



JONAH KIM

Approaching Autumn

DE 3585



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JONAH KIM, cello
ROBERT KOENIG, piano

ZOLTÁN KODÁLY
Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 8 (33:20)

MARK ABEL
Approaching Autumn (14:51)

EDVARD GRIEG
Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 36 (29:25)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 77:36

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JONAH KIM, cello

ROBERT KOENIG, piano

ZOLTÁN KODÁLY

Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 8 (33:20)

1. Allegro maestoso ma appassionato (9:10)
2. Adagio (con gran espressione) (11:51)
3. Allegro molto vivace (12:19)

MARK ABEL

4. *Approaching Autumn (14:51)*

EDVARD GRIEG

Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 36 (29:25)

5. Allegro agitato (9:48)
6. Andante molto tranquillo (6:11)
7. Allegro molto e marcato (13:26)

Total Playing Time: 77:36

DE 3585



A WELCOME FROM JONAH KIM

Growing up, the Temple of the De-
lians and the rolling tide on the De-
los logo was one of the portals that
freed my imagination as I sat practically
inside the subwoofer of our stereo, en-
veloped in a musical cocoon. Thirty some

years later, I'm grateful for this opportu-
nity to stand on the shoulders of giants.

I was born into a Korean family, and my
parents are devout Protestants. We moved
often because my father founded churches

abroad for Korean immigrants. The constant moving made me feel lonely at times, but it also taught me to make friends quickly.

This is what my music is really about: Finding common areas and learning what we all actually care about. I feel beauty is one of these things—and art may be a way to connect with this very human affinity for beauty, even in times when the world feels void of it.

I consider the Hungarian cellist and pedagogue Janos Starker to be one of my biggest musical influences. I met him first on a Delos recording of the same Kodály sonata I've prepared for you here. We became pen pals; Mr. Starker was not only an artist of the highest echelon, in my opinion, but a gracious enough human being to respond to the letters of a seven-year-old.

Years later, when I finally played the Kodály for him in person, he said to me almost matter-of-factly: "You get it. Koreans and Hungarians have an old connection." I did not know quite what he meant at the time. I proceeded to ask what I was curious about at that moment: "How accurate was Kodály in notating *scordatura*?" I had been weighing the composer's inconsistent notations and traditional interpretations of those against the possible harmonic sonorities created by dropping the

pitch of the cello's two lowest strings. Mr. Starker replied, "Do what sounds good."

It turns out there is a linguistic connection in real life between the two tongues that set Hungarian and Korean apart from other languages of the world. They are the Ural-Altaic languages. The only other language in this group is Finnish, which is also fascinating to me.

Just over the icy gulf from Finland into Scandinavia, we could not encounter a more drastic linguistic contrast than in Norwegian, the mother tongue of Edvard Grieg. To my ears, Grieg also had a distinct ethnic voice that informed his music, instantly conjuring images of expansive and vivid sunsets spanning epic fjords.

I live in San Francisco, California. The Golden Gate has welcomed Pacific immigrants since the beginning, and I consider it to be one of the most beautiful places in the world. To record the music of Mark Abel right here in the Bay Area, the way he captured the song of our people, of our time, has been a deeply enjoyable experience for me and I think I can speak for my friend, our wonderful pianist Maestro Robert Koenig, on this as well.

These are some of my feelings about our musical menu, and I sincerely hope you enjoy what we've prepared for you.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967)

Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 8 (1915)

Composer, instrumentalist, singer, conductor, ethnomusicologist, linguist, music critic and pedagogue Zoltán Kodály is one of the giants of 20th-century music. His compositions in all genres, his influence as an educator and his pioneering work collecting Hungarian folk music are enduring contributions.

Kodály, with his friend Béla Bartók, formed the New Hungarian Music Society in 1911 to promote performances of music by contemporary Hungarian composers. In spite of these efforts, Kodály's music was slow to gain recognition, but the success of his oratorio *Psalmus Hungaricus* and his opera *Háry János* in the mid-1920s established him as an important composer.

