



SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Presents

Grady O’Gara, cello
Elijah Ong, piano

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

7 pm

PepsiCo Recital Hall

Program

Pohádka, JW 75

Con moto

Con moto

Allegro

Leoš Janáček

(1854–1928)

Elijah Ong, piano

Ciaconna from Violin Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004
(transc. G. O’Gara)

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)

Brief Pause

Sonata for Piano and Cello in G minor, Op. 19

Lento – Allegro moderato

Allegro scherzando

Andante

Allegro mosso

Sergei Rachmaninoff

(1873–1943)

Elijah Ong, piano

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Bachelor’s in Performance.

Grady O’Gara is a student of Dr. Juliette Herlin.

The use of recording equipment or taking photographs is prohibited.

Please silence all electronic devices including watches, pagers, and phones.

L. Janáček: *Pohádka*, JW 75

1923

Leoš Janáček, a Czech composer, began *Pohádka* (Fairy Tale) in 1910, but the piece went through several iterations and structures before finally being finished and published in the 1920s. This piece closely resembles to Janáček's piano work, *In the Mist*, written around the same time—a few years after his daughter's death and in the midst of several rejections from Prague opera companies. It demonstrates Janáček's strong fascination with Eastern European folk music and Russian literature.

In three short movements, *Pohádka* is based on the epic poem *The Tale of Tsar Berendey* by Russian author Vasily Zhukovsky. The poem describes a tsar named Berendey, who is unable to have children with his wife and decides to go on a long trip to visit his kingdom. While traveling, he promises to give up something he does not know he has at home; in his absence, his son has been born. Years later, the now grown prince (named Ivan) has been sacrificed to the King of the Underworld to fulfill the promise, and must complete several tasks given to him. In the midst of this, he meets a maiden, Maria, and the two fall in love.

The 10-minute piece focuses on this last part of the story—when Ivan falls for Maria. Janáček expertly creates this atmosphere. In the first movement, *Con moto*, the cello and piano move hesitantly between fragmented *pizzicati* gestures and melodic piano phrases, perhaps “testing the waters” before delving into a dance-like melodic theme. The offbeat *ostinati* morph into a stormy third section that brings the movement to a close. The second movement, with the same *con moto* marking, begins similarly to the first movement in the sense of conversation between the instruments; however, the character now demonstrates joy and playfulness with the *pizzicati*. The character darkens before another turbulent passage begins. This time, though, the texture expands with fast arpeggios and a luscious, joyous cello melody that helps end the movement in a more buoyant mood than the first. The third movement first exemplifies a marching, heroic character before moving into a searching theme. To end the piece, the march briefly reappears before it seems to go off into the distance, disappearing into the warm landscape of G-flat major.

J.S. Bach: *Ciaconna* from Violin Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004

c. 1720

Widely regarded as one of the most emotionally powerful pieces ever composed, the *Ciaconna* from the Second Violin Partita is hailed as the pinnacle of solo violin playing and composition. A chaconne, or *ciaconna*, is a type of Baroque dance that derived from Spanish culture after it was introduced from the New World. It uses a slow triple meter, usually emphasizing the second beat, but the most recognizable feature of any chaconne is the repeating ground bass that often descends from the tonic. While Bach likely never intended this piece to be danced to, it retains the ground bass and rhythmic features of the dance style.

The Chaconne is structured in three main sections—modulating to the parallel D major about halfway through, before moving back to D minor for the final third of the piece. Over the three sections, Bach writes 64 variations of the four-measure ground bass, exploring myriad characters and emotions along the way. Similar variations are grouped together, though transitions are seamless. The Chaconne’s beauty speaks for itself, but some have speculated that Bach wrote the piece as a *tombeau* for his recently deceased wife, Maria Barbara, who died in 1720.

The Chaconne has been arranged and transcribed for just about every instrument and ensemble imaginable, from solo piano to full orchestra. This particular transcription retains the original key of D minor, only changing certain voicings on large chords when absolutely necessary. As the cello does not have an E string like the violin does, the violin fingerings do not map onto the cello when the piece is kept in its original key, and some notes do need to be changed for the sake of timbre and hand positioning.

