

MARY ANNE  
*Rennolds*

CHAMBER CONCERT SERIES 2016 - 2017 SEASON

**JOSHUA ROMAN**

*cello*

**ANDRIUS ŽLABYS**

*piano*

Saturday, April 1, 2017

8 p.m.

Sonia Vlahcevic Concert Hall  
W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
922 Park Avenue | Richmond, VA

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**JOSHUA ROMAN**  
**CELLO**

**ANDRIUS ŽLABYS**  
**PIANO**

**DEBUSSY**  
(1862-1918)

Sonata

I. Prologue: Lent, sostenuto  
e molto risoluto

II. Sérénade: Modérément animé

III. Final: Animé, léger et nerveux

**BEETHOVEN**  
(1770–1827)

Sonata No. 3, Op. 69

I. Allegro, ma non tanto

II. Scherzo. Allegro molto

III. Adagio cantabile - Allegro vivace

- INTERMISSION -

**ROMAN / ŽLABYS**

"Only Once" – An Improvisation

**MESSIAEN**  
(1908-1992)

Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus

**JANÁČEK**  
(1854-1928)

Pohádka

**PÄRT**  
(B. 1935)

Fratres

**PIAZZOLLA**  
(1921-1992)

Grand Tango

Please turn off cell phones and other electronic  
devices. Photographing, sound recording or  
videotaping this performance is prohibited.

## ***Notes on the Program***

*by Susanna Klein*

I have never met a person who does not love the sound of the cello. The same can be said of the piano, but the warm vocal quality of the cello does seem to produce a particular following of passionate devotees in the music world. The history of the cello follows in the footsteps of its smaller cousin, and has its origins in 16th century Italy. Its full proper name, the violoncello, literally translated, means "the little big bass," as cello is the diminutive of the violone. The violone was a precursor of the modern day double bass. Violone in Italian means "little violin." So I suppose the literal translation for the cello is "little big violin." Early composers writing for the cello included Antonio Vivaldi and Domenico Gabrielli, but it was Johann Sebastian Bach who put the cello on the map with his six famous cello suites. These were written before the instrument had a standard size or string configuration, and the sixth suite was written for a five-string instrument. In the beginning, the instrument body rested on the floor while playing, later it was played by clamping it between the knees, and finally an adjustable endpin was added to the set up. Women cellists, who had always been discouraged from playing the "unladylike" instrument, got in the game as the endpin became standard (and probably helped promote its consistent use.) Many women played "side saddle" until well into the early part of the last century. As with most instruments, the cello repertoire was expanded by virtuoso players who were also composers, like Luigi Boccherini (who wrote over 100 cello quintets) and the great virtuoso Bernard Romberg. Romberg, who was greatly admired by Beethoven, has faded into relative obscurity as a composer - among cellists, however, he remains infamous for turning down Beethoven's offer to write a cello concerto for him. If not for Romberg's competitive spirit (he would rather promote his own music than that of Beethoven's), we could have had a Beethoven Cello Concerto to enjoy! From Beethoven's time forward, composers relished writing for this extraordinarily warm instrument in solo

and chamber music form, where it played an increasingly soloistic role.

**Claude Debussy** wrote his only sonata for cello and piano in 1915, near the end of his life. He had been diagnosed with cancer and was on a mission to write a set of six sonatas for various instruments. The work has its own distinct voice in the cello literature and, as is typical for Debussy, he excels in instrumental colors for both instruments. The work is often mysterious and impressionistic, other times murky, and sometimes very agitated. The guitar-like pizzicato (plucking) is evocative of Spanish music, and the technique of an extended pizzicato section harkens back to Debussy's string quartet from some 20 years earlier. Cellists and pianists love to play this short, powerful work.

**Ludwig van Beethoven** wrote a total of five sonatas for this instrument combination - the first two of which were written in the spirit of a piano sonata with cello relegated to an accompanying bass line. Sonata No. 3, op. 69 is the middle of the five sonatas, and for the first time Beethoven clearly gives both instruments equal weight. This is clear from the very first few notes of the piece. The A major Sonata was written during Beethoven's middle period, around the same time as his famous fifth symphony and groundbreaking triple concerto for violin, violoncello and pianoforte. Incredibly satisfying for both performers and the audience, it has a wonderfully optimistic outlook. A good cellist friend of mine describes the opening, which features cello singing alone, as sounding "like the start of the earth itself." All of this while Beethoven - at the age of 38 - was already almost completely deaf. The work is dedicated to Baron Ignaz von Gleichenstein, an amateur cellist who was part of a consortium of sponsors who were organized to give Beethoven an annual stipend. Immediately after this thank you gesture, Beethoven asked Gleichenstein to help find him a wife. Let's just say it proved to be a difficult task.

