

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

March 18, 2024 6:00 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Ethan Brown, cello Nenad Ivovic, piano

Suite for Solo Cello (1993)

Preludio (Andante, rubato)

Fuga - Burletta (Allegro moderato)

Sarabanda (Lento molto)

Giga (Prestissimo)

John Harbison

(b. 1938)

Suite for Solo Cello in D Minor (1926)

Preludio-fantasia. Andante

Sardana (danza). Allegro giusto

Intermezzo e danza finale. Lento ma non troppo - Allegro marcato

Gaspar Cassadó

(1897–1966)

INTERMISSION

Sonata in G Minor for Cello and Piano (1901)

Lento - Allegro moderato

Allegro scherzando

Andante

Allegro mosso

Sergei Rachmaninoff

(1873–1943)

with Nenad Ivovic, piano

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

Harbison Suite

My Suite for Solo Cello was composed at Nervi, near Genoa, Italy in 1993 shortly after completing my Concerto for Cello and Orchestra. I wanted to do a short piece of a very different character for the instrument that had held my attention over many months. The concerto is in many ways a discovered form, improvised to fit the material, and of a very demonstrative, public type. The solo piece is baroque in origins, more private, and very compact. The cello was the instrument my sister played. I heard most of its standard literature, repeatedly, while still in high school, and always think of the sound of the cello ‘as her sound.’

— John Harbison

Using Harbison’s own program notes as a starting point, presenting his Solo Cello Suite as a homage to Bach’s cello suites is a logical argument. Most of the movement titles evoke Bach suites in the mind of cellists due to the use of movement titles such as *Prelude*, *Sarabande*, *Giga*, as well as *Fuga* which were more common in Bach’s solo violin sonatas.

The *Preludio* movement presents a wandering melody with an unclear path forward. The music evokes the Prelude of Bach’s D minor cello Suite which is meandering in comparison to Preludes of the other five Suites. In the case of the second movement *Fuga*, the word *Burletta* or “little joke” attached to it signals that the music departs the homage to the traditional baroque music and pokes fun at the more serious material surrounding it. The third movement, *Sarabanda*, evokes the many *Sarabande* movements in the Bach Suites in its overall style. Of the three beats per measure, the second beat holds equal weight to the first beat. In the case of Harbison’s *Sarabanda*, the second beat often features a note of the longest length of the measure, further indicating its prominence and link to the traditional baroque dance style. This movement, full of both sonorous and discordant double stops, ends with an ambiguous sounding drawn out perfect fourth—a notable departure from a traditional Sarabande. The fourth movement *Giga* is in a rollicking Prestissimo tempo and features a roller-coaster ride of arpeggios. In this way, the *Gigue* from Bach’s C Major cello Suite is evoked. The movement is full of surprising dynamic shifts and has the same playful character as the second movement did. The open C string final resounding note marks the triumphant finish of Harbison’s Solo Cello Suite—an homage and evolution of Bach’s prolific works.

Cassadó Suite for Solo Cello (1926)

Gaspar Cassadó may not be the most famous composer in the Western canon, but within the world of twentieth-century music, his excellence as a cellist, composer, and arranger for his own instrument shines brightly. Born in Barcelona in 1897, Cassadó's talent was recognized at only 9 years old by the legendary Catalan cellist, Pablo Casals, then only twenty-one. Under Casals' mentorship, Cassadó journeyed to Paris on a scholarship, immersing himself in the artistic scene in the French capital. Here, amidst the influences of Stravinsky's modernism, Ravel's impressionism, and Manuel Da Falla's nationalism, Cassadó expanded his musical palette to the artistic trends of his time.

It was Casals' fervent advocacy for Bach's solo cello suites, however, that left a mark on Cassadó's music as a whole. Bach's influence is clear through many of Cassadó's compositions, including the Suite for Solo Cello, written in 1926. The Suite was not recorded and remained relatively unknown until the 1980s when Janos Starker revived prolifically in a recording. According to Cassadó's pupil Marçal Cervera, who

gleaned insights directly from Cassadó, the suite's three movements encapsulate the essence of three significant Spanish cultural regions: Castilla-La Mancha, Catalonia, and Andalusia.

In parallel to Bach's suites, Cassadó's creation is a collection of dances, beginning with a Preludio that morphs into a zarabanda in the suite's first movement. Cervera speculates that the contrasting dynamics and articulations of the opening theme symbolize the relationship between the valiant Don Quixote and the mystical Dulcinea. In this movement Cassadó evokes the flute solo from Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*. Cassadó also evokes Zoltan Kodaly's Solo Cello Suite particularly in the decisive chords that punctuate impactful moments throughout the first movement.

Daphnis et Chloé.

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff is in treble clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It begins at measure 178 with a piano (*p*) dynamic and the instruction *expressif et souple*. The melody consists of eighth notes, with a section from measure 180 to 181 highlighted by an orange box. This section features a series of eighth notes with a slur, followed by two triplet eighth notes. The bottom staff is in bass clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It begins at measure 11 with a piano (*p*) dynamic and the instruction *dolce*. The melody consists of eighth notes, with a section from measure 12 to 13 highlighted by an orange box. This section features a series of eighth notes with a slur, followed by a measure with a *sfz* dynamic and a 7-measure rest. The caption below the staves reads: "Cassadó Suite for Solo Cello, *Preludio – Fantasia*, mm. 11-13".

