



**Program**  
**October 20, 2024**

***Emerging Artist***

**Dillan Couillard, *cello***

Cello Suite No. 5 in C minor, BWV 1011  
IV. Sarabande

J.S. Bach  
(1685-1750)

The Train Whistle

Aaron Minsky

***Featured Performers***

**Luka Coetzee, *cello***  
**Susanne Ruberg-Gordon, *piano***

Three Pieces (1914)

I. Modéré  
II. Sans vitesse et à l'aise  
III. Vite et nerveusement rythmé

Nadia Boulanger  
(1887-1979)

Violin Sonata in A Major (1886)

I. Allegretto ben moderato  
II. Allegro  
III. Recitativo-Fantasia  
IV. Allegretto poco mosso

César Franck  
(1822 - 1890)

***Intermission***

Dragon Dance (2024)

Vincent Ho  
(b. 1975)

Suite for Solo Cello (1994-2013)

I. Preludio  
II. Serenade  
VIII. Notturmo

Krzysztof Penderecki  
(1933 - 2020)

Sonata L. 135 (1915)

I. Prologue  
II. Sérénade  
III. Finale

Claude Debussy  
(1862 - 1918)

Le Grand Tango (1982)

Astor Piazzolla  
(1921 - 1992)

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## Program Notes

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### **Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979)** **Three Pieces for Cello and Piano (1914)**

A teacher and pedagogue of world renown, Nadia Boulanger's legacy permeates Western art music, most notably through the remarkable influence she had teaching at the French Music School for Americans. She entered the Paris Conservatoire at nine years old, where she studied composition with Gabriel Fauré, and subsequently developed a career as a composer, conductor, early music pioneer, trusted advisor to Stravinsky and Poulenc, and as a teacher, inspiring an impressive list of many of the most influential American composers of the first half of the 20th century.

Most of Nadia Boulanger's music was composed between 1904 and 1918, and her Three Pieces, published in 1915, was originally composed for organ in 1911 as part of an anthology. This explains the oddity of the titles, typically represented by only number and key. The titles in the original manuscript were different, Improvisation, Prélude, and the third referred to in a program for the premiere performance as "Danse Espagnole," which Nadia performed alongside cellist Fernand Pollain at a gala evening organized by the Boulanger sisters at the Théâtre Léon Poirier in Paris on 18 November 1913.

### **César Franck (1822-1890)** **Violin Sonata in A Major (1886)** **Transcribed for cello by Jules Delsart**

Composed during the final decade of his life, César Franck's Sonata in A Major was a wedding present for fellow Liège-born artist, violinist Eugene Ysaÿe, performed first by Ysaÿe at his own wedding on 26 September 1886. Months later, Ysaÿe and Franck gave the first public performance of the sonata during a festival of Franck's music in Brussels. At the French

premiere one year later at the Société Nationale in Paris, the audience reception was so positive that the finale was repeated.

The Sonata in A Major has since emerged as one of the most revered 19th-century compositions for violin and piano. Its enduring popularity has inspired transcriptions for several other instruments— flute, double-bass, saxophone, organ (with mixed choir), and, most frequently, the cello. The first version for cello was arranged by a prominent French cellist and contemporary of Franck, Jules Delsart (1844–1900), and is the only alternative version produced in collaboration with the composer.

### **Vincent Ho (b. 1975) Dragon Dance (2024)**

Vincent Ho writes: Dragon Dance was written in celebration of the Year of the Dragon and inspired by my daughter's (Claudia) Chinese Zodiac animal. Ever since she was a child, Claudia loved music that had engaging rhythms, Eastern harmonies, fast tempi, and folkloric elements. With these in mind, I conjured a musical narrative that would express many of these concepts and ideas. As well, many of these ideas draws on the performance practices of Chinese traditional instruments but adapted for cello and piano.

The music begins with the emergence of the dragon coming out of the sea. As it settles onto land, it excitedly chases the animals it comes across as a playful game. Once catching up to the animals, they all engage in a rustic dance as a celebration. This eventually leaves the dragon exhausted, gradually making it fall into a sleepy slumber on the beach.

### **Claude Debussy (1862-1918) Sonata, L. 135 (1915)**

In the final years of Claude Debussy's life, he set out to write a collection of six sonatas for various musical forces, the sixth to be a combination of all the instruments in a chamber setting. He finished only three, and the cello sonata is perhaps the most visceral, intensified through Debussy's extensive use of fragmented themes, laced with adventurous harmonic language, and yet, a nostalgic classicism. In a letter to his publisher, Debussy wrote "I like the Cello Sonata's proportions and form, which are almost classical in the best sense of the word."

The Cello Sonata is dedicated to French singer Emma Bardac, notoriously known for her role in both the lives of Debussy and Gabriel Fauré. The sonata was premiered in London's Aeolian Hall in 1916, with the French premiere a year later by cellist Joseph Salmon, alongside Debussy himself at the piano.

### **Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) Le Grand Tango (1982)**

Born in Argentina to Italian parents, Astor Panteleón Piazzolla, the great tango composer and virtuoso bandoneón player, was also a New Yorker. From age five through fifteen he lived with his family in Greenwich Village and Lower Manhattan, and the musical hotbed of New York City in the 1920s was as influential on Piazzolla as it was the rest of the world. This period saw young Astor paired with his first bandoneón—a German instrument developed in Argentina—which he used to explore the plethora of jazz and commercial music surrounding him, and together with his teacher—a student of Rachmaninoff—to play the music of J.S. Bach.

Piazzolla returned to Argentina in his late teens, where he spent five years studying composition with Alberto Ginastera, and a subsequent five years under the instruction of concert pianist Raúl Spivak. At age thirty-two, Piazzolla's three-movement symphony won the Fabian Sevitzy Award, resulting in a grant for extensive compositional studies in Paris under none other than...Nadia Boulanger, and her influence on him was great.

Prolific Argentine pianist Martha Argerich was responsible for *Le Grand Tango*, by way of suggesting to Piazzolla in 1982 that he compose it for the music director of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, DC, cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, who premiered, recorded, and championed the work in his late career. Rostropovich's grand student performs it for you today.