

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

May 11, 2023 6:00 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Sarah Song, cello with Riko Higuma, piano; Haley Gilia and Ariana Cappon, violins; and Cindy Lan, viola

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

Suite No. 1 for Solo Cello (1956) Ernest Bloch
Prélude (1880–1959)
Allegro
Canzona
Allegro

INTERMISSION

Cello Sonata No. 2 in F Major, Op. 99 (1886) Johannes Brahms
Allegro vivace (1833–97)
Adagio affettuoso
Allegro passionato
Allegro molto

Strum for String Quartet (2006, rev. 2012) Jessie Montgomery
(b. 1981)

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

Beethoven's five cello sonatas for cello and piano single handedly set the standard for a genre that was practically non-existent. The final two sonatas published as opus 102, came at a time when Beethoven's health was increasingly turbulent and his output dropped significantly in 1811. His deafness grew worse and he withdrew ever inward searching for a more personal means of expression.

Subtitled the "Free Sonata" because of its unusual form consisting of only two movements rather than three, both beginning with a slow introduction, Beethoven's **fourth cello sonata** is perhaps the most intimate and fantasia-like of all five. Marked *teneramente*, the opening begins with an elegiac motive played by the cello in the open key of C major, welcoming the piano's statement soon after. The warmth of the opening is overtaken by a strict, heroic motive marked with increasingly intense *sforzandi* played by both cello and piano.

The second movement is as fickle as it is dreamy. The opening begins like an improvised conversation between the two instruments, one completing the other's statement in an overlapping texture. More probing than the first movement's slow introduction, the second meanders with added chromaticism and the cello's low octaves until finally melting into a memory of the *teneramente* motive from before. At the last moment, without ending in final dark resolution or comfortably in C, the music runs to the finale with an epiphany-like twist of events. Brevity, lightness and humor encapsulate the last movement.

Swiss-born American composer, **Ernest Bloch** is remembered today as one of the greatest Swiss composers in history. Striving to establish his musical identity, Bloch composed a series of compositions referred to as *The Cycle*, expressing his Jewish heritage through biblically inspired works during a time when Israel's national state was yet to be formed. The well-received *Schelomo: Rhapsodie Hébraïque for Violoncello and Orchestra* is one of several cello works from this period. Bloch's affinity for the cello grew immensely when he encountered the prodigious Zara Nelsova. Crowned the "Queen of the Cello," Russian-Canadian, Nelsova, was a musical celebrity, regularly playing with the greatest American and European orchestras of the mid 20th century. Her biggest fan was none other than Ernest Bloch who would go as far as to say "Zara Nelsova is my music." Two of his three unaccompanied cello suites written by Bloch would be dedicated to her and Zara would record *Schelomo* under his baton.

The **first cello suite** is a compact work containing four movements. The Prélude is a searching exploration of the semitone motive starting in the low register of the cello, coming to an expressive climax in the upper register. Fast passages in upward motion are contrasted with a folk-like lyrical section with added open string drone in the second movement. The third, titled *canzona*, is a lyrical and intimate respite from the driving energy of the previous movement. The suite closes with a strong celebratory chordal melody.

In 1886, during one of his many summer escapades, **Brahms**, leaving behind his usual summer travels to Salzkammergut, was convinced by a friend to join him in the ancient Swiss town of Thun, located in the foothills of the Bernese Alps. During these working holidays, away from Vienna, Brahms produced some of his greatest scores like the violin Concerto, Second, Third and Fourth Symphonies, *Haydn Variations*, and *Tragic Overture*. The Cello Sonata was composed during this trip and its formal premier was given in the fall of the same year by cellist Robert Hausmann.

The **F Major Cello Sonata**, reflects Brahms's fullest maturity and his contentment in his life at the time. He was then already well-celebrated and his works from this period do not share the same yearning and sadness heard in his earlier works. The first edition of the sonata, published by Simrock in 1887, named the piece "for Piano and Violoncello," a note on the equal role the two instruments hold in the piece and which characteristically mark Brahms's late works. Symphonic in scope, the sonata is written in four expansive movements. Robert Schumann, in an 1853 article heralding the composer onto the German musical scene, referred to his chamber works as "veiled symphonies," which his piano student, and later biographer, Florence May, would summarize the expressive characters in the sonata as thus: "the first broad and energetic; the second touching; the third passionate; the fourth vivacious."

