



Alisa Weilerstein

Cellist

“Alisa Weilerstein ... is too big a talent to be pigeonholed.”

– New York

“A young cellist whose emotionally resonant performances of both traditional and contemporary music have earned her international recognition, ... Weilerstein is a consummate performer, combining technical precision with impassioned musicianship.” So stated the MacArthur Foundation when awarding Alisa Weilerstein a 2011 MacArthur “genius grant” Fellowship, prompting the *New York Times* to respond: “Any fellowship that recognizes the vibrancy of an idealistic musician like Ms. Weilerstein ... deserves a salute from everyone in classical music.” In performances marked by intensity, sensitivity, and a wholehearted immersion in each of the works she interprets, the American cellist has long proven herself to be in possession of a distinctive musical voice. An exclusive recording artist for Decca Classics since 2010, she is the first cellist to be signed by the prestigious label in more than 30 years.

Weilerstein releases her fifth album on Decca in September, playing Shostakovich’s two cello concertos with the Bavarian Radio Symphony under Pablo Heras-Casado, in performances recorded live last season. Her 2016-17 season also includes, for the first time in her career, performances of Bach’s complete suites for unaccompanied cello: at Caramoor, in Washington, DC, New York and in London. In January she embarks on a nine-city U.S. tour with longtime recital partner Inon Barnatan and clarinetist Anthony McGill, including a performance at New York’s Lincoln Center in Alice Tully Hall. The trio’s tour will include the world premiere of a piece written by Joseph Hallman specifically for this ensemble. She tours Europe with Barnatan later in the spring, with performances in Salzburg and a return to Wigmore Hall in London. Her busy international concert schedule this season features performances around the globe: she performs Britten’s Cello Symphony with the New World Symphony; Shostakovich’s First Cello Concerto with the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, the Netherlands Philharmonic, and the National Symphony in both Washington, DC and Moscow; Prokofiev’s *Sinfonia concertante* with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and the Dallas Symphony; Schumann with the San Francisco Symphony, and at Carnegie Hall in the company of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, with which she then tours the same program to Italy and Spain; Elgar with the Staatskapelle Weimar; Walton with Amsterdam’s Residentie Orkest; and Dvořák with the Minnesota Orchestra, Sydney Symphony, and the Tokyo Symphony on a three-stop tour of Japan, where she will also play four solo recitals. The cellist also performs Henri Dutilleux’s *Tout un monde lointain...* with Lisbon’s Gulbenkian

Orchestra, and gives the world premiere of Matthias Pintscher's Cello Concerto with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, which co-commissioned the piece for her.

The 2015-16 season saw Weilerstein give the world premiere of another new concerto commissioned expressly for her from a major European composer, Pascal Dusapin's *Outscape*, which she performed with the co-commissioning Chicago Symphony before giving its first European performances with the Stuttgart and Paris Opera Orchestras. Other concerto performances included Prokofiev's *Sinfonia concertante* with the Czech Philharmonic; Elgar with the London Symphony; Schumann with the Orchestre de Paris; Dutilleux's *Tout un monde lointain...* with Hamburg's NDR Symphony and the Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino; Hindemith with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony; Tchaikovsky with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande; Haydn with the Bavarian Radio Symphony and the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen; and Barber with the National Symphony in Washington, DC. Weilerstein made her Lucerne Festival Debut this past spring, playing the Dvořák Cello Concerto with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe under Bernard Haitink. In the summer of 2016, she gave the BBC Proms premiere of Matthias Pintscher's *Reflections of Narcissus* to rave reviews, with Pintscher himself conducting. Following the October release of their duo album debut on Decca with sonatas by Chopin and Rachmaninoff, Weilerstein reunited with Inon Barnatan for tours of the U.S. and of seven European capitals, including a return to London's Wigmore Hall.

For her first album on the Decca label, Weilerstein recorded the Elgar and Elliott Carter cello concertos with Daniel Barenboim and the Staatskapelle Berlin. The disc was named "Recording of the Year 2013" by *BBC Music*, which featured the cellist on the cover of its May 2014 issue. Her second Decca release, on which she plays Dvořák's Cello Concerto with the Czech Philharmonic, topped the U.S. classical chart, while her third, a compilation of unaccompanied 20th-century cello music titled *Solo*, was pronounced an "uncompromising and pertinent portrait of the cello repertoire of our time" (*ResMusica*, France). *Solo*'s centerpiece is the Kodály sonata, a signature work that Weilerstein revisits on the soundtrack of *If I Stay*, a 2014 feature film starring Chloë Grace Moretz in which the cellist makes a cameo appearance as herself.

