



SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Presents

Emily Torkelson, violoncello
Dr. Michael Bukhman, piano

April 22, 2023

12:30 PM

PepsiCo Recital Hall

Program

Suite No. 5 in C minor, BWV 1011
Prelude
Allemande

J.S. Bach
(1685-1750)

Song: For English Ivy

Oliver Hecht
(b. 2004)

Silbo

Andrea Casarrubios
(b. 1988)

Sonata for Arpeggione and Piano, D821
Allegro Moderato
Adagio
Allegretto

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Music degree in Cello Performance. Emily Torkelson 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.

Suite No. 5 in C minor (c. 1717-1723)

Although Bach's six suites for solo cello are now among the most standard and beloved music played by cellists today, this was not always the case. Like much of Bach's work, the cello suites faded into obscurity over time, and it was not until Catalan cellist Pablo Casals rediscovered them in the twentieth century that they began to receive the attention that they rightly deserve.

While suites are already French in origin and style, Bach wrote the fifth cello suite in particular in a more deliberate imitation of French music. The prelude is in the French overture style developed by Jean-Baptiste Lully, which features two primary sections: a slow, majestic A section with prominent dotted rhythms; and a fugal B section.

The allemande was already an old dance at the time of Bach's birth—analogue to a composer born this year writing music to a Charleston in thirty years. Despite the dance's French name, it is German in origin, leading to the rather entertaining notion of Bach, a German composer, writing in a French style to put to music a French version of a German dance.

This suite, the fifth out of six, is interesting for a number of reasons outside of its place as a sheer musical tour de force. Firstly, this suite was written for cello with scordatura, or cello with its strings tuned in a nonstandard way. Our strings are, from bottom to top, C-G-D-A, tuned in fifths. For the fifth suite, Bach wants us to tune our A string down to a G, creating a fourth between it and our D string. This completely changes the timbre of the instrument, resulting in a darker, more somber sound. It also gives us a different set of sympathetic vibrations (the way other strings vibrate when we play certain notes). Secondly, aside from cello, Bach himself also transcribed this suite for lute, giving us another manuscript to consult and more information on what he envisioned in this suite—valuable information that we do not see in the other (often frustratingly vague and contradictory) manuscripts.

Song: For English Ivy (2022)

Composed in summer of 2022, this piece was a collaboration between myself and Oliver Hecht, a student composer at Atlantic Music Festival, who is currently a composition student at Oberlin. Here is what the composer has to say about the piece:

“The cello, as cellists love to frequently point out, is the classical instrument closest in range and timbre to the human voice. This piece is a sort-of ode for a patch of ivy growing outside my window, a contemplation and meditation on its arching leaves and firm roots, using the strikingly human sound of a solo cello.”

Personally, I love this piece for its open sounds and dramatic slides. I also love the pizzicato ending, which gives the piece closure with something that sounds a little like a question mark.

Silbo (2021)

Written only two years ago by Spanish cellist and composer Andrea Casarrubios, *Silbo* draws inspiration from the various whistling languages from around the world. The composer's notes on the piece:

“*Silbo* (2021) for cello and piano takes inspiration from the fascinating whistling languages that have existed in territories worldwide, developed to communicate from across long distances. Often characterized by mountains or large extensions of land, some of these languages still exist in Mexico, Bolivia, Brasil, Birmania, Nepal, Turkey, Papua New Guinea, France, Greece, Spain, and multiple countries in Africa. Each place has its own codification, tied to its history and heritage. For example, *Silbo Gomero* (*Sylbo* from La Gomera in the Canary Islands, Spain) allows for full sentences to be exchanged from up to three miles away. Its origins are associated with the language of Guanche. Spoken in the Canary Islands during pre-Hispanic times, Guanche derives from Afro-Asian communities in North Africa. *Sylbo* from La Gomera not only has been preserved, but has also been declared World Heritage, and its current codification is in Spanish. This work for cello and piano was commissioned by the Cello Teaching Repertoire Consortium. One of my goals with *Silbo* was to foster curiosity towards these captivating traditions, besides becoming proficient at a wide range of instrumental skills. The cello often utilizes harmonics that create a sound world imitating whistles, while the piano provides the shapes of the landscape; the mountainous expanse, the winds, the subtle sea waves. These ideas are combined with dance rhythms inspired by traditional music of La Gomera island.”

Sonata for Arpeggione and Piano (1824)

What is held and bowed like a cello, tuned and fretted like a guitar, and sounds like the worst parts of both instruments? It sounds like the setup to a bad joke, but the arpeggione, invented in the early 19th century, really did fit this descriptor. Multiple instrument makers of the time were experimenting with a cross between a cello and a guitar—and for a time, the resulting instrument was quite popular. It fell out of popularity within fifty years of its invention, however, and were it not for Franz Schubert's beautiful sonata, it might have become nothing more than the smallest of footnotes in history.

In 1824, though, the arpeggione was still fashionable, and Schubert wrote the work while dealing with significant health problems (a result of syphilis). He would die only four years later, the sonata still unpublished. By the time it was published, some fifty years later, the arpeggione had already faded into obscurity, and the work was published with a part edited for cello, its nearest relative. Now, the work is standard on both cello and viola, and can be heard on many other instruments as well.