**"Only Once"** is tonight's mystery piece by our special guests. This collaborative work is evidence of the strong musical partnership between Roman and Žlabys, who first met while studying at the Cleveland Institute of Music. They have been performing in recital together since 2012. In a 2014 interview with the Albuquerque Journal, Roman said of Žlabys, "He's an especially good listener. When he plays, even when it's quiet, it feels like we're connected at the brain. He really knows how to make chamber music. He's not just an accompanist for me." This seemingly telepathic musical connection between Roman and Žlabys will surely make for an intriguing improvisation.

French composer **Olivier Messiaen** wrote *Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus*, or Praise for the Eternity of Jesus, as the fifth movement of his most famous work, *Quartet for the End of Time*. The quartet - scored for piano, clarinet, violin and cello - began in sketches before Messiaen was called into WWII military service. It was completed and scored for the unusual instrumentation while he was prisoner of war at Camp Görlitz, Germany (now Zgorzelec, Poland). The piece as a whole is based on the Apocalypse, Book of Revelations Chapter 10, where an angel announces "the end of time." Messiaen was a devout Roman Catholic and even before the war and Nazi agenda, had labeled himself a "mystic" composer and often called upon religious material for inspiration. There is another layer to the piece, of course, given the circumstances of its premiere. The quartet was premiered at camp during a rainy day in 1941, and the composer later wrote about the experience: "Never was I listened to with such rapt attention and comprehension." This particular movement that you are hearing tonight is scored for cello and piano alone, marked *Infiniment lent*, *extatique* - translated Infinitely Slow, Ecstatic.

The Czech composer **Leoš Janáček** was deeply influenced by folklore and also by Moravian Folk Songs. He was equally inspired by literature, and in this particular case, a Russian

fairy tale "Pohádka," loosely translated "Fairy Tale." The three-movement work was first written in 1910 and later underwent two revisions, first in 1912 and again in 1923 (the version you'll hear tonight.) This work is based on an epic poem "The Tale of Tsar Berendyey" by Russian poet Vasily Zhukovsky. The tale's hero, Prince Ivan, is portrayed in the dramatic pizzicato cello lines. Ivan falls in love with Marya, represented by the lyrical piano. It is not an easy situation, as Marya is the daughter of Kashei, the ruler of the underworld. A love duet can be heard early on, but gives way to Kaschei chasing the lovers on horseback. All ends well toward the end of the piece when a spell is broken and the lovers reunite. This dramatic story also inspired Igor Stravinsky in the very same year, who adapted it as the basis of his ballet *The Firebird*.

Does **Arvo Pärt's** *Fratres* sound familiar? If you are a regular Rennolds patron, you have the unique opportunity to hear a piece a second time this year, but scored for a different instrument. Anne Akiko Meyers had this on her program as well, but the original instrumentation of this work was for neither violin or cello. Originally scored for for string quintet and wind quintet, Pärt arranged *Fratres* for cello and piano in 1989. The cello and piano version is very similar to the violin/piano iteration. The cello introduces the chant-like theme in its low register with a virtuosic string crossing technique we call *bariolage*. *Fratres* traverses a vast emotional range in just ten minutes, from the mystical to the dramatic, and has been arranged for over a dozen instrument combinations since its premiere in 1977. Arvo Pärt (b. 1935) currently splits his time between Berlin, Germany and his native Estonia. He is one of the most often performed living composers in the world.

**Astor Piazzolla** composed *Grand Tango* for cello and piano in 1982 for the great cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, who was at that time Music Director of the National Symphony in Washington, D.C. Although born in Argentina, Piazzolla

spent his formative years (between the ages of 14 and 25) in New York City. After returning to Argentina, the young musician seemed to have one foot in the traditional Argentine musical movement and the other in classical music. On a Fulbright scholarship in Paris in the 1950s, he planned to abandon Tango all together to study composition with avant garde composer Nadia Boulanger. It was she who thankfully convinced him to stick close to his Argentinian roots instead of shifting focus to Western Art Music. This piece in particular is in the style of what has come to be known as *nuevo tango* ("new tango"), Piazzolla's own personal mix of traditional tango rhythms and jazz inspirations. Stomping rhythms are fused with sentimental cello melodies for a sensual and wild ride. After the composer's death in 1992, the piece served as the title for Maria Susana Azzi's biography *Le Grand Tango: The Life and Music of Astor Piazzolla*.

