

Cellist Julia Hagen to make Cleveland Orchestra debut in Beethoven's Triple Concerto

by Mike Telin



“When I think about playing with the Cleveland Orchestra it still sounds like a dream,” cellist Julia Hagen said during a recent zoom conversation. “It still feels surreal, but it’s going to be such an honor to share the stage with an orchestra that has so much history — and I’m very excited to get to meet them and to work with them.”

On Wednesday, November 6 at 7:30 pm, Hagen will make her Cleveland Orchestra debut at Severance Music Center when she joins pianist Igor Levit and violinist Augustin Hadelich for a performance of Beethoven’s *Triple Concerto*.

Under the direction of Franz Welser-Möst, the evening will also include Levit as soloist in the composer’s *Piano Concerto No. 3*. The program, which will be repeated on November 7 at 7:30 pm, is the first of three that feature Igor Levit in all six of Beethoven’s concertos for the instrument. The series runs through November 17. Tickets are available [online](#).

Hagen, the 2024 winner of the UBS Young Artist Award, said she looks forward to reconnecting with the pianist she first met at a chamber music academy in Heidelberg, Germany. “He was one of the teachers and he liked my playing. And since then we’ve shared many concerts together including playing piano trios with Renaud Capuçon. Working with Igor is incredible because there’s so much trust on stage, which allows you to be so free and flexible.”

Although she has not previously worked with Hadelich, she is a huge fan of his playing. “I can’t wait to meet him and because the two string parts in the *Triple Concerto* have so

many things to work on before we meet with Igor or the orchestra, I'm very curious to see how that process will go."

Hagen noted that the Conceto's cello part is famously difficult because it is not idiomatically written for the instrument. "Rostropovich said that it's the most difficult piece he ever played. Then we need to play both as a piano trio and with the orchestra. So there are many difficulties which hopefully no one will hear. But I think it's an incredible piece which is way underrated. I can't wait for the audience in Cleveland to hear it and hopefully they will agree with me."

Hagen, who began playing the cello at the age of five, grew up in a musical family — her father Clemens Hagen is a cellist and her older siblings play piano and violin. "I remember listening to them and soon it was not enough to just listen, I also wanted to play something. And it was my wish to play the cello. I loved the sound, and as a kid I had this image of hugging the instrument. So I had a very playful connection with it."

She realized when she began studying with Enrico Bronzi in Salzburg at the age of twelve that she wanted to play the instrument professionally. "He was so passionate about music and the cello. And the way he shared his love for the profession — I don't like the word because it's so much more than a profession. It was just that everyone in the class became addicted to music when we were listening to his lessons. So I think from the moment I entered his class I knew I wanted to play the cello for the rest of my life."

While she has an overflowing dance card of performances awaiting her, she is especially excited about performing Arnold Schönberg's *Verklärte Nacht* with her father in Amsterdam and Hamburg. "It will be so nice to travel with my dad. It feels really special for me."

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