Weilerstein has appeared with all the foremost orchestras of the United States and Europe, collaborating with conductors including Marin Alsop, Sir Andrew Davis, Gustavo Dudamel, Sir Mark Elder, Christoph Eschenbach, Alan Gilbert, Giancarlo Guerrero, Manfred Honeck, Marek Janowski, Neeme Järvi, Paavo Järvi, Jeffrey Kahane, Lorin Maazel, Cristian Măcelaru, Zubin Mehta, Ludovic Morlot, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Peter Oundjian, Matthias Pintscher, Donald Runnicles, Yuri Temirkanov, Michael Tilson Thomas, Jaap van Zweden, Osmo Vänskä, Simone Young and David Zinman. Her major career milestones include an emotionally tumultuous account of Elgar's concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic and Daniel Barenboim in Oxford, England, for the orchestra's 2010 European Concert, which was televised live to an audience of millions worldwide and subsequently released on DVD by EuroArts. She and Barenboim reunited in 2012-13 to play Elliott Carter's concerto on a German tour with the Berlin Staatskapelle. In 2009, she was one of four artists invited by Michelle Obama to participate in a widely celebrated and high profile classical music event at the White House, featuring student workshops hosted by the First Lady, and performances in front of an audience that included President Obama and the First

Family. A month later, Weilerstein toured Venezuela as soloist with the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra under Gustavo Dudamel. She has since made numerous return visits to teach and perform with the orchestra as part of its famed *El Sistema* music education program. Other highlights of recent seasons include her debut at the BBC Proms in 2010, and with England's Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, which she joined in 2013 for a 16-city U.S. tour.

Committed to expanding the cello repertoire, Weilerstein is an ardent champion of new music. She gave the New York premiere of Matthias Pintscher's *Reflections on Narcissus* under the composer's own direction during the New York Philharmonic's inaugural 2014 Biennial, and has worked extensively with Osvaldo Golijov, who rewrote *Azul* for cello and orchestra (originally premiered by Yo-Yo Ma) for her New York premiere performance at the opening of the 2007 Mostly Mozart Festival. Weilerstein has since played the work with orchestras around the world, besides frequently programming the Argentinean composer's *Omaramor* for solo cello. At the 2008 Caramoor festival, she gave the world premiere of Lera Auerbach's *24 Preludes for Violoncello and Piano* with the composer at the keyboard, and the two have subsequently reprised the work at the Schleswig-Holstein Festival, the Kennedy Center, and for San Francisco Performances. Joseph Hallman, a 2014 Grammy Award nominee, has also written multiple works for Weilerstein, including a cello concerto that she premiered with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic in 2008, and a trio that she premieres on tour with Barnatan and clarinetist Anthony McGill in the spring of 2017.

Weilerstein has appeared at major music festivals throughout the world, including Aspen, Bad Kissingen, Delft, Edinburgh, Jerusalem Chamber Music, La Jolla SummerFest, Mostly Mozart, Salzburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Tanglewood, and Verbier. In addition to her appearances as a soloist and recitalist, Weilerstein performs regularly as a chamber musician. She has been part of a core group of musicians at the Spoleto Festival USA for the past eight years and also performs with her parents, Donald and Vivian Hornik Weilerstein, as the Weilerstein Trio, the trio-in-residence at Boston's New England Conservatory.

The cellist is the winner of both Lincoln Center's 2008 Martin E. Segal prize for exceptional achievement and the 2006 Leonard Bernstein Award. She received an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2000 and was selected for two prestigious young artists programs in the 2000-01 season: the ECHO (European Concert Hall Organization) "Rising Stars" recital series and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Chamber Music Society Two.

Born in 1982, Weilerstein discovered her love for the cello at just two and a half, when her grandmother assembled a makeshift set of instruments from cereal boxes to entertain her while she was ill with chicken pox. Although immediately drawn to the Rice Krispies box cello, Weilerstein soon grew frustrated that it didn't produce any sound. After persuading her parents to buy her a real cello at the age of four, she developed a natural affinity for the instrument and gave her first public performance six months later. At 13, in October 1995, she played Tchaikovsky's "Rococo" Variations for her Cleveland Orchestra debut, and in March 1997 she made her first Carnegie Hall appearance with the New York Youth Symphony. A graduate of the Young Artist Program at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she studied with Richard Weiss,

the cellist also holds a degree in history from Columbia University, from which she graduated in May 2004. In November 2008, Weilerstein, who was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when she was nine, became a Celebrity Advocate for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

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