

December 13, 2024 6:00 p.m.

*Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall*

## Audrey Chen, cello

*Four Pieces for Cello and Piano* (1901 – 1910)

Frank Bridge  
(1879–1941)

- I. *Berceuse*
- II. *Serenade*
- III. *Elegie*
- IV. *Cradle Song*

with Gabrielle Chou, *piano*

Selections from *Seven Tunes Heard in China for Solo Cello* (1995)

Bright Sheng  
(b. 1955)

- I. *Seasons*
- III. *Little Cabbage*
- V. *Diu Diu Dong*
- VII. *Tibetan Dance*

Sonata No. 2 in F Major, Op. 99 (1886)

Johannes Brahms  
(1833–1897)

- I. *Allegro Vivace*
- II. *Adagio affettuoso*
- III. *Allegro passionato*
- IV. *Allegro molto*

with Chaeyoung Park, *piano*

*INTERMISSION*

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.

String Quartet in D, Op. 71, No. 2 “Apponyi” (1793)

Franz Joseph Haydn  
(1732–1809)

- I. *Adagio – Allegro*
- II. *Adagio cantabile*
- III. *Menuetto. Allegro*
- IV. *Finale. Allegretto*

String Quartet No. 3 (1927)

Béla Bartók  
(1881–1945)

- Prima parte: *Moderato*  
Seconda parte: *Allegro*  
Ricapitulazione della prima parte: *Moderato*  
Coda: *Allegro molto*

### **The Terra String Quartet**

Harriet Langley, *violin*  
Amelia Dietrich, *violin*  
Chih-Ta Chen, *viola*  
Audrey Chen, *cello*

## **Notes on the Program**

**Frank Bridge** (1879 – 1941)

*Four Pieces* for Cello and Piano (1901 – 1910)

The legacy of English composer Frank Bridge is somewhat of an enigma. His compositional output is recognized and celebrated but remains relatively underplayed. Even less known is his lucrative performing career as a quartet violist, with one highlight including giving the British premiere of Debussy’s newly completed string quartet in 1904. Like that of many composers during the postwar period, Bridge’s harmonic style flirted with atonality and impressionist harmonies as composition in Europe shifted towards experimentation and a reckoning with the modern world.

However, these four miniatures for cello and piano are some of Bridge’s earliest works, harkening to a more innocent and youthful time. The lighthearted Berceuse and whimsical Serenade were written while Bridge was enrolled as a violin and composition student at the Royal College of Music. Elegie, written in 1904, is true to its name through its introspective and bittersweet nature, amplified by the cello’s deep lyricism. The set concludes with the gently lilting Cradle Song, composed the latest in 1910. Given that these pieces were composed separately over the span of nine years, Bridge did not necessarily intend to group them into a larger collection. Nevertheless, the shared simplicity of each character piece makes their assemblage a harmonious one.

**Bright Sheng** (b. 1955)

Selections from *Seven Tunes Heard in China* for Solo Cello (1995)

As with many composers who bridge elements from Eastern and Western musical styles, the question of how to understand and grasp their music arises. Sometimes the best answer is found in the composer's words. Bright Sheng proclaims, "I'm a mixture of both cultures, but I consider myself both 100% American and 100% Chinese." His music reflects the weight of all his influences, although provincial folk music remains a strong inspiration within Sheng's work.

Sheng's exposure to music began early, as he began learning the piano at age four under his mother at his home in Shanghai. Due to the rumblings of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, he was sent across the country as a fifteen-year-old to live in the Qinghai province of China. Qinghai's proximity to Tibet and its music and dance theater scene inspired a fruitful period in which Sheng performed both piano and percussion for the provincial theater while studying the folk music of the region. When universities re-opened in 1978, Sheng returned home to enroll in the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. It wasn't until 1982 that he made the journey to the United States to study Western composition at Queens College and Columbia University. Now touted as an awardee of the MacArthur Genius Grant as well as many other prestigious awards and residencies, Sheng incorporated many of his travels and experiences into his work.