Kodály collected, studied and analyzed the folk music of his native country. In 1906, following one of his first expeditions gathering traditional songs in rural regions, Kodály wrote a dissertation on the structure of Hungarian folk song and earned a PhD from the Royal National Hungarian Academy of Music (now the Franz Liszt Academy).

As described by Bartók, Kodály's music is distinguished by "rich melodic invention ... a perfect sense of form ... and striking individuality." These characteristics are all heard in the *Sonata for Solo Cello*. Folk melodies and rhythms are prominent in this seminal work, particularly in the last movement. It is a prime example of Eastern European folk idioms being transmuted into early 20th-century musical modernism—as also heard in the works of such composers as Bartók, Stravinsky, Janáček and Szymanowski.

Kodály's *Sonata* is acknowledged to be one of the greatest pieces in the repertoire for solo cello, along with the six suites by J. S. Bach. The sonata is technically challenging for all but the most accomplished players. Following the dramatic opening chords, the cello ascends to its highest range within the first few measures. Janos Starker, one of the most famous interpreters of the sonata, noted that "Kodály uses the cello from top to bottom." (The cello's lowest playable note is made even lower with the tuning Kodály specifies for the piece.)

On hearing a recording of the sonata, one can scarcely believe a lone cellist with only eight fingers and two thumbs can make such an astonishing variety of sounds.

Mark Abel (b. 1948)
***Approaching Autumn* (2020)**

American composer Mark Abel is best known for his song cycles, several of which have been issued on the Delos label. They include *The Palm Trees Are Restless* (DE 3495); *In the Rear View Mirror, Now*, with text by the composer (DE 3550); and *Four Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva* (DE 3570) – all sung by GRAMMY-winning soprano Hila Plitmann.

But Abel's most recent album, *The Cave of Wondrous Voice* (DE 3570), signaled a shift of focus by introducing his first chamber works: *Intuition's Dance*, *The Elastic Hours* and the Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano. Los Angeles critic Henry Schlinger called *Cave* "a wondrous creation. ... Abel has announced his arrival as a serious chamber music composer." When Abel's opera *Home Is a Harbor* (DE 3495) made its debut on Delos in 2016, *Gramophone* praised it as "an affecting experience."

For the listener who is new to Abel's music, not much guidance is needed: The flow of melody, harmony and rhythm will carry the listener along without the need to be informed about musical structures or compositional techniques. Repeated hearings will reward the listener with a greater appreciation of the music and

deeper understanding of its emotional content.

Above all, it is Abel's mastery of the vocal line that informs his writing for cello in *Approaching Autumn*. The music is lyrical and accessible, unlike much that is being composed today. A sense of playfulness (also missing from much 21st-century music) permeates some sections of the piece as the cello and piano quip and converse. Abel effortlessly combines elements of jazz, rock and classical music into his own distinctive style, enfolding performer and audience alike with a wide range of tonal colors and impressions.

Music critic Huntley Dent remarked in *Fanfare*, "Abel represents the best strain in contemporary American composers who can merge their musical gifts with a sensitive, far-reaching intellect."

A profound admiration for Abel's music has brought distinguished pianist and Delos Director Carol Rosenberger back to the studio to record several of his pieces, including the concert aria *Those Who Loved Medusa*, with Plitmann singing text by Kate Gale (on the album *Time and Distance*, DE 3550), and three works on *The Cave of Wondrous Voice*. Says Rosenberger: "I've been an ardent fan of Mark's creations ever since I discovered



his unique song cycle *The Dream Gallery*, which Delos released in 2012.”

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)
Sonata for Piano and Cello, Op. 36
(1883)

Compared with the large number of songs and orchestral pieces that Grieg wrote, his chamber works are few. Besides the *Sonata for Piano and Cello*, Op. 36, Grieg’s only other piece for those instruments is the short *Intermezzo in A Minor*.

