



WASHINGTON
PERFORMING ARTS

HOME DELIVERY PLUS

2021 SERIES



ALISA WEILERSTEIN, cello

PREMIERING FRI, MAY 7, 8pm (ET)

STREAMING ON DEMAND THROUGH
THU, MAY 13, 11:59pm (ET)

PROGRAM

From the artist:

One of the things I always look for in terms of constructing a recital program is variety—variety of musical language, of history, and of place. So in this program, you have a nearly three-century span between Bach and Osvaldo Golijov. You also have four nationalities: Bach, of course, was German; you have Kodály, who was Hungarian; Britten, who of course was British; and Osvaldo Golijov, who was born in Argentina of Eastern-European Jewish parentage and who is now living in Boston. So, I really wanted to put these four very, very disparate composers together.

We start with Britten's *Tema 'Sacher'*, which is a fanfare. This is how I really wanted to begin the program—we really are just forced to wake up immediately. This piece, however, lasts about 90 seconds, and then launches straight into Osvaldo Golijov's beautiful *Omaramor*, which is a requiem and a tribute to the wonderful tango singer Carlos Gardel. After that, you will hear Johann Sebastian Bach's Suite No. 3, which is a complete and utter contrast to what has come before. It's very regal, optimistic, and of course has the traditional dance movements which you all know and love so much. After that is the most massive tour de force for solo cello—still to this day—that's ever been written. And for its time, 1915, it was really just incredibly groundbreaking to have a piece of this scope and magnitude written for solo cello, by Zoltán Kodály.

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913–1976)
Tema 'Sacher'

OSVALDO GOLIJOV (b. 1960)
Omaramor

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)
Suite No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1009

- I. Prélude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Bourrée
- VI. Bourrée
- VI. Gigue

ZOLTÁN KODÁLY (1882–1967)
Sonata in B minor for solo cello, Op. 8

- I. Allegro maestoso ma appassionato
- II. Adagio (con grand' espressione)
- III. Allegro molto vivace

So, I really hope you enjoy this program. I have enjoyed so much putting it together and preparing it for you.

– Alisa Weilerstein
(Excerpted from her video introduction to the
Home Delivery Plus performance)

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PROGRAM NOTES |

One Performer, One Cello, One Stage

On this program, Alisa Weilerstein performs four works composed over a span of nearly 300 years, yet none of them includes piano accompaniment for the cello. Faced with the challenge of writing for a linear instrument, these four composers respond with very different pieces. All four pieces were written for virtuoso performers, and they press cellists to the limits of their ability: some are so complex that they're written on two staves, some require the cellist to retune the instrument's strings, some require harmonics, chording, and simultaneous pizzicato and bowing. Yet these four pieces—which span just one hour—are also beautiful, bracing, and moving music.

Britten wrote his *Tema 'Sacher'* out of friendship. In 1976, his good friend Mstislav Rostropovich asked Britten to write a short piece for solo cello in honor of Swiss conductor Paul Sacher's 70th birthday. Dying of heart disease, the frail Britten could work only a few minutes each day, but he composed an ingenious one-minute piece based on chords derived from the musical equivalents of the six letters of Sacher's last name: E-flat / A / C / B / E / D.

Argentinian composer Osvaldo Golijov composed *Omaramor* as a musical tribute to Carlos Gardel, a tango singer who had revitalized the tango before his death in a plane crash in 1935. Golijov based his piece on one of Gardel's most famous hits, and he noted: "*Omaramor* is a fantasy on 'My Beloved Buenos Aires': the cello walks, melancholy at times and rough at others, over the harmonic progression of the song, as if the chords were the streets of the city. In the midst of this wandering, the melody of the immortal song is unveiled."

Like Britten, Bach was writing for a close friend when he composed his six suites for solo cello around 1720. That friend was Christian Ferdinand Abel, and Bach had served as godfather to one of Abel's sons. Abel must have been a spectacular cellist, for Bach's six suites are among the greatest music ever composed for that instrument: each consists of a prelude followed by a collection of dances. Those suites are extremely difficult for the performer, and to compound the difficulties, Bach left no indications about bowing, fingering, phrasing, or dynamics. Cellists must make many decisions for

themselves, and the late Hungarian-American cello virtuoso János Starker playfully claimed that one of the pleasures of going to heaven would be that he would finally be able to discuss with Bach himself exactly how the composer wanted this music played.