Like Bartok and Kodaly who studied and incorporated folk music within their compositions, Sheng utilizes folk melodies in *Seven Tunes Heard in China* but finds a way of reflecting them through his own voice and interpretation. About the work, he writes: "I take a lot of freedom. I'm searching for a new idiom that doesn't belong to preconceived categories." Today, I perform four of the seven tunes and their accompanying text are as follows:

I. *Seasons* (from Qinghai)

Spring is coming,  
Narcissi are blooming,  
The maiden is out from her boudoir seeking,  
My love boy, lend me a hand, please.

III. *The Little Cabbage* (from Hebei)

The little cabbage is turning yellow on the ground,  
She lost her parents when she was two or three.  
Mom, my Mom!

V. *Diu Diu Dong* (From Taiwan)

The train is coming,  
It is going through the tunnel!

VII. *Tibetan Dance* (Based on the music of a popular Tibetan folk dance)

**Johannes Brahms** (1833 – 1897)  
Sonata No. 2 in F Major, Op. 99 (1886)

Brahms's second Cello Sonata in F Major was written during a time of great happiness and contentment in Brahms's life. In the summer of 1886, Brahms had escaped the heat of Vienna and rented a beautiful villa on the shore of Lake Thun in the Swiss hamlet of Hofstetten. It was here that he found the inspiration and respite to complete the cello sonata that he had begun but could not finish two years ago. Brahms's retreat was so productive that he returned for several more summers after, completing works like his second and third violin sonatas, his C minor Piano Trio, and his Double Concerto, all in Thun.

The maturity of Brahms's compositional style aligned with his enjoyment of a prolific output, worldwide acclaim, and financial stability at this point in his life. The second cello sonata reflects that sense of security and certainty, particularly through the jubilation and triumph of the first movement. While the slow second movement (located in the relatively rare key of F-sharp major) is heartfelt and touching, there is "no longer that yearning after the unattainable that so often pervaded his earlier works," as William Murdoch puts it. The third movement is passionate and dramatic, while the fourth and final movement is surprisingly light to the touch.

After returning from Thun, Brahms premiered the work back in Vienna with cellist and friend Robert Hausmann in the late Autumn of 1886. It is just as much a sonata for Piano and Cello as it is a Cello Sonata, as the piano part features prominently through vivaciously virtuosic tremolos and orchestral-like textures. Though not everyone was convinced by the piece precisely for that unusual balance of instruments, its sheer power, warmth, and richness cements its exalted place within the cello repertoire today.

**Franz Joseph Haydn** (1732 – 1809)  
String Quartet Op. 71 No. 2 in D Major "Apponyi" (1793)

After a nearly three-decade long tenure at the Esterhazy court, a fifty-eight-year-old Joseph Haydn departed Vienna and embarked on a month-long journey to London in January of 1791. Just a few months earlier, impresario and violinist Johann Peter Salomon had convinced him to come, promising him great fanfare and the opportunity to showcase his music to new and eager audiences. At this point, Haydn had already garnered an illustrious reputation, and to no one's surprise, his first London tour ended in great success with Salomon re-engaging him for more performances to come.

Two years later, while still carrying on with his adventures in London, Haydn wrote six quartets (published in two sets as Op. 71 and Op. 74). As opposed to his usual manner of writing quartets for intimate house concerts and the exclusive noble connoisseur at the Esterhazy court, Haydn had to approach these quartets with his concert-going London public in mind. As his symphonies grew bolder and more theatrical to better suit the grandeur of the concert hall, so did his quartets. Haydn outfitted the opening of each quartet in the set with a brief introduction, a fanfare or a tutti unison, as if to announce the start of the performance.

In particular, his Op. 71 No. 2 Quartet begins with a declamation within a full four-measure Adagio. (It foreshadows the slow symphonic introductions that would come from the mind of Beethoven just a decade later.) Immediately after, the music breaks into a joyful, extroverted, and virtuosic first movement. Without losing the elegance and classicism that he is well-known for, this work is an

example of Haydn bringing the quartet genre from the drawing room to the concert hall with a fresh and dynamic approach, making for a true crowd-pleaser.

**Béla Bartók** (1881 – 1945)  
String Quartet No. 3 (1927)

By the time he was in his forties, Hungarian composer Béla Bartók was internationally well-known for his compositional prowess as well as his work in ethnomusicology. He spent many years throughout the early 20th century studying and collecting folk music across Eastern Europe including his own Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Serbia, and Slovakia. Bartok found a unique way of weaving in his knowledge of folk music to create a musical voice of his own without having to explicitly quote any melodies.