S. Rachmaninoff: Sonata for Piano and Cello in G minor, Op. 19

1901

Dedicated to Russian cellist Anatoly Brandukov and premiered in December 1901 by him and Rachmaninoff, the monumental Cello Sonata was composed in the wake of the failure of Rachmaninoff’s First Symphony in 1897. The premiere of Symphony No. 1 threw him into a severe, three-year-long depressive episode, and coupled with writer’s block, it was not until 1900 that Rachmaninoff began to compose again, after psychiatric treatment with hypnotherapy. Rachmaninoff first completed the “Love Duet” for his opera *Francesca da Rimini*, and then the heralded Piano Concerto No. 2 (Op. 18). The Cello Sonata was composed just after the piano concerto, but it shares much of the same lyricism that Rachmaninoff first used in the “Love Duet.”

Sometimes dubbed Rachmaninoff’s “Piano Concerto No. 6” due to the immense difficulty and density of the piano part, the work lasts about 35 minutes. It is structured in four movements: a sonata-form first movement with a slow introduction, a scherzo second movement, a slow third movement, and a sonata-form finale. Though composed at the turn of the century, its structure, harmonies, and overall sound remain quintessentially Russian and romantic, recalling such ideas like the bells of Russian Orthodox churches and Rachmaninoff’s own Symphony No. 1.

The opening *Lento* makes heavy use of an ascending half step, and the primary theme of the first movement uses both this interval and the whole step interval to form the melody. If listening closely, one can hear the interplay of these two intervals in each theme throughout all four movements. The rest of the movement follows in regular Rachminoff fashion, with an *espressivo* primary theme played by the cello over a complex piano texture, and a simpler second theme introduced by the piano, using the half step as a tension point and the whole step as a resolution. Though it is in sonata form, the

exposition is repeated and the recapitulation is hidden without a true cadence in G minor until after the restatement of the primary theme.

The second movement, a dark, rhythmic scherzo in C minor, makes great use of several textural elements especially in the cello part, with the interplay of *pizzicato*, *legato*, and ricochet. The form of this movement is a compound sectional ternary, with each A section also in ternary form. The stormy primary theme is characterized by these textural elements and occasional outbursts of sounds around quiet, truncated melodies built on the descending half and whole steps. Each alternating section changes the mood and opens the range—first to a sweet and loving theme in the relative E-flat major, and then later to a nostalgic, operatic theme in A-flat major in the B section. The movement ends like it began, quietly back in C minor.

The third movement, in E-flat major and marked *Andante*, lets the piano introduce both themes first in a simple ternary form. Over dense arpeggio texture, the first theme sings passionately for an entire phrase before the cello enters, repeating the melody with piano echoes. The second theme is more complex, meandering its way through each phrase, now intermixed with polyrhythms between the parts. It is in this second theme that one can hear clear melodic formation based on these half and whole steps—the theme is almost completely stepwise. The middle section fragments the themes and brings the movement to an exciting climax, before a wandering recitative-like section and a restatement of the primary theme pushes to an even higher peak, now on the augmented fifth. The movement ends with a simple, warm cadence back in E-flat major, uniting the half step and whole step with the final three notes.

The fourth movement starts with a bang, in the bright key of G major. A celebratory, lilting primary theme is introduced by the cello; a slower, warm second theme in the dominant follows, with the first melody as background in the piano. These two themes again demonstrate the predominance of stepwise motion. The second theme is built only on these intervals, except for one leap in the middle. A long development section with fragmentation of both themes eventually finds its way back to home by way of a long *accelerando*. The recapitulation restates both themes in the home key—the secondary theme now seems even more wistful and sentimental, especially after the upper octave repetition. To end the sonata, Rachmaninoff seems to initially lose his way, simply descending down a scale with a motif from the secondary theme that does not seem to have anywhere to go. Finally, a coda that seems to adjoin the first movement's coda and the last movement's themes brings the whole sonata together and ends the piece enthusiastically.