Broad and energetic, the opening already challenges the two instruments in depth and registral range in a larger-than-life opening from the piano on restless tremolos and the cello trumpeting large leaping motive. The second movement, written in F# major, one semitone higher than the home key, is a mix of nostalgia, warmth and darkness based on the opening pizzicati in the cello. The scherzo is full of rhythmic play – a type of tug-of-war between the piano and cello, always crossing in and out of rhythmic groupings creating a sense of tension and release. The contrasting trio section sweetly flows and the transition's extensive use of fourths gives it a church-like solemnity before the change in mood at the scherzo's return. The finale-rondo, features a simple melody, light in weight, reminiscent of the bucolic surroundings Brahms experienced in his summers.

Originally written for the Providence String Quartet and members of Community MusicWorks Players, *Strum* is the culminating work of several versions of a 2006 string quintet. In 2012 it was further revised for the Catalyst Quartet in a performance celebrating the 15th annual Sphinx Competition. Prevalently featured in the work, the strumming pizzicato creates what Montgomery calls *texture motives*. Layers of rhythmic or harmonic ostinati along with the texture motives create a bed of undulating sounds which the melodies happily weave in and out of. *Strum* draws on American folk and the spirit of dance and movement.

Composer, violinist⁴ and educator, **Jessie Montgomery** was born and raised in Manhattan's Lower East Side in the 1980s during a great turning point in the neighborhood's history. At this time of artistic experimentation, Jessie attended rallies, performances, intermixing with neighbors and activists. It is from these experiences that she has created an artistic perspective merging composing, performance education and advocacy.

Her works are described as "turbulent, wildly colorful and exploding with life" (*The Washington Post*) and blends classical music with elements of vernacular music, improvisation, poetry and social consciousness, making her an acute interpreter of the 21st American experience. She has been awarded the highest honor, the Sphinx Medal of Excellence.

About the Artists

Award-winning cellist **Sarah Song** is quickly forging an exciting musical career as a chamber musician, soloist and educator across the United States and Mexico.

Sarah is a founding member of the *Distortion Quartet*, an ensemble dedicated to changing the concertgoing experience with pre-concert talks. In 2019, the quartet won The Classical Tahoe International String Quartet Apprenticeship led by Laurie Hamilton and Joel Rezven of the Metropolitan Opera. As the quartet-in-residence, Sarah performed the string quartet works of Bartók and Beethoven throughout Incline Village and performed in The Classical Tahoe Orchestra with members of The Metropolitan Orchestra, LA Phil, Cleveland Orchestra and San Francisco Symphony concertizing with soloists like Itamar Zorman and Emmanuel Ceysson.

Sarah is the recipient of the Chamber Music Live Award for her musical leadership at Queens College (2021) and a semi-finalist in the 2020 Coltman Chamber Competition (Austin, TX). As a quartet fellow at the Madeline Island Music Festival, she has worked closely with members of the Arianna String Quartet, American String Quartet, Shanghai String Quartet, St. Lawrence String Quartet and Brooklyn Rider (2018).

As a soloist, she has performed with the Aaron Copland School Orchestra as the winner of the 2020 schoolwide Concerto competition and most recently with the New Amsterdam Symphony Orchestra on Elgar Cello Concerto in Symphony Space. She performs regularly in venues like Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, The DiMenna Center for Classical Music, The LGBTQ Center and Flushing Town Hall.

Alongside her performing career, Sarah is passionate about expanding music education accessibility and has spearheaded cello studios in [El-Sistema programs](#) around the US and Mexico. In tuition-free music programs, Sarah can be found teaching, conducting and organizing city-wide workshops for her students of all ages and backgrounds.

In New York City she has taught at The Brooklyn Conservatory of Music and regularly workshops students' original works as a Teaching Artist with [The Little Orchestra Society](#).

Sarah holds degrees from Indiana University, The Eastman School of Music and CUNY Queens College. She has appeared in masterclasses with teachers like Laurence Lesser, Lluís Claret, Hans Jørgen Jensen, Paul Katz, Paul Watkins, Philippe Muller and Astrid Schween. Her teachers include Brandon Vamos and David Ying.

A native Houstonian, Sarah is pursuing a Doctorate of Musical Arts at The CUNY Graduate Center studying with Marcy Rosen. She is a 2023 bespoken fellow mentored by Gina Izzo and Eunbi Kim.

Sarah proudly lives in Brooklyn where she teaches her studio of adult cello students from her Dumbo studio.

