

# The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music

April 16, 2021 1:00 p.m.

*Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall Online*



## Audrey Chen, cello Jiarong Li, piano

*1* for violoncello solo (2018)

Karmit Fadael  
(b. 1996)

Suite No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1008 (1717–23)

*Prelude*

*Sarabande*

*Minuet I and II*

J. S. Bach  
(1685–1750)

Suite No. 1 for Cello Solo, Op. 72 (1964)

*Canto Primo*

*Fuga*

*Lamento*

*Canto Secondo*

*Serenata*

*Marcia*

*Canto Terzo*

*Bordone*

*Moto perpetuo e Canto Quarto*

Benjamin Britten  
(1913–76)

### INTERMISSION

Sonata for violoncello and piano (1948)

*Allegro – Tempo di Marcia*

*Cavatine*

*Ballabile*

*Finale*

Francis Poulenc  
(1899–1963)

*Adoration* for Organ (1951) arr. by Elaine Fine

Florence Price  
(1887–1953)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.

## Notes on the Program

### **Karmit Fadael 1 For Solo Cello**

Meditative and brooding, Karmit Fadael's piece *1 For Solo Cello* requires a profound and unyielding commitment to listen and care deeply. The composer writes:

*'I' is a piece I wrote during my fourth year. The piece consists of two different characters emerging into one, hence the title. The first character is more melodic and dramatic. The second one is very static and consists of very slow glissandi. Throughout the piece you hear the worlds getting to know each other and blend together.*

### **J. S. Bach Suite No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1008**

Of his six cello suites, Bach wrote two in minor keys. The second suite, in D Minor, and the fifth suite, in C Minor, possess a gravitas that distinguish them from the brighter and more cheerful major keys of the other four suites. However, what distinguishes the D Minor Second Suite from the C Minor Fifth Suite (aside from the lack of a daunting fugue in the Prelude) is a sense of reserved modesty. In comparing Bach's set of six Sonatas and Partitas for violin with his six Cello Suites, German musicologist Philipp Spitta wrote, "The passionate and penetrating energy, the inner fire and warmth which often grew to be painful in its intensity [in the violin], is here softened down to a quieter beauty and a generally serene grandeur, as was to be expected from the deeper pitch and fuller tone of the cello." The same can be said for the second suite in the context of the larger six suite series. Solemn yet serene, the second suite possesses great feeling, but it remains relatively contained within its sequential simplicity.

The *Prelude* begins with an arpeggio that spells out the D minor triad. From there, running eighths and sixteenths pave the way for an improvisatory journey, where sequences pave the way for a winding path that culminates into one questioning chord. The *Prelude* ends with a series of chords, held together through ornamentation lead towards the final cadence.

The *Sarabande* is a stately Spanish dance drawn from Arab influences. In triple meter, the Sarabande typically puts the weight on the second beat. Grave and somber at first, the piece gives off glimpses of hope through harmonic dissonances that yearn for its resolutions.

*Minuets I and II* are a pair of contrasting dances. Also in triple meter, *Minuet I* is in D minor, energetic and rustic, laden with double stop chords that make for a rich texture. *Minuet II*, in the major parallel key of D major, is sweet and elegant with a simple line that directly contrasts with its denser counterpart.

### **Benjamin Britten Suite No. 1 for Cello Solo, Op. 72**

Benjamin Britten first became acquainted with the great cellist Mstislav Rostropovich in 1960 following the premiere of Dmitri Shostakovich's first cello concerto. Four years later, he presented a Christmas gift to his new friend – his Cello Suite No. 1 for solo cello. Britten planned to take upon an enormous undertaking: writing six suites of his own in response to the monumental precedent set by Bach. While Britten only managed to complete three before passing away from heart failure, his works have a lasting legacy in the cello repertoire.

A unique progression of movements, the piece begins with a *Canto*, derived from the Latin word *cantus* for “song.” Also used to denote sections of a long narrative poem, the *Canto* indicates the start of an epic poetic journey. Throughout the piece, there are a total of four *Cantos*, all distinctly related to one another through the arpeggiation of chords and clear declamatory syntax, but each evoking their own personality. *Canto Primo* is lush, tremulous, and resonant, made possible by warmth of the arpeggiated chords with open ninths. Its introductory quality segues well into the *Fuga*, a dazzling fugue reminiscent of Bach counterpoint. Next is the deeply melancholy *Lamento*, which immediately precedes the calmer and gentler *Canto Secondo*, tinged with deep empathy, acknowledging the pain that came before it. Then comes the *Serenata* and the *Marcia*, the two more enigmatic inner movements of the piece. The *Serenata* is composed of only pizzicato, with similar qualities to the Serenade in Debussy’s cello sonata. The *Marcia* is sonically vivid – it conjures up trumpet calls in the distance, the marching of soldiers nearby, a snare drum or perhaps even gunfire, constantly interweaving between one another.