Two centuries later, in 1915, Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály wrote his *Sonata for Solo Cello*, which many consider the first significant work for unaccompanied cello since Bach's suites. And it is even harder than those suites: Kodály asks his cellist to play across five octaves, bow and pluck strings simultaneously, and master all manner of supremely difficult technical hurdles. Yet this soaring music breathes the powerful atmosphere of Hungarian folk music, and it is as exciting for audiences as it is demanding for its performer.

This concert offers music by four very different composers, spanning multiple eras and cultures. Each takes on the incredible challenge of writing for unaccompanied cello, and each responds in quite different ways—we will hear music of beauty, virtuosity, complexity, difficulty, and excitement, all performed by a single cellist alone on the stage.

– Eric Bromberger

Eric Bromberger has been program annotator for Washington Performing Arts since 2000. He also writes program notes for the Minnesota Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, San Francisco Performances, University of Chicago Presents, and many other organizations. A violinist, he was a member of the La Jolla Symphony for 32 seasons.

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Alisa Weilerstein is one of the foremost cellists of our time. Known for her consummate artistry, emotional investment and rare interpretive depth, she was recognized with a MacArthur “genius grant” Fellowship in 2011. Today her career is truly global in scope, taking her to the most

prestigious international venues for solo recitals, chamber concerts, and concerto collaborations with all the preeminent conductors and orchestras worldwide. “Weilerstein is a throwback to an earlier age of classical performers: not content merely to serve as a vessel for the composer’s wishes, she inhabits a piece fully and turns it to her own ends,” marvels the *New York Times*. “Weilerstein’s cello is her id. She doesn’t give the impression that making music involves will at all. She and the cello seem simply to be one and the same,” agrees the *Los Angeles Times*. As the UK’s *Telegraph* put it, “Weilerstein is truly a phenomenon.”

Bach’s six suites for unaccompanied cello figure prominently in Weilerstein’s current programming. Over the past two seasons, she has given rapturously received live accounts of the complete set on three continents, with recitals in New York, Washington, D.C., Boston, Los Angeles, Berkeley, and San Diego; at Aspen and Caramoor; in Tokyo, Osaka, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, London, Manchester, Aldeburgh, Paris, and Barcelona; and for a full-capacity audience at Hamburg’s iconic new Elbphilharmonie. During the global pandemic, she has further cemented her status as one of the suites’ leading exponents. Released in April 2020, her Pentatone recording of the complete set became a *Billboard* bestseller and was named “Album of the Week” by the U.K.’s *Sunday Times*. As captured in Vox’s YouTube series, her insights into Bach’s first G-major prelude were viewed almost 1.5 million times. During the first weeks of the lockdown, she chronicled her developing engagement with the suites on social media, fostering an even closer connection with her online audience by streaming a new movement each day in her innovative *#36DaysOfBach* project. As the *New York Times* observed in a dedicated feature, by presenting these more intimate accounts alongside her new studio recording, Weilerstein gave listeners the rare opportunity to learn whether

“the pressures of a pandemic [can] change the very sound a musician makes, or help her see a beloved piece in a new way.”

Earlier in the 2019/20 season, as Artistic Partner of the Trondheim Soloists, Weilerstein joined the Norwegian orchestra in London, Munich, and Bergen for performances including Haydn’s two cello concertos, as featured on their acclaimed 2018 release, *Transfigured Night*. She also performed ten more concertos by Schumann, Saint-Saëns, Elgar, Strauss, Shostakovich, Britten, Barber, Bloch, Matthias Pintscher, and Thomas Larcher with the London Symphony Orchestra, Zurich’s Tonhalle Orchestra, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne, Tokyo’s NHK Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, and the Houston, Detroit, and San Diego symphonies. In recital, besides making solo Bach appearances, she reunited with her frequent duo partner, Inon Barnatan, for Brahms and Shostakovich at London’s Wigmore Hall, Milan’s Sala Verdi, and Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw. To celebrate Beethoven’s 250th anniversary, she and the Israeli pianist performed the composer’s five cello sonatas in Cincinnati and Scottsdale, and joined Guy Braunstein and the Dresden Philharmonic for Beethoven’s Triple Concerto, as heard on the duo’s 2019 Pentatone recording with Stefan Jackiw, Alan Gilbert, and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields.