The Cello Sonata followed two youthful violin sonatas (available on the Delos album DE 3523, along with the magnificent Violin Sonata No. 3, performed by Haik Kazazyan, violin, and Philipp Kopachevsky, piano). Grieg’s only complete string quartet was written in 1877. Grieg wrote of that work: “It strives toward breadth, soaring flight and, above all, resonance for the instruments for which it is written.” The same could be said for the Cello Sonata, a staple of the chamber repertoire that shares the excitement and mood of Grieg’s famous Piano Concerto, first performed in 1869. Both compositions have dramatic openings and folk-inflected finales, and both are in the key of A minor. The first movement of the sonata includes a cadenza for the cello—unusual in a sonata but expected in a concerto.

Composers of duos for piano and cello face the challenge of balancing a wonderful but inherently unbalanced ensemble: The cello’s voice can easily be overwhelmed by the power of a modern concert grand. Fortunately, Grieg’s sonata is a collaboration, not a contest between the two instruments. All ranges of the versatile cello are used to good advantage, with the upper register singled out for towering melodies. And there are plenty of passages for the pianist to show off a virtuoso technique.

Like Kodály, Grieg was inspired by the folk music of his country. Nationalism in music emerged along with Romanticism in the early 19th century as composers turned away from the international style of the European classical tradition. The trend toward nationalism is evident in the Mazurkas of Chopin; in Wagner’s and Verdi’s operas; in the music of Russia’s “Mighty Handful,” which included Rimsky-Korsakov and Mussorgsky; and in Smetana’s and Dvořák’s music, to name a few prominent composers of the Romantic Era.

The lyric and expressive melodies and contagious rhythms of Grieg’s dance-like movements have their roots in Norwegian folk music, and the composer’s delight in folk tunes and dance rhythms overflows in the last movement of the cello sonata.

In Grieg's own words, he "dipped into the rich treasures of native folk song and sought to create a national art out of this hitherto unexploited expression of the folk soul of Norway."

—David Brin

Jonah Kim is a performer of great charisma and originality. The legendary cellist Janos Starker placed him at the "top of his generation" and the Washington Post hailed him as "the next Yo-Yo Ma." He made his solo debut with Wolfgang Sawallisch and the Philadelphia Orchestra at only 12 years of age, and he has performed on some of the world's most prestigious stages.

Jonah has soloed with the National Symphony, Atlantic Classical Orchestra, New Philharmonia, Palm Beach Symphony, Philadelphia Chamber Orchestra, Stanford Philharmonia, Symphony of the Americas and many other orchestras. He has performed in venues such as New York's Carnegie Hall and Merkin Hall, Wigmore Hall in London, San Francisco's Herbst Theater, Bing Hall at Stanford, the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, the Kravis Center and Flagler Museum in Palm Beach, the Adrienne Arsht Center in Miami, the historic

Phillips Collection and the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., where the Post's Anne Midgette offered this praise: "He flirted with the line, shaped it, wrapped it around his fingers, pulled it out in a new dimension, all with practiced ease."

Jonah is equally passionate about chamber music and some of his favorite environments for playing are festivals like San Luis Obispo's Festival Mozaic, the Atlantic Music Festival, and the Interlochen Center for the Arts. His new ensemble The Barclay Trio, with pianist Sean Kennard and Pacific Symphony concertmaster Dennis Kim, is currently in residence at the Barclay Theatre in Irvine, California.

Jonah enjoys collaborating with friends like conductor/violinist Scott Yoo, host of the PBS hit docu-series *Now Hear This*, Van Cliburn Competition winner Jon Nakamatsu and Chee-Yun Kim (you may recognize her from her cameo on the HBO comedy series *Curb Your Enthusiasm*). Jonah has also worked with leading members of world-class ensembles such as the Orpheus and New Century chamber orchestras, and the Guarneri and Tokyo Quartets. As a fellow at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, his ensemble with Joel Link, violinist of the award-winning Dover Quartet, and international piano sensation Yuja Wang, studied the piano

trio repertoire extensively. His training also included performances with faculty and friendly alums like pianist Meng-Chieh Liu and Steven Copes, concertmaster of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Jonah trained at The Juilliard School and Curtis. His favorite cello is the award winning "Stella" made by Haide Lin in 2016, paired with his favorite bow, made in 1904 by Jules Fétique in Paris.