Next is the *Canto Terzo*, a dark and brooding melodrama, the precursor to the tense calm before the storm that is the *Bordone*. The *Bordone*, derived from the late Latin word *burdō*, meaning “mule,” is made distinct by the D pitch drone that relentlessly lingers throughout the entire movement. The first half of the *Bordone* is a dialogue between a slow ominous pizzicato line and a fast and frenzied line that travels up and down the fingerboard with alarming speed. The second half invokes what sounds like a children’s song, but made dark and chilling by the undertow of the D drone. It ends only when the storm, the *Moto Perpetuo*, begins. This final movement evokes the ebb and flow of turbulent storm, wind, and rain, and the final *Canto*, *Canto Quarto*, is interwoven into this tumultuous landscape. It makes its appearance first as if breaking through the chaos in the form of miraculous sunlight. However, while its rays of warm light continually succumb to the interruptive bursts of hurricane energy, it takes on renewed fervor at the end before all is lost abruptly in a frightening drop back to darkness.

### **Francis Poulenc Sonata for Cello and Piano, FP. 143**

Poulenc’s cello sonata is the unmistakable sound of whimsy, sentimentality, and wit. Of its four movements, the first, third, and fourth are cheeky and fun, classical with a mix of French cabaret, while the second movement is an expressive, lyrical gem. Beneath the playful exteriors are technically challenging cello parts; Pierre Fournier, the cellist to whom Poulenc dedicated the sonata, was a key collaborator in the composition process. One can reason that the combination of Poulenc, whose chamber music *oeuvre* had consisted primarily of piano and woodwind music, with Fournier, a consummate cellist, ended up bearing this unique work: a hodgepodge of fanciful yet difficult and awkward cellistic feats, made effortless and effervescent by the limitless dexterity of Fournier’s fingers.

Fournier and Poulenc gave the first performance of the sonata in 1949. While at that time it received a lukewarm reception, judged by some to be “pleasant no more,” the piece later became a beloved standard of cello sonata repertoire. The dialogue is witty and sharp, and the melodies yearning and soaring. While the bulk of the sonata is fun and exuberant, each movement has its own character in which at the core lies a recurring theme. Woven expertly into their respective landscapes, this melody is a siren, lurking within the work and entrancing everyone in its path whenever it emerges.

#### *I. Allegro – Tempo di Marcia.*

As stipulated, the *Tempo di Marcia* is march-like, made prominent by the first strike of the piano – a bold and angular exclamation. But between each cornerstone are lush breaths of fresh air, overall

contributing to a lively, exuberant and certainly expressive quality. The cello and piano pass phrases between each other back-and-forth, as if throwing witty remarks and punchlines one after the other. Then right in the middle of the movement, we encounter a beautiful *sans vibrato* melody by the cello. This phrase is the recurring theme mentioned earlier, an important player in the movements to come. Beautiful and alluring, it is there only for a slight moment before things wind down and we jump right back into a dancing playful section, later to return to the march rhythms and breezy colors from earlier.

## II. *Cavatine*.

On many occasions I've walked through the conservatory gardens of Central Park with this second movement on repeat in my ears, the music strumming sentimental nostalgia throughout my whole body. The piece is to me what Central Park may be for the city of New York. The first few chords of the piano introduction, hymn-like, constitutes a safe place where light is a hazy golden glow and flowers are friendly and vibrant amidst the hubbub of the world around. It is a place where the street noise ceases, time stops, and terrain becomes sacred and magical. Then, we hear the *sans vibrato* melody from the first movement, but this time, with vibration and marked *très intense*. The heart of the whole sonata lies in this moment, when the recurring phrase slowly blooms and reveals its full glory through the piano, supported by the grandeur of cello arpeggiations.

The title of this movement makes me think of another famous Cavatina, the one found in Beethoven's Op. 130 string quartet. What violinist Mark Steinberg labels as "one of the most unsettling passages in all of music," the middle *Beklemmt* passage of Beethoven's Cavatina is pulsating, heavy at heart, anguished yet revelatory. The ending of Poulenc's Cavatina, marked *Excessivement calme*, has a similar pulse: deep and dark F sharp octaves in the bass of the piano support the most exquisite and almost painfully sweet melody in the cello. All the nuanced emotions of nostalgia, sweetness, and longing are stifled by the attempt to remain calm, creating the illusion of a reality that in the end was only a bittersweet dream.

