

**The Mesa-Yakushev Duo** is Cuban-American cellist **Thomas Mesa**, winner of the \$50,000 First Prize in the 2016 Sphinx Competition, and Russian pianist **Ilya Yakushev** ([www.ilyayakushev.com](http://www.ilyayakushev.com)), with many awards and honors to his credit. The duo's career was launched in part by their extremely successful showcase for presenters at Weill/Carnegie Recital Hall, the result of winning APAP's highly competitive 2017 Young Performers Career Advancement audition.

Since then, the Mesa-Yakushev Duo has performed at venues and festivals from coast-to-coast, including the Flagler Museum in Palm Beach; La Jolla Athenaeum; California Center for the Performing Arts in Escondido; Nantucket Musical Arts; Wildflower Festival and ArtQuest Festival in Pennsylvania; Bryant University in Rhode Island; the North Dakota Museum of Art; Mayville State University; and Community Chamber Concerts, Bryan, TX.

Rave reviews include *"The pair's playing was grounded in storytelling, as great musical performances often are . . . Mesa and Yakushev always played on equal footing, never with the piano serving as the accompanist to the cello . . . a musical performance that encapsulates the best that good drama has to offer."* —*Palm Beach Daily News*:

After the pandemic caused the cancellation of all 26 of their '20-21 concerts, their first live performance, at the Wildflower Festival in Pennsylvania, received this presenter feedback:

**"THOMAS AND ILYA WERE STUPENDOUS!** I cannot say enough good things about these two superlative musicians and how much the audience loved them. They had the audience eating out of their hands from the moment they walked on stage until the last note. Not only are they wonderful performers, they are terrific to work with.

The audience was mesmerized by their musicianship and their amazing synergy. Each one enhances the other's playing, and they have such wonderful charisma both on stage and off. I love that both of them have great rapport with the audience and a wonderful sense of humor. Everyone enjoyed their comments and their good natured kidding with each other. As people were leaving the venue, they were all saying wonderful things about how terrific the concert was — exactly what any presenter wants to hear." —Judi Mortensen, Director

Cuban-American cellist Thomas Mesa won the \$50,000 First Prize in the 2016 Sphinx Competition. His performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl were seen by over 30,000 people. *"A listener with closed eyes would have been hard pressed to distinguish his shapely, expressive performance from that of an artist two or three times his age."* —Cleveland Plain Dealer (performance with the Cleveland Orchestra)

Pianist **Ilya Yakushev** has performed over the world. His playing was hailed as "little short of heroic" (New York Times), and his concert with the San Francisco Symphony

was named "One of the Top 10 Classical Music Events of the Year" by the San Francisco Chronicle.