

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

April 26, 2022 1:00 p.m.

*Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall*



Audrey Chen, cello  
with Gabrielle Chou, piano

Sonata in B-Flat Major, Op. 46 (1858)

*Allegro Moderato*

*Andante Sostenuto*

*Finale. Allegro*

Louise Farrenc

(1804–75)

*Sept Papillons* (2000)

Kaija Saariaho

(b. 1952)

~ Brief Pause ~

Sonata in E Minor (1913)

*Allegro Moderato*

*Scherzo: Allegro*

*Adagio Sostenuto*

*Allegro Comodo*

Dora Pejačević

(1885–1923)

## Notes on the Program

While this program happens to feature all women composers, by their own right, these pieces are some of the most intriguing and beautiful pieces of music I have encountered for the cello. Despite utilizing very different techniques and aesthetics, all three composers write with such imagination and innovation, displaying an incredible sensitivity and ear for music that heals, stirs, and touches the soul.

I first came upon Saariaho's *Sept Papillons* as an undergraduate when I was browsing the extensive list of works for solo cello available at Harvard's Loeb Music Library. Once I listened to a recording of the piece, I knew I had to learn it, although it has taken me several years to acquire the technical acumen necessary to execute the unique demands that Saariaho's butterflies call for. A few years later, I was lucky enough to hear a few movements of Dora Pejačević's sonata performed live at an intimate house concert. Not to be confused with Polish composer Grażyna Bacewicz, who bears a last name that when spoken aloud sounds slightly similar, Dora Pejačević is a Croatian composer whose works have unfortunately fallen into obscurity even within her home country but most definitely are worth sharing. I was excited to show her music to several of my musician friends, and following one such conversation, the friend recommended that I also take a listen to Farrenc's Cello Sonata, whose works (particularly chamber works) have been seeing a greater renaissance within the last few years. I fell in love with the piece immediately.

This program is whimsical and captivating, and it has been an absolute delight to prepare. This would not have been possible without the willingness of my collaborator Gabrielle Chou and my teacher Marcy Rosen to explore these beautiful works along with me, and I hope that those who hear the music from my recital will be just as thrilled to discover these works as I was.

Born to an artistic family, **Louise Farrenc**, born Dumont, was one of the first women to achieve recognition and success in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for a diverse array of talents – composition, pedagogy, scholarly work, and piano performance. Named at just age 38 as a professor of piano of the Paris Conservatory in 1842, Farrenc was a piano virtuoso who garnered her stellar reputation not only through her playing but also by leading many of her own students to win major awards. Furthermore, while women were barred from compositional study at the conservatory, Farrenc sought lessons from Anton Reicha at a young age, the same professor who taught the likes of Hector Berlioz, Franz Liszt, and Cesar Franck. The compositional scene in the mid-1800s was not an easy environment to write in, particularly after the wake of Beethoven's enormous impact, yet Farrenc contributed many important works to the symphonic and chamber music repertoire, including three symphonies and two piano quintets.

Farrenc's **Sonata in B-flat Major, Op. 46** for cello and piano was one of the last compositions she wrote. One can hear the heavy influence of Beethoven's set of cello sonatas in this three movement work, where the piano and cello share roles as equal partners and partake in virtuosic arpeggiation, scales, and broken octave passages. However, Farrenc combines that influence with her ear for lyricism, and her unique compositional style produces beautiful textures without losing simplicity, refinement, and effortlessness. The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, flows freely with enchanting and whimsical melodies, enhanced with moments of dialogue and unison between the cello and piano. A gentle and tender Sicilienne follows in the second movement, titled *Andante sostenuto*, radiating warmth and affection. The final movement is a lighthearted and brilliant *Allegro*, with dazzling virtuosic passages, fugues, and intriguing harmonic transitions.

Finnish composer **Kaija Saariaho** has garnered massive success and worldwide impact through her compositions. She is known for her “characteristically luxuriant and mysterious textures,” often through combining live acoustic instrumental music with electronics, and she often draws inspiration for her music from nature, fine arts, and literature.

*Sept Papillons* was commissioned by the Rudolf Steiner Foundation and premiered in 2000 by cellist Anssi Karttunen, to whom the piece was also dedicated. Saariaho began work on this piece in Salzburg during the rehearsals of her first opera, *L'Amour de Loin*, where she sought to capture a world very different from the themes of an opera on love and yearning. Thus emerged the butterfly, a fragile, ephemeral, and mysterious creature represented through these seven miniatures that are at once ubiquitous yet fleeting, with no seemingly clear beginning or end. Saariaho uses intricate cello harmonic capabilities, sul ponticello, and tremolo bow techniques among others to create the unique atmospheres of seven fluttering and enchanting little worlds.