## III. *Ballabile*.

A delight to play and listen to, the *Ballabile* is a momentary respite from the preceding movement and the allure of the melody that haunts the sonata. "Ballabile" itself refers to a dance within a classical ballet performed by the corps de ballet. This movement is as if you've stepped into a children's toy store – it is an orderly chaos of a magical fairy godmother's lair for all things petite and fantastical – ballerina dancers chassé-ing about, sparkling dust blown into the air, feathers and flutters and flippant feet. There's an element of sweet coyness to it all too – a smile here, a wink there.

## IV. *Finale*.

As expected from a composer who closely collaborated with a virtuosic cellist, the bulk of this movement is a circus of literal finger acrobatics. Clean and crisp textures indicate fantastic feats, devilish arpeggiations and flying trapezes, and a sarcastic clown act. Right about the middle of the movement, we are whirled back into a dreamland reminiscent of the three previous movements, but as if everything had been blended into a unique and intriguing composite landscape. The phrase we first encountered in the first movement and watched unfold in the second movement is back, but this time, more calm and wise. This passage is a satisfying and sweet farewell to the lyricism of the sonata before we are whisked back to the recapitulation of the circus. The announcer steps into the spotlight once more to conclude the entire piece with the cello's ascending scale up – a flourish, and then the final chord of the piano — a deep bow.

### **Florence Price *Adoration* arr. for cello and piano**

Widely arranged for many variations of instruments today, *Adoration* first appeared in the 1951 issue of the *The Organ Portfolio*. An organist herself, Florence Price wrote many works for the instrument, having received her undergraduate degree in both piano and organ performance. *Adoration* is loving and sweet, beautiful in its simplicity yet deeply nuanced in the deep emotions of respect and love it is able to conjure through its melody.

### **About the Artists**

A Washington native, cellist **Audrey Chen** is a passionate solo and chamber musician dedicated to sharing the music-making process of discovery and collaboration with the rest of the world. She has performed in venues across the globe, including at Carnegie Hall, the Mariinsky Theatre, Royal Albert Hall, and the Kennedy Center, and has performed as a guest artist with the Boston Chamber Music Society, A Far Cry, the Silk Road Ensemble, the Parker Quartet, and the Borromeo Quartet.

Audrey's festival appearances include the Ravinia Steans Music Institute, Perlman Music Program Chamber Music Workshop, Tanglewood Music Center, Taos School of Music, and Sarasota Music Festival. After receiving a Bachelor's from Harvard University and Master's in Music from the New England Conservatory, she is now based in NYC, pursuing a Doctorate in Musical arts from the CUNY Graduate Center. She is also the cellist of the acclaimed New-York based Argus Quartet.

Pianist **Jiarong Li** enjoys sharing her music with the community and collaborating with instrumentalists. She is currently pursuing her doctorate with fellowship at Manhattan School of Music, where she studies with John Forconi. Jiarong holds a Master of Music from New England Conservatory, where she studied with Bruce Brubaker and Pei-Shan Lee, and a Bachelor of Music from Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where she was admitted with first place, and studied with Xiang Zou.

She has won prizes at competitions including first prize in the Oxford Philomusica Piano Festival and Summer Academy Competition, the New England Conservatory Honors Competition, the International Music Competition-Best Schubert Performance, the Distinction Award of the Hong Kong-Asia Piano Open Competition, and was a finalist at New England Conservatory Piano Concerto Competition, semi-finalist at Foundation for Chinese Performing Arts International Concerto Competition, and a collaborative piano fellow at Bowdoin Music Festival. She is an artist in residence in Grace Note Farm in Pascoag, RI. Jiarong is also a Si-Yo Artist.

## Spring 2021 Online Events

### March

- 8 Ari Livne, piano
- 12 Han Chen, piano

### April

- 7 Kirsten Jermé, cello
- 16 Audrey Chen, cello
- 23 Carrie Frey, viola
- 26 Federico Diaz, guitar
- 28 Antonio Valentin, piano
- 30 Austin Lewellen, double bass

### May

- 3 Thapelo Masita, cello
- 5 Clare Monfredo, cello
- 7 GC Composers
- 12 Julia Danitz, violin
- 14 GC Composers
- 17 Isabel Fairbanks, cello
- 19 Jeremy Kienbaum, viola
- 21 Fifi Zhang, piano

All events begin at 1:00pm and will be live-streamed free of charge at this link:

<https://gc-cuny.zoom.us/j/95813229159>

For detailed concert information, please visit our website at: <http://gcmusic.commonsgc.cuny.edu>