

# Daily Camera

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## Wu Han/David Finckel: Artist Series hosts unique duo David Finckel and Wu Han perform Tuesday at CU's Macky Auditorium.

By Wes Blomster

Wu Han is a versatile and charismatic pianist with a full schedule of solo recitals, concertos and chamber-music engagements. David Finckel is the cellist in the distinguished Emerson String Quartet, and he's also in demand for performances with leading orchestras.

Together, the two direct New York's Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the nation's biggest enterprise in this field. And, at the moment, they're finalizing plans for the fifth season of Music@Menlo, the chamber-music festival they founded in California's Silicon Valley five summers ago, after three years at the helm of La Jolla's SummerFest.

Faced by chaos in the recording industry, the two launched ArtistLed, the world's first musician-directed, Internet-based recording company, which has to date released nine discs, all acclaimed by critics.

At home, they cherish daughter Lilian, about to turn 13, and on Tuesday come to Boulder as the Wu Han and David Finckel Duo, currently the only regular cello-piano team in existence.

"Few musicians realize just how much repertory there is for this combination," says Wu Han from her Lincoln Center office. "And much of it is strong on the piano; Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy and Rachmaninoff — each composed a cello-piano sonata — were outstanding pianists themselves."

And, at the same time, really great cellists are hard to come by.

"You can count those playing today on the fingers of one hand," Wu Han says, and although Yo-Yo Ma, for example, plays recitals, he does so with various partners at the piano.

"Thus we have an unusual career," she says, realizing only as she chats, that this is their 25th anniversary as a duo. "We love playing together; if we try performing with another partner, it just doesn't seem right."

And the enthusiastic reaction of audiences has led to repeated return engage-

ments.

"People come backstage," Wu Han says. "We're amazed at their enthusiasm."

In a typical season, the couple plays 30 concerts, and Wu Han joins the Emerson quartet for a dozen performances.

"We're a family," she says of this collaboration.

And she shies away from concertos, because they commonly involve two rehearsals and three performances.

"That takes five days out of my life," she says.

Wu Han also tours with members of the Chamber Music Society, a branch of that program that she is currently enlarging.

All of which leaves the big question: How do they do it all?

"We do spend a certain amount of time in the office," Wu Han says. "But we have a lot of support — an excellent artistic administrator here in New York, for example, and a music advisor who makes proposals and suggests programs. And the Internet is a big help; today you can do anything anywhere."

Wu Han also derives energy from her work with young artists.

"I advise them on repertory," she says. "It's a lot of work and takes a lot of time, but it's very rewarding. It's the best job I've ever had, and I'm having the time of my life."

The duo's Boulder program, "The Unfolding of Music," traces the evolution of style from Bach to Britten.

"It's a journey through the Baroque, Classical and Romantic eras before landing in the 20th century," Wu Han says. "Each composer represents the finest that his time had to offer."

The program opens with Bach's Sonata for Viola da Gamba in G Major.

"It's one of those perfect pieces," the pianist says. "It shows the organic musical language of Bach. And from there we move to the classicism of Beethoven, a touch of romantic Schumann and on to the impressionism of Debussy and finally to Britten,



one of the great masters of the 20th century."

The program is, she says, a history of the cello.

"We'll embrace all the nuances of which the instrument is capable," she adds.

Beethoven's Sonata No. 3 in A major, Debussy's 1915 Sonata for Cello and Piano and Britten's Sonata in C for Cello and Piano, written in 1961 for Russian virtuoso Mstislav Rostropovich, are all original works for cello. Schumann's Adagio and Allegro, on the other hand, is performed by violists and clarinetists as well.

"But it sounds best on the cello," Wu Han says.

"We like things to be perfect," she says, surveying the busy life that she and Finckel lead. "Anything we touch we do the best we can; we don't know any other way to behave."

"We love the music so much."