**Dora Pejačević** has left behind a considerable catalog of compositions, putting her on the map as a major Croatian composer of late Romantic music, although many of her compositions have yet to be published. Born into a Hungarian-Croatian noble family, she received piano lessons from her mother but was largely self-taught in composition, which she began at the age of 12.

Well-connected amongst artists and intellectuals of her time, Pejačević attended the 1911 premiere of Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*. Two years later, Pejačević saw the completion of her first piano concerto as well as the **Sonata for Cello and Piano in E Minor**. Perhaps as a result, similar late Romantic features are displayed in both pieces, and her cello sonata is full of lush melodies, exquisitely modulating harmonies, and a wide range of emotional expression, from Mendelssohn-like waltzes to brooding laments. The first movement, marked *Allegro moderato*, opens with a searching melody sung by the cello. Throughout, there are moments of soaring expression, tender and hopeful, complemented by tight contrapuntal passages between the cello and piano. The second movement maintains the sweeping momentum but is a playful, virtuosic, yet slightly ominous *Scherzo*, enclosing a warm and expressive trio section within. The following movement, *Adagio Sostenuto*, is darker and weightier. Written in 5/4 time, the piano introduces the lumbering melody before the cello enters in its lower range, wandering melancholily and at other times declaiming emphatically. The final movement, *Allegro Comodo*, provides the necessary respite – a victorious E major that swirls and breezes through virtuosic piano passages and ends with a triumph.

Just one year later came the events of World War I, and Pejačević volunteered as a nurse in her home village by day and threw herself into composing at night to cope with the grotesque reality surrounding her, churning out works like her *Symphony in F Sharp Minor*. As a result of experiencing the war firsthand, she grew to shun her aristocratic background of class and privilege, scorning their disinterest in the welfare of the common people. She forged her own path through music and married a young officer by the name of Ottomar Ritter von Lumbe. Unfortunately, Pejačević died at the young age of 38 due to kidney failure and childbirth complications. Even at her deathbed, she refused to be buried in the family crypt and requested only that her name “Dora” and the words “Rest now” be engraved on her tombstone. She also asked that all donations in her memory be directed to musicians in need. Though the cello sonata was written in an earlier time of her life, the music continues to reflect the warm, highly sensitive, and selfless nature that Pejačević has continually embodied.

## About the Artists

Cellist **Audrey Chen** is a passionate solo and chamber musician dedicated to spreading the joy of chamber music and expanding classical music for all. Originally from Washington State, Audrey has concertized with the Seattle Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra Summer Institute Orchestra, and the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra. She has also collaborated as a guest artist with the Boston Chamber Music Society, Silk Road Ensemble, Parker Quartet, Borromeo Quartet, Argus Quartet, and Boston-based A Far Cry.

Audrey's festival appearances include performing at Music@Menlo, Ravinia Steans Music Institute, Four Seasons Chamber Music, Perlman Music Program, Tanglewood Music Center, Taos Music School, and Sarasota Music Festival. She received her B.A. from Harvard University in 2018 and an M.M. from the New England Conservatory the following year, where her teachers included Laurence Lesser and Lluís Claret. Currently, she is pursuing a D.M.A. at the CUNY Graduate Center under Marcy Rosen while teaching at CUNY Hunter College. She was also named a 2022 recipient of the prestigious Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship. In her free time, Audrey enjoys watching films and making greeting cards.

**Gabrielle Chou** is a New York-based pianist and violinist seeking to defy genres and break barriers in music education and performance tradition. On both instruments she performs solo, chamber music, and in large ensembles, teaches and lectures, coaches chamber music, collaborates with composers and dancers, and is active in community engagement. Her education includes the Colburn Music Academy, The Juilliard School, and the CUNY Graduate Center, where she is getting her doctorate, and her teachers include Jerome Lowenthal and Richard Goode on piano and Lewis Kaplan on violin. Gabrielle is the winner of the Center for Musical Excellence's 2018 International Performing Arts Grant and has been a piano and violin soloist with orchestras throughout the US, Europe, and Asia; currently she is faculty at Baruch College, staff pianist and teaching fellow at Juilliard, and plays in Metropolis Ensemble and Nu Deco Ensemble. She loves art museums, aquariums, and science fiction.