Cassadó Suite for Solo Cello, *Preludio – Fantasia*, mm. 11-13

The second movement is in the form of a Sardana, the traditional Catalan dance style which signifies the emblematic of the Catalonian nationalist resurgence of the 19th century. Here, harmonics emulate the piercing call of the flaviol, summoning dancers to the town square. Mimicking the sardana's tripartite structure, the cello's register fluctuates, mirroring the interplay of a traditional cobla wind band.

In the final movement, the dance styles permeate once again, with the staccato rhythms evoking castanets. Flamboyant arpeggios evoke the strumming of guitar strings, while the cadence of Spanish folk music weaves through the descending bass line's distinctive four-note pattern.

Rachmaninoff Sonata

Rachmaninoff specifically titled this Sonata “for Cello and Piano” (instead of simply Cello Sonata), reinforcing the equal footing the two instruments play in the piece. Often rich and lush timbrally, Rachmaninoff's distinct sound world is achieved throughout this work often from the interplay between a winding vocal melodic line in the cello and propelling rhythms in the piano's inner voices. Following the public failure of his First Symphony, Rachmaninoff was able to lift his name as a composer internationally early in his career with the massive success of his Second Piano Concerto. Written during this celebratory period after the second Concerto, Rachmaninoff wrote the Sonata for Cello and Piano in g minor and dedicated the work to his friend and cellist Anatoli Brandukov.

The sonata is symphonic in scale and was the only large piece for cello Rachmaninoff ever wrote. The first movement opens with a flowing dream-state introduction before launching into a conventional Sonata-Allegro form. The aria-like main theme is presented often accompanied by undulating sixteenth notes. The half step motif from the introduction is developed throughout the first movement as well, each moment of the half step raising upward signaling a question or destabilization of some sort. The second movement is presented as a frenetic Scherzo which is counterbalanced by contrasting sections of relaxing lyrical melodies. In these contrasting “laid-back” sections, Rachmaninoff presents the cello melody on the beat, but the piano melody displaced by syncopation in continuously rolling triplet figures. On paper this reads as complex and neurotic writing, but the effect musically is entirely the opposite. The third movement marked Andante is perhaps the most well known of this sonata. The music is similar to an operatic aria for a baritone voice full of nostalgia and richness of sound. The closing portion of the movement closely resembles the end of the first movement of Rachmaninoff’s epic choral symphony “The Bells.”

The fourth and final movement mirrors the Sonata-Allegro form of the first movement but is even more hopeful and uplifting musically. The second theme is repeated multiple times in the development section which balances melancholic dips in the soaring melodic line and harmony with energizing leaps up in register that signal the true virtuous hope of the movement at large. The coda is suddenly in a slower tempo, perhaps looking backward at the transpired musical journey before the music takes a dramatic turn marked by the Vivace tempo to heroically close the epic piece.

About the Artists

Ethan Brown is a cellist born and raised in New York City. Ethan has earned a Master's of Music from Rice University, a Bachelor's of Music from Northwestern University and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts at the CUNY Graduate Center. Ethan's principal cello instructors include Yari Bond, Hans Jensen, Desmond Hoebig and most recently, Rafael Figueiroa through the CUNY Graduate Center. Over the years, Ethan has enjoyed artistic coaching and collaborations with esteemed musicians including Emmanuel Ax, Yo-Yo Ma, Roberto Diaz, Nicholas Tzavaras, Steven Doane, and members of the Dover, Juilliard and Shanghai String Quartets.

Through his graduate fellowship, Ethan began teaching as a part-time faculty member for Hunter College's music department in the Fall 2023 semester. Outside of teaching a small private studio of young cellists, Ethan frequently performs as a substitute for notable orchestras from the cities in which he has lived including the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and the Houston Symphony. Ethan has previously served in the role of principal cello for notable performances at the Tanglewood Music Center, Spoleto Festival USA, Aspen Music Festival, and the symphony orchestras of Northwestern and Rice University. Over the years, Ethan has been lucky to perform chamber music among friends and is thankful for his life in music affording him the opportunity to explore the world while performing abroad.

Ethan is lucky to perform on an exceptional modern instrument by the Belgian luthier, Thomas Meuwissen and a bow by the American prodigy, William Salchow.

At the age of four, **Nenad Ivovic** began his musical training at the Music School "Mokranjac" with Prof. Milica Vasiljević Bisenić. He completed his bachelor's degree with distinction at the Belgrade University of Arts under the tutelage of Prof. Nevena Popović at the age of nineteen. Nenad has received recognition for his outstanding musical abilities throughout his career, winning numerous awards at both domestic and international competitions. These include first prize at the Step Towards Mastery competition in Saint Petersburg, second prize at the Arianne Katcz competition in Tel Aviv, and third prize at the Jacob Flier competition in New York.

In 2015, Nenad earned his Master of Music Degree from Tel Aviv University while studying with Prof. Emanuel Krasovsky. He has had the honor of collaborating with renowned musicians such as Andras Schiff, Emanuel Ax, Augustin Hadelich, Dmitri Bashkirov, Emerson Quartet, Mikhail Voskresensky, Joseph Kalihstein, Alexander Toradze, Tatiana Zelikman, and Peter Serkin, among others.

In May 2019, Nenad completed his Master of Musical Arts degree at Yale University, guided by Prof. Boris Berman. After graduation, he continued working at Yale School of Music as a collaborative pianist and chamber music coach. As of September 2022, Nenad has begun pursuing his Doctoral Degree at the City University of New York - Graduate Center, with the guidance of Prof. Julian Martin (Juilliard School).

Currently, Nenad works at Hartt School of Music (Hartford University) as a Collaborative Pianist.