As always, thank you for joining us tonight. We look forward to seeing you again next month for the Miró Quartet for a fantastic program of Haydn, Dvořák, and Beethoven!

All the best,

Susanna Klein

Rennolds Board Member

Area Coordinator of Strings, Assistant Professor of Violin  
Virginia Commonwealth University

**Susanna's pick, if you want to dive in deeper:**  
***Secondinversion.org***

Check out music, blogs and interviews by Joshua Roman and Andrius Zlabys on [Secondinversion.org](http://Secondinversion.org), whose mission is to be "a music project dedicated to rethinking classical music." Just put either of the artists' names in the search tool in the top right hand corner.



## **About Joshua Roman**

Joshua Roman has earned an international reputation for his wide-ranging repertoire, a commitment to communicating the essence of music in visionary ways, artistic leadership and versatility. As well as being a celebrated performer, he is recognized as an accomplished composer and curator, and was named a TED Senior Fellow in 2015.

Recent seasons have seen Roman premiere *Awakening*, his own Cello Concerto, with the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra, and subsequently perform it with ProMusica Chamber Orchestra; make his debut with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra playing Dvorák's Cello Concerto; give a solo performance on the TED2015 main stage; perform a program of chamber works by Lera Auerbach at San Francisco Performances with Auerbach and violinist Philippe Quint; and make appearances with the Columbus, Fort Worth, New World, Seattle Symphonies as well as with the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. He also served as Alumnus-in-Residence at the prestigious Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara.

Roman has demonstrated inspirational artistic leadership throughout his career. As Artistic Director of TownMusic in Seattle he has showcased his own eclectic musical influences and chamber music favorites, while also promoting newly commissioned works. Under his direction, the series has offered world premieres of compositions by some of today's brightest young composers and performances by cutting-edge ensembles. In the 2015-16 season at TownMusic he presented his own song cycle, ... we do it to one another, based on Tracy K. Smith's book of poems *Life on Mars*, with soprano Jessica Rivera. He has also recently been appointed the inaugural Artistic Advisor of award-winning contemporary streaming channel Second Inversion, launched

by Seattle's KING-FM to cultivate the next generation of classical audiences. The cellist additionally took on a new curatorial role last summer, as Creative Partner of the Colorado Music Festival & Center for Musical Arts. The same organization sponsored him in April 2016 at the 68th Annual Conference on World Affairs on the University of Colorado campus, where he contributed his innovative ideas about how classical music is conceived and presented. Roman performed at the Kennedy Center Arts Summit that same month and is a member of the 2016 Kennedy Center Honors artists committee.

Roman's cultural leadership includes using digital platforms to harness new audiences. In 2009 he developed "The Popper Project," performing, recording and uploading the complete etudes from David Popper's High School of Cello Playing to his dedicated YouTube channel ([youtube.com/joshuamancello](http://youtube.com/joshuamancello)). In his latest YouTube project, "Everyday Bach," Roman performs Bach's cello suites in beautiful settings around the world. He has collaborated with photographer Chase Jarvis on Nikon video projects, and Paste magazine singled out Roman and DJ Spooky for their cello and iPad cover of Radiohead's "Everything in Its Right Place," created for the Voice Project. For his creative initiatives on behalf of classical music, Roman was named a TED Fellow in 2011, joining a select group of next-generation innovators who show potential to positively affect the world. He acted as curator for an outdoor amphitheater performance at the TED Summit in Banff in the Canadian Rockies this past summer.

Beyond these initiatives, Roman's adventurous spirit has led to collaborations with artists outside the music community, including his co-creation of "On Grace" with Tony Award-nominated actress Anna Deavere Smith, a work for actor and cello which premiered in February 2012 at San Francisco's Grace Cathedral. His outreach endeavors have taken

him to Uganda with his violin-playing siblings, where they played chamber music in schools, HIV/AIDS centers and displacement camps, communicating a message of hope through music.