Committed to expanding the cello repertoire, Weilerstein is an ardent champion of new music. She has premiered two important new concertos, giving Pascal Dusapin’s *Outscape* “the kind of debut most composers can only dream of” (*Chicago Tribune*) with the co-commissioning Chicago Symphony in 2016 and proving herself “the perfect guide” (*Boston Globe*) to Matthias Pintscher’s cello concerto, *un despertar*, with the co-commissioning Boston Symphony the following year. She has since reprised Dusapin’s concerto with the Stuttgart and Paris Opera Orchestras and Pintscher’s with the Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne and with the Danish Radio Symphony and Cincinnati Symphony, both under the composer’s leadership. It was also under Pintscher’s direction that she gave the New York premiere of his *Reflections on Narcissus* at the New York Philharmonic’s inaugural 2014 Biennial, before reuniting with him to revisit the work at London’s BBC Proms. She has worked extensively

with Osvaldo Golijov, who rewrote *Azul* for cello and orchestra for her New York premiere performance at the opening of the 2007 Mostly Mozart Festival. Since then, she has played the work with orchestras around the world, besides frequently programming his *Omaramor* for solo cello. Grammy nominee Joseph Hallman has written multiple compositions for her, including a cello concerto that she premiered with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic and a trio that she premiered on tour with Barnatan and clarinetist Anthony McGill. At the 2008 Caramoor festival, she premiered Lera Auerbach's 24 Preludes for Violoncello and Piano with the composer at the keyboard, and the two subsequently reprised the work at the Schleswig-Holstein Festival, Washington's Kennedy Center, and for San Francisco Performances.

Weilerstein's recent Bach and *Transfigured Night* recordings expand her already celebrated discography. Earlier releases include the Elgar and Elliott Carter cello concertos with Daniel Barenboim and the Staatskapelle Berlin, named "Recording of the Year 2013" by *BBC Music*, which made her the face of its May 2014 issue. Her next album, on which she played Dvořák's Cello Concerto with the Czech Philharmonic, topped the U.S. classical chart, and her 2016 recording of Shostakovich's cello concertos with the Bavarian Radio Symphony and Pablo Heras-Casado proved "powerful and even mesmerizing" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). She and Barnatan made their duo album debut with sonatas by Chopin and Rachmaninoff in 2015, a year after she released *Solo*, a compilation of unaccompanied 20th-century cello music that was hailed as an "uncompromising and pertinent portrait of the cello repertoire of our time" (*ResMusica*, France). *Solo*'s centerpiece is Kodály's Sonata for Solo Cello, a signature work that Weilerstein revisits on the soundtrack of *If I Stay*, a 2014 feature film starring Chloë Grace Moretz in which the cellist makes a cameo appearance as herself.

Weilerstein has appeared with all the major orchestras of the United States, Europe, and Asia, collaborating with conductors including Marin Alsop, Daniel Barenboim, Jiří Bělohlávek, Semyon Bychkov, Thomas Dausgaard, Sir Andrew Davis, Gustavo Dudamel, Sir Mark Elder, Alan Gilbert, Giancarlo Guerrero, Bernard Haitink, Pablo Heras-Casado, Marek Janowski, Paavo Järvi, Lorin Maazel, Cristian Măcelaru, Zubin Mehta, Ludovic Morlot, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Peter Oundjian, Rafael Payare, Donald Runnicles, Yuri Temirkanov, Michael

Tilson Thomas, Osmo Vänskä, Joshua Weilerstein, Simone Young, and David Zinman. In 2009, she was one of four artists invited by Michelle Obama to participate in a widely celebrated and high-profile classical music event at the White House, featuring student workshops hosted by the First Lady and performances in front of an audience that included President Obama and the First Family. A month later, Weilerstein toured Venezuela as soloist with the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra under Dudamel, since when she has made numerous return visits to teach and perform with the orchestra as part of its famed El Sistema music education program.

