

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

March 2, 2023 6:00 p.m.

*Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall*



Joseph Staten, cello  
Luis F. Ortiz, piano

Suite No. 3 in C Major for Unaccompanied Cello, BWV 1009 (c. 1720) J. S. Bach  
*Prelude* (1685–1750)

*Between Worlds* for Solo Cello (2019) Carlos Simon  
(b. 1986)

Cello Sonata No. 4 in C Major, Op. 102 No. 1 (1815) Ludwig van Beethoven  
*Andante – Allegro vivace* (1770–1827)  
*Adagio – Allegro vivace*

Cello Sonata No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 38 (1865) Johannes Brahms  
*Allegro non troppo* (1833–97)  
*Allegretto quasi Menuetto*  
*Allegro*

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.  
Please switch off your cell phones and refrain from taking flash pictures.

## Notes on the Program

The **Six Cello Suites** of **Johann Sebastian Bach** are a cornerstone of the cello repertoire. Written when he was in Leipzig (toward the end of his career), Bach was able to write for instruments and ensembles which his previous job wouldn't have allowed him to. In the Prelude from his Third Suite, Bach creates suspense with upward scalar motion toward the higher range, and releases tension with downward motion toward the lower register. In the piece's climax, the high range collides with the low in an extended passage of arpeggios where the cello resembles an organ. Unlike the other movements of the Suite, the Prelude is completely improvisational and does not follow any particular set of rules regarding form or structure.

Born in Washington D.C. and raised in Atlanta, **Carlos Simon** is an internationally renowned, GRAMMY-nominated composer whose works have been performed by such groups as the London Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra (at the Kennedy Center), and the New York Philharmonic. *Between Worlds* is based on the collected works of the late Bill Traylor, a former slave in Alabama whose work reflects the history he lived through: the Civil War, Emancipation, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the Great Migration. The piece's title comes from *Between Worlds: The Art of Bill Traylor*, a book and Smithsonian exhibition which were written and curated, respectively, by Leslie Umberger.<sup>1</sup>

Source: <https://www.carlossimonmusic.com/works/between-worlds-2>

**Beethoven** finished writing his **Fourth Cello Sonata** in 1815, and it was later published in 1817. At this point in his life, Beethoven was almost completely deaf and the productivity he enjoyed during his middle period had declined substantially. This piece is considered by many scholars to be the first work of Beethoven's famous "late period," where the composer experimented with unconventional forms and dissonance. On the manuscript of his Fourth Cello Sonata, Beethoven wrote the words "*freie sonata*" or in English, "free sonata," which explains (at least partially) the unusual forms of each movement, and the fact that there are only two movements where there would normally be four.

The first movement begins with the cello alone on a melody which the composer imbued with several character markings: *cantabile* (singing), *dolce* (sweetly), and *teneramente* (tenderly). In addition, the cello is marked *piano* (soft) and the tempo is *Andante*. This series of expression markings reflects the aforementioned idiosyncrasies of Beethoven's late period; no composer before him would write such explicit interpretive directions in the score.

Towards the end of the cello's entrance, the piano joins the cello for a conversational duet that lasts for the entire introduction. The cello and piano trade primary and accompaniment roles for the entire first section, whose character is one of utter ease and peace. However, just as rapture is achieved, it is interrupted by a rude awakening with the cello and piano playing a fast, loud, and accented melody in A minor. This is the beginning of the second section, which is a complete foil to the introduction: drastic dynamic and character changes throughout, in contrast to the peaceful stasis of the beginning.

The second movement begins in a similar character to the first movement. However, Beethoven quickly takes a turn into darkness, followed by ecstasy, and then unexpectedly launches into the quick second section of the movement. This section is defined by a playful and excitable character, which comes from a series of unexpected key changes, textures, and sudden dynamic contrasts.

In 1865, **Johannes Brahms** finished composing his **first Sonata for Cello and Piano**. Unlike traditional sonatas, this only contains three movements instead of four. Brahms did write a slow movement, but for some reason ended up not including it in the final publication. The dedicatee of the sonata, Dr. Josef Gänsbacher, reportedly beseeched Brahms to at least show him the movement, but no record exists of its performance or publication. Gänsbacher taught voice in Vienna and was an amateur cellist, albeit not a very good one. In fact, there is a famous anecdote which describes a private performance of the piece where Brahms' piano playing was so deliberately loud as to cover up the less than competent cellist.

