unfailing beauty.

At the Barns at Wolf Trap on Friday night, the sound permeated Mendelssohn's "Variations Concertantes," Op. 17, as the instruments' inherent tonal contrasts blended smoothly.

For Shostakovich's Sonata for Cello and Piano in D Minor, Op. 40, the sound reflected the work's contrasts. In the heartfelt first movement, Bailey enfolded his 1693 Matteo Goffriller cello and played it lovingly. The grotesque dance of the second movement was a whirl of harmonics, pizzicati and complex bowing techniques. Well-matched intensity persisted through the dark third-movement meditation and the showy finale.

Estonian composer Arvo Part's "Mirror in the Mirror" dates to 1978 but bespoke much earlier times, its piano triads and extended cello line producing feelings of peace and tranquility.

The performers' give-and-take was especially impressive in Brahms's Cello Sonata No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 38. Here the piano, which often dominates thematically, can easily overwhelm the cello, but Pratt was too musicianly (or too gentlemanly) for that. A and Z sounded not like opposites but -- as in the alphabet -- like two parts of the same totality.

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