However, even composers at the height of their careers need continual inspiration and immersion in fresh material to remain motivated. Bartok had spent a great deal of the early 1920s focused on teaching and ethnomusicology, which meant less time for composing. However, after attending a concert celebrating Stravinsky in 1926, Bartok felt encouraged to write again by churning out a series of works for piano. The slew of performances that followed led to more incentive to write, and it was at this moment that after hearing Berg's Lyric Suite in July of 1927, Bartok took to composing for the string quartet again after a hiatus of ten years.

This quartet, his third quartet, went on to win first prize at the 1927 Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia Competition and received two high-profile premiere performances in London and Frankfurt thereafter. It is the shortest of Bartok's quartets, only fifteen minutes long and one continuous work. Despite its compact nature, it is filled with contrasting passages, fugues, moody lyricism, and extended techniques that ultimately make for a very colorful and rousing journey.

## About the Artists

### **Audrey Chen**

Praised for her “lyricism of dramatic intensity” (San Francisco Classical Voice) and “longevity of phrasing” (Boston Musical Intelligencer), Washington state native and cellist Audrey Chen has performed around the world in venues including Carnegie Hall, Sumitomolife Izumi Hall, Melbourne Recital Center, Royal Albert Hall, and the Kennedy Center. She has concertized with the Seattle Symphony and the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, and has been featured as a guest artist with the Jupiter Chamber Players, Argus Quartet, Parker Quartet, and Borromeo Quartet. Audrey performs actively as the cellist of the prize-winning Terra String Quartet.

Audrey's festival appearances include performing at Yellowbarn, Olympic Music Festival, 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 and an M.M. from the New England Conservatory, where her teachers included Laurence Lesser and Lluís Claret. Currently, she is pursuing her Doctor of Musical

Arts degree at the CUNY Graduate Center under Marcy Rosen. In 2022, Audrey was named a recipient of the prestigious Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans. Outside of music, she enjoys watching films, cooking with her partner, and playing word games.

### **Gabrielle Chou**

Gabrielle Chou is a New York-based pianist and violinist active in performing solo and in ensembles, teaching and coaching, championing new works, and community engagement and activism. Her education includes the Colburn Music Academy, The Juilliard School, and the CUNY Graduate Center, where she received her D.M.A. writing on play structures and game mechanics in music. Currently Gabrielle teaches at Riverdale Country School, Baruch College, the New York Youth Symphony, and Juilliard's Preparatory Division. She is a founding member of contemporary chamber collective Away From Keyboard, and in her free time enjoys art museums, aquariums, birding, board and video games, and science fiction.

### **Chaeyoung Park**

Pianist Chaeyoung Park has most recently been featured on the Gilmore Rising Stars series, Bravo! Vail Music Festival and Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall as a soloist. Winner of the 2022 Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions and Finalist at the 2023 Arthur Rubinstein International Master Piano Competition, she has performed with orchestra across the U.S. and at the Ravinia Steans Music Institute, Yellow Barn, Four Seasons Winter Workshop and Kneisel Hall as a dedicated chamber musician. South-Korean born, but considering herself as also a Kansas native, she travels frequently to visit her family and two cats from New York City, where she is currently based.

### **Terra String Quartet**

Prizewinners at both the 2023 Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition and 2023 Osaka International Chamber Music Competition, the Terra String Quartet is a vibrant young ensemble based in New York City. They are composed of graduates of The Juilliard School, The New England Conservatory, Harvard University, and The Curtis Institute of Music. Praised for their "remarkable maturity and musicality" and "superb ensemble playing" (Hyde Park Herald, Chicago), these four musicians, through their unique individuality as artists, are committed to infusing the string quartet with equal parts passion, vitality, and humor. Storytelling and spontaneity are at the heart of TSQ's music making and they craft programs so as to tell a unique tale about the people, places, and ideas behind great works of the past and masterpieces of the present. Their name is a nod to their multicultural origins - together, this foursome represents four continents and speaks six languages.