Born in 1982, Alisa Weilerstein discovered her love for the cello at just two and a half, when she had chicken pox and her grandmother assembled a makeshift set of instruments from cereal boxes to entertain her. Although immediately drawn to the Rice Krispies box cello, Weilerstein soon grew frustrated that it didn't produce any sound. After persuading her parents to buy her a real cello at the age of four, she developed a natural affinity for the instrument and gave her first public performance six months later. At 13, in 1995, she made her professional concert debut, playing Tchaikovsky's "Rococo" Variations with the Cleveland Orchestra, and in March 1997, she made her first Carnegie Hall appearance with the New York Youth Symphony. A graduate of the Young Artist Program at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she studied with Richard Weiss, Weilerstein also holds a degree in history from Columbia University. She was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes (T1D) at nine years old, and is a staunch advocate for the T1D community, serving as a consultant for the biotechnology company eGenesis and as a Celebrity Advocate for JDRF, the world leader in T1D research. Born into a musical family, she is the daughter of violinist Donald Weilerstein and pianist Vivian Hornik Weilerstein, and the sister of conductor Joshua Weilerstein. She is married to Venezuelan conductor Rafael Payare, with whom she has a young child.

ABOUT THE HOST



Director of Programming at Washington Performing Arts since 2011, **Samantha Pollack** has also been named a “Rising Star in Classical Presenting” by *Musical America*. Ms. Pollack programs dozens of performances in venues throughout

the D.C. region each season in the genres of jazz, classical, global music, dance, and gospel. Ms. Pollack has been a key leader in re-imagining the performance experience for the digital landscape, closely collaborating with artists to design the *Home Delivery Plus 2021* performances and companion events.

LINGER LONGER PANELISTS



Dr. Fran Cogen is a Professor of Pediatrics at the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences and is the Director of the Childhood and Adolescent Diabetes Program at Children’s National Hospital. She has been consistently named as one of the

“Best Doctors in America,” most recently in 2018, and “Top Doctors” in the *Washingtonian* Magazine, most recently in 2020. She is dedicated to advocating for the needs of patients and their families in managing diabetes.

patients that have included: Washington Performing Arts, Cirque du Soleil, the National Symphony Orchestra, The Washington Ballet, Washington National Opera, NASA, and many more.

Dana Kristina-Joi Morgan is also a concert pianist who brings a new sound to the arts as she bridges the long revered classical tradition and other genres into a diverse and creative sound. Dazzling audiences nationwide by the wizardry and refined gracefulness of her sensational talent, she skillfully performs classics like George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* and Andraé Crouch’s “My Tribute” in the style of “classicalists” of yesteryear.



Dana K. J. Morgan is the Performance Coordinator of the Creative and Therapeutic Arts Services (CTAS) at Children’s National. The mission of CTAS is to combine the healing power of art, music, dance, and literature with other integrative care services to heal overall pain

and symptom relief, empower self-awareness and emotional expression for coping skills, ease anxiety, and provide a creative outlet for patients and families. As the Performance Coordinator, Dana schedules multi-disciplined artists and groups for performances in the Main Atrium and at patient bedside. Most notably, Dana has coordinated educational and engaging hospital performances for



Anastasia Tsioulcas is an NPR Arts reporter and the Series Host of *Home Delivery Plus 2021*. Tsioulcas’s NPR roles have included interviews with the likes of composers Steve Reich and Terry Riley and, as a former reporter and producer for NPR Music, production

of episodes of the popular *Tiny Desk Concert* series. For *Home Delivery Plus*, she lends her insights to a number of performance “packages,” from introducing the events to moderating post-performance talks to curating Spotify playlists inspired by package artists and themes.

SPECIAL THANKS

EVENT SPONSORS

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Linger Longers on Home Delivery Plus are made possible through the generous support of an anonymous donor.

“As a cello student, I am so inspired by the strength, passion, and sensitivity of Alisa Weilerstein’s performances. Barbara and I also have common cause with Weilerstein’s work on type 1 diabetes, which we have in our family. As repeat attendees of Weilerstein’s Washington Performing Arts concerts, we couldn’t be more pleased to sponsor Washington Performing Arts’s presentation of this remarkably talented artist.”

– Philip R. West

SERIES SPONSORS

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