The first movement is written in sonata form, beginning with the theme in the cello's low register. It is passed back and forth between piano and cello until the dramatic transition and eventual entry into a tempestuous second theme area. The first half of the movement ends in a state of melancholic repose similar to the beginning of the movement. The second half begins tenuously in the key of G minor, and the music makes its way through several different keys until the recapitulation in E minor. This development section is typical of Brahms in that he uses snippets/fragments of the first theme and direct reiterations of the second theme to create a narrative. At the recapitulation, we remain in E minor for the second theme which, in the exposition, was actually written in B minor. After the restatement of the tempestuous second theme, the cello and piano arrive at a peaceful repose which they maintain for the rest of the piece until its conclusion in the major.

The second movement is a dance movement (hence the marking "*quasi Menuetto*"), and is written in typical A-B-A form. It begins with a minuet-like theme "A," with the cello and piano each taking turns at the melody. This is followed by a trio section "B" with flowing lines in both the cello and piano, eventually returning to the same dance-like material from the beginning "A." The A-B-A form juxtaposes the formal character of the minuet with the infatuated lyricism of the trio.

The third movement begins with a theme in the piano reminiscent of the Baroque era. It is based on the opening of the 13th *Contrapunctus* from Johann Sebastian Bach's *Art of the Fugue*. Some scholars argue that the first movement is also based off of one of the *contrapuncti*, but it is uncertain. As in a fugue, the second voice (cello) enters a few bars after the initial statement (piano), a fifth up in pitch. Brahms writes a counter theme for the piano which clashes rhythmically with the cello's triplets, a classic Brahmsian device, which recurs throughout the movement. The cello and piano alternate their roles as accompaniment and melody until the second theme area, which comes as a romantic, lyrical surprise after the regimented Baroque aesthetic which precedes it. Again, the cello and piano trade between melodic, lyricism and arpeggiated accompaniment, with dotted eighth and sixteenth rhythmic motifs introducing a new playful character into the mix. Eventually, the triplet and eighth note "fugue" texture returns, with intermittent references to the lyrical music of the second theme area. In the final coda, the clashing of two on three reaches its climax in a fiery final dual between piano and cello.

## About the Artists

Originally from the Hudson Valley in upstate New York, cellist **Joseph Staten** has performed in numerous major music festivals around the world. At 14, Joseph was awarded his solo debut with the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, and has appeared in the Cape Cod Chamber Music Festival, the Society of the Four Arts in Palm Beach, the Emerald Coast Music Alliance, and the Festival de Musica Camerata in San Miguel de Allende, among others. Joseph will be a fellow at the Marlboro Music Festival through the 2023-2025 season. His solo and chamber performances have been featured on The Violin Channel, WQXR, and many other platforms.

A passionate teacher, Joseph maintains a studio in NYC and was a contributing editor to *The First Hour*, an acclaimed scale book by Amit Peled.

Joseph attended The Heifetz International Music Institute, the Keshet Eilon International Mastercourse, the Lev Aaronson Memorial Cello Festival, and performs regularly with such ensembles as the Peabody Peled Cello Gang and the Mt. Vernon Virtuosi. An avid chamber musician, Joseph has collaborated with such artists as Guy Braunstein, Leon Fleisher, Sergei Ostrovsky, and Alon Goldstein. Joseph has played in masterclasses for Frans Helmerson, Lynn Harrell, and Ralph Kirshbaum among others. He earned his Master's at the Juilliard School studying with Timothy Eddy, and his Bachelor's and Performance Diploma at the Peabody Institute with Amit Peled, to whom Joseph served as teaching assistant in technique class. Joseph is currently pursuing his Doctorate at the CUNY Graduate Center, studying with Marcy Rosen.

Pianist **Luis F. Ortiz** made his international debut with a 2010 recital in Miraflores, Peru. Winner of the Round Top International Festival Concerto Competition, the New England Philharmonic Young Artists Competition and others, Mr. Ortiz holds a M.M. in Collaborative Piano from The Juilliard School, a B.M. in Piano Performance from The Eastman School of Music, and B.A. in English Literature from the University of Rochester. He also graduated in 2005 from Phillips Academy in Andover. Mr. Ortiz performs frequently around New York City and is currently working at the Juilliard School as a studio pianist and teaching assistant.