Versatile pianist, **Riko Higuma** made her US debut as a soloist with the Fort Worth Symphony. A sought after collaborative pianist, she has shared the concert stages with artists such as Aaron Rosand, Neil Rosenshein, Cho-Liang Lin, Alan Gilbert, Ray Chen, Timothy Eddy and has collaborated (engaged by the New York Philharmonic) with Leonidas Kavakos, Gil Shaham and

Michael Tilson Thomas. Performance highlights as the member of the Zodiac Trio include Festival Radio France/Montpellier, Ottawa Chamberfest, Edinburgh Festival, Shanghai Oriental Arts Center. She has been featured in music festivals around the world including Zodiac Music Academy & Festival in France, La Jolla Music Society Summerfest, New DOCTA in Argentina, Lidal North in Norway. Her performances were featured by France 3 Television, Radio France, CBC, WQXR, WFMT, WGBH and NPR. She is a staff pianist and vocal coach at the Manhattan School of Music where she studied with Phillip Kavin.

A native of Brooklyn, NY, **Haley Gillia** began violin studies at the age of 4 and went on to study at Kaufman Center's Special Music School and Young Artists Program. She received her bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University's Blair School of Music as a student of Carolyn Huebl, and her master's degree from Chicago College of Performing Arts as a student of Almita Vamos. She currently studies with Nurit Pacht.

As a soloist and chamber musician, Haley has appeared at Merkin Hall, NY Phil Biennial, and the Ecstatic Music Festival among others. She is currently a member of a violin-percussion duo with Tony Kirk, performing and commissioning new works, and a member of a newly formed yet-to-be-named string quartet in NYC.

Haley will be joining The Orchestra Now at Bard College as a violin fellow in the fall of 2023.

Haley is also an avid poet, newbie composer, and a student of the Alexander Technique as part of the Balance Arts Center's Teacher Training Program in NYC. In her down time, you might find her watching Bravo, playing with her two cats, or finding new restaurants to enjoy.

Ariana Cappon is violinist from New York City. She has performed frequently in North America and Europe since her solo debut at age 14, playing Wieniawski's Violin Concerto No.2 under the baton of David Gilbert. She has been featured on recitals at Lincoln Center, the Earl Hall and St. Paul's Chapel at Columbia University, the Downtown Music Series in White Plains, New York, with the Richardson Chamber Players at Princeton University, and with the Riversong Music Festival, of which she is a founding member. She has performed with Heifetz Institute in Virginia, the Fontainebleau Academy in France, the Orford Academie Festival, and the Snowpond Music Festival in Maine as fellowship recipient. In 2019 and 2020, she toured as a chamber musician for the Holland America Line in tandem with Lincoln Center. Recently, she placed first in the International Festival-Contest "Music of the World" in Israel. While primarily a classical violinist, she is versed in other genres. She has performed on baroque violin, performed Afro-Cuban charanga, and shared the stage with Daniel Binelli in a tango quintet.

At the moment, Cappon performs with various ensembles, including the Greenwich Symphony Orchestra, the Harrisburg Symphony, and the Bronx Arts Ensemble. She has played in such notable venues as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the DiMenna Center in New York.

Cappon completed her Master's degree at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music under Mark Kaplan in 2018, and her Bachelor's degree with Mauricio Fuks in 2016, with additional study under Stanley Ritchie, Menahem Pressler, Andre Watts, the Gryphon Trio, the Horszowski Trio, and the Pacifica Quartet. She holds a degree in theoretical mathematics from Indiana University, and in 2013 received a grant from the National Science Foundation to publish original research.

Cindy Lan is a performer and composer from Queens, NY. She began studying the violin under her mother's tutelage at the age of 7. Adopting the viola in high school, she found a unique voice and expression through the instrument. In 2022, she appeared as a soloist with Orchestra Northern Arizona, and will return in December 2023 to premiere a work for solo viola, string orchestra, and percussion. In 2022, she debuted her solo show, 'Breath & Bow Meditations', a collection of original compositions for voice, viola, and electronics. Originating from meditative improvisations, her compositional practice has expanded to explorations of the coalescence between sound healing and music.

A graduate of Skidmore College, she has always found herself in interdisciplinary spaces. At the Eastman School of Music, she completed her Master's degree with George Taylor. She is a pedagogue with over a decade of experience and is constantly learning from her students. She is the co-principal violist and Executive Director of the Greenwich Village Orchestra. She is a featured musician & collaborator on recording projects with Dogbotic Studios and the band EMDR. Today, she enjoys expanding her strings family with cello studies, working on multi-genre recording projects (including film, animation, and video games), and making art with her husband, Raphael Galvis. To learn more about her projects, visit CindyLan.com.