Before embarking on a solo career, Roman spent two seasons as principal cellist of the Seattle Symphony, a position he won in 2006 at the age of 22. Since that time he has appeared as a soloist with the San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Mariinsky Orchestra, New World Symphony, Alabama Symphony, and Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional del Ecuador, among many others. An active chamber musician, Roman has collaborated with established artists such as Andrius Zlabys, Cho-Liang Lin, Assad Brothers, Earl Carlyss, Christian Zacharias and Yo-Yo Ma, as well as other dynamic young soloists and performers from New York's vibrant music scene, including the JACK Quartet, Talea Ensemble, Derek Bermel and the Enso String Quartet.

A native of Oklahoma City, Roman began playing the cello at the age of three on a quarter-size instrument, and gave his first public recital at age ten. Home-schooled until he was 16, he then pursued his musical studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music with Richard Aaron. He received his Bachelor's Degree in Cello Performance in 2004, and his Master's in 2005, as a student of Desmond Hoebig, former principal cellist of the Cleveland Orchestra. Roman is grateful for the loan of an 1899 cello by Giulio Degani of Venice.

## About Andrius Žlabys

Grammy-nominated pianist Andrius Žlabys has received international acclaim for his appearances with many of the world's leading orchestras, including The New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Rotterdam Symphony, and Philharmonic Orchestra of Buenos Aires.

He is a featured soloist in "Between two Waves" by Victor Kissine for piano and string orchestra released on ECM in 2013 in collaboration with Gidon Kremer and Kremerata Baltica. In 2012 Andrius Žlabys made his concerto debut at the Salzburg Festival performing Mozart's Concerto K.467 with the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra conducted by Mirga Grazinyte-Tyla.

Andrius Žlabys—born in Lithuania and trained at the Curtis Institute of Music—was 18 years old when the Chicago Tribune wrote: "Pianist-composer Andrius Žlabys is one of the most gifted young keyboard artists to emerge in years." Žlabys was also heralded by The New York Sun in a review titled "A Shining Hope of Pianists" after his recital at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Žlabys's artistry has received many other accolades from the press for his performances of "easy virtuosity" (The Strad), "generous and all encompassing" sound (The Philadelphia Inquirer), "spell-binding interpretation" (The Plain Dealer) and his "wealth of musical perception" (The Greenville News). This international acclaim has followed his uniquely honest approach to music, as described by The Philadelphia Inquirer: "The beloved C-major chord... rippled off Žlabys' hands with such open-hearted rightness that you couldn't escape the notion that the pianist was acting as Bach's ventriloquist..."

Mr. Žlabys's concerts have included appearances on many of the world's leading stages, such as Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center, Concertgebouw, Carnegie Hall, Phillips Collection, Teatro Colón, Wigmore Hall, Vienna's Musikverein and Suntory Hall. He has also appeared at numerous festivals both in the U.S. and abroad, including the Menuhin, Salzburg, Lockenhaus and Caramoor music festivals, and made his Carnegie Hall debut at the Isaac Stern Auditorium with the New York Youth Symphony conducted by Misha Santora in 2001 in a performance of Beethoven's First Piano Concerto. He was also invited the following season as soloist with Kremerata Baltica to perform Benjamin Britten's Young Apollo at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall.

Andrius Žlabys has enjoyed collaborations with several esteemed musicians, including violist Yuri Bashmet, violinist Hilary Hahn, and an enduring collaboration with violinist Gidon Kremer with whom Zlabys has toured extensively in Europe, Japan, South America, and the U.S.

In 2003, Žlabys received a Grammy nomination for his recording of Enescu's Piano Quintet with Gidon Kremer and Kremerata Baltica. A multifaceted musician of wide-ranging repertoire, Andrius Žlabys holds a special reverence for J. S. Bach, while remaining a strong advocate for the contemporary stage with numerous works commissioned by and written for him. He was a winner of 2000 Astral Artists National auditions.

Andrius Žlabys began piano studies at the age of six in his native Lithuania with Laima Jakniuniene at the Ciurlionis Art School, and continued his studies in the U.S. with Victoria Mushkatkol (Interlochen Arts Academy), Seymour Lipkin (Curtis Institute of Music), Sergei Babayan (Cleveland Institute of Music), and Claude Frank (Yale School of Music).

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