For more information, visit: jonahcello.com

Now in his third decade as a much sought-after performing artist, **Robert Koenig** has appeared throughout the world to great acclaim as a collaborative pianist and chamber musician. His partnerships with leading classical artists have taken him to such important stages as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Boston's Jordan Hall, San Francisco's Herbst Theater, Seattle's Benaroya Hall, Vancouver's Chan Center, Tokyo's Suntory Hall, Taiwan's National Theater, Hong Kong's City Hall, London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, Paris' Louvre Museum, Brussels' BOZAR, and Amsterdam's Het Concertgebouw. These frequent recital appearances have included collaborations with such re-

nowned musicians as Augustin Hadelich, Sarah Chang, Hilary Hahn, Pamela Frank, Ida Kavafian, Kyoko Takezawa, Esther Yoo, Paul Huang, Roberto Diaz, Jonathan Merschel, Zuill Bailey, Sara Sant'Ambrogio, Jennifer Kloetzel, Isabel Bayrakdarian, the Miro String Quartet, St. Lawrence String Quartet, and members of the Tokyo and Juilliard String Quartets.

Koenig's partnership with the late, legendary violinist Aaron Rosand resulted in successful recital tours throughout the world and a recorded legacy of live performances. Koenig's 25-year collaboration with esteemed American violinist Elmar Oliveira continues to see the pair travel the globe in recital performances and is documented in acclaimed recordings for the Artek and Biddulph Recordings labels. Koenig's recording activity includes a GRAMMY-nominated CD for Naxos of William Primrose's Transcriptions for Viola and Piano with violist Roberto Diaz, as well as releases on Decca, Cedille, Eroica, Ambassador, Centaur and CRI.

Koenig has performed at such prestigious festivals as Ravinia, Aspen, Saratoga, Chamber Music Northwest, Seattle Chamber Music Festival, Caramoor, Banff, Mostly Mozart, Campos do Jordao Festival in Brazil, and Interlochen Summer Arts Festival. A strong advocate for new mu-

sic, he commissioned American composer Lowell Liebermann to write his Piano Trio for flute, cello and piano, Op. 87, and gave the world premiere at the National Flute Association Convention in Nashville.

A native of Saskatchewan, Koenig graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with collaborative piano master Vladimir Sokoloff. In addition to his decade-long association with the

Juilliard School, where he served as staff pianist, Koenig was formerly Professor of Piano and Chamber Music at the University of Kansas. Since 2007, he has been Professor and Head of Collaborative Piano at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he also serves as Chair of the Music Department and Head of Performance. His summers are spent at the Interlochen Summer Arts Camp, where he is Coordinator of Collaborative Piano.

Produced, engineered, edited and mastered by Matt Carr
Executive Producer: Carol Rosenberger

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Special thanks

Working on this album got me through some of the darker moments many of us have had to live through in recent times. I can't thank Mark enough for the gift of his piece we named the album after. I had the greatest time and learned much with this incredible team. As we approach this autumn and our world looks to harvest once again, it means a great deal to me to share the fruit of our labors with you.

This record is made possible only by the love and support of our wonderful friends, their faith in me and the power of music to bring us closer together. Thank you John Bratton, Michael Buckles & McNeese State University, Kevin & Barb Monahan, Karen Lile, Sharon Litsky, Carol Rosenberger, David & Jonathan Yeh, and those who wish to remain anonymous.

—Jonah Kim

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Also
Available

"Kim and Kennard balance their efforts judiciously With his pulsating vibrato and intense expressivity, Kim asserts the cello's eloquent personality throughout the varied atmospheres."

—Donald Rosenberg, *Gramophone*

"... A moving and musically satisfying performance Kim's full-bodied, rounded cello sound is ideal for the work's Romantic lyricism and the energy and passion of his playing carry the listener along."

—Janet Banks, *The Strad*