



**WASHINGTON
PERFORMING ARTS**
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**WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTS
CELLIST ALISA WEILERSTEIN'S
INNOVATIVE CONCERT EXPERIENCE: "FRAGMENTS"**

Saturday, April 6, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Terrace Theater

Evening Concert is the Second-Annual Ruth Bader Ginsburg Memorial Recital



WASHINGTON– Cellist **Alisa Weilerstein** redefines the concert experience with her latest project, **FRAGMENTS**, presented and co-commissioned by **Washington Performing Arts**, at The Kennedy Center Terrace Theater on **Saturday, April 6 at 4:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.**

FRAGMENTS is a multi-year collection of 27 new works blended with Bach's Cello Suites in six unique, hour-long programs. Tracing a powerful and wholly original emotional arc, each FRAGMENTS program embraces a wide variety of compositional voices, the

composers being diverse in age, race, gender, geography, compositional approach, musical style and stage of career (see below for the complete list).

Weilerstein gives **the world-premiere of FRAGMENTS 4 at the 4:00 p.m. performance**, featuring commissions from **Courtney Bryan, Gabriel Kahane, Matthias Pintscher, Missy Mazzoli, and Paul Wiancko**. She presents the regional premiere of **FRAGMENTS 2** at the 7:30 p.m. performance, featuring commissions from **Ana Sokolovic, Alan Fletcher, Caroline Shaw, Gity Razaz, and Daniel Kidane**.

Each FRAGMENTS program is approximately 65 minutes and is performed without pauses, applause, or advance program order in a multi-sensory production directed by **Elkhanah Pulitzer**, and artistic producer and advisor **Hanako Yamaguchi**. The concerts feature responsive lighting and architectural elements by **Seth Reiser** and original costumes by **Carlos J Soto**.

“The staging serves as a way of guiding the audience,” **Weilerstein said**. “It’s not narrative theater. It’s abstract, yet very, very emotional. Some things will be familiar to people. Some things obviously will not be. To me, that’s very exciting! It’s the way I would want to experience a concert or a performance myself.”

The 7:30 p.m. concert also is the second-annual **Ruth Bader Ginsburg Memorial Recital**—a Washington Performing Arts performance honoring longtime friend of the organization and elevating new work of established and renowned artists. In summer 2021, Washington Performing Arts established the Ruth Bader Ginsburg Memorial Fund to celebrate the Justice’s life, legacy, and love of music with an annual award and recital in her memory. The Washington Performing Arts Ruth Bader Ginsburg Memorial Recital serves as a creative initiative connecting Justice Ginsburg’s love of music, the esteemed artists she championed and befriended, and the future of the vocal and instrumental arts in which she delighted.

Fellow co-commissioners of FRAGMENTS include The San Diego Symphony, UC Santa Barbara Arts & Lectures, Carnegie Hall, The Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, and Celebrity Series of Boston.

FRAGMENTS ticket prices range from \$40 to \$75 and are available at www.washingtonperformingarts.org/event/alisa-weilerstein

“Washington Performing Arts first presented Alisa Weilerstein in 2009 and has since supported almost a dozen presentations, from orchestral concerti to the complete solo Bach suites, to

contemporary chamber music.” said Washington Performing Arts’s Director of Programming **Samantha Pollack**. “From the beginning, we were captivated by Alisa’s expansive vision for FRAGMENTS, encompassing beloved, familiar Bach, brand-new works, innovative staging, and especially her re-imagining the audience experience by immersing them in the unknown, removing perhaps pre-conceived notions of what each composer ‘should’ sound like by not announcing the order in advance.”

About FRAGMENTS

Weilerstein first conceived of FRAGMENTS in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. She viewed the months of concert cancellations and lockdowns as an opportunity to rethink the way audiences experience classical music. She arrived at the idea of combining Bach’s suites with new music, which allowed her to celebrate the best of what’s being written today.

To all 27 composers, Weilerstein gave the same compositional prompt, asking each to write ten minutes of music in two or three standalone fragments that she could program between other new excerpts or movements by Bach. Her prompt elicited a wide variety of musical responses: Some composers drew inspiration directly from Bach, others explored the possibilities of today’s extended cello techniques.

Weilerstein then integrated the new works with Bach’s music to create the six chapters of FRAGMENTS. Each chapter is built around one suite in its entirety, but within them, she reordered Bach’s movements with the same freedom as the newer works.

“At its core, FRAGMENTS is about connection,” **Weilerstein said**. “I wanted to find new ways of connecting audience with performer, the familiar with the new, and composers of varying generations and backgrounds with one another. I intend for this program to be both a celebration of well-known voices and a way of introducing audiences to young composers or composers whose work has not been adequately appreciated by the wider public.”

Click [here](#) to watch a preview of FRAGMENTS.

Featured composers of the six full FRAGMENTS programs:

Andy Akiho, J.S. Bach, Courtney Bryan, Chen Yi, Alan Fletcher, Gabriela Lena Frank, Osvaldo Golijov, Joseph Hallman, Gabriel Kahane, Daniel Kidane, Thomas Larcher, Tania León, Allison Loggins-Hull, Missy Mazzoli, Gerard McBurney, Jessie Montgomery, Reinaldo Moya, Jeffrey Mumford, Matthias Pintscher, Gity Razaz, Gili Schwarzman, Caroline Shaw, Carlos Simon, Gabriela Smith, Ana Sokolović, Joan Tower, Mathilde Wantenaar, Paul Wiancko

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.”

In the 2023-24 season, Weilerstein plays concert repertoire spanning three centuries, from Haydn’s C-major Concerto with the Boston Symphony and Karina Canellakis to Anna Clyne’s *DANCE* with the Helsinki Philharmonic. She headlines the Staatskapelle Berlin’s season-opening concerts at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden and Berliner Philharmonie, performing Unsuk Chin’s Cello Concerto with her husband, Rafael Payare, whom she subsequently rejoins for Barber’s Cello Concerto with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and for Dvořák’s Cello Concerto with the San Diego Symphony, on a U.S. tour that culminates at Carnegie Hall. In addition, she opens the Barcelona Symphony’s season with accounts of Prokofiev’s *Sinfonia Concertante*, plays Lutosławski’s Cello Concerto with the Seattle Symphony, and performs Elgar’s Cello Concerto, first to launch the Rochester Philharmonic’s centennial season and then for a tour and week of subscription concerts with the Detroit Symphony. In recital, as well as continuing “FRAGMENTS,” she performs a solo program at New York’s 92NY and undertakes collaborations with violinist James Ehnes, pianist Inon Barnatan and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

Having given rapturously received live accounts on three continents, Weilerstein is already recognized as one of the leading exponents of Bach’s six suites for unaccompanied cello. Last season, she reprised the complete set in Portland, Oregon, and at London’s Wigmore Hall, where she has developed a close rapport with Wigmore audiences over the past 13 years. A Billboard bestseller, her Pentatone recording of the complete Bach suites was nominated for a 2021 Gramophone Award, while her insights into his first G-major prelude, as captured in Vox’s YouTube series, have been viewed well over two million times. During the first weeks of the global pandemic, she chronicled her developing engagement with the suites on social media,

fostering an even closer connection with her online audience in her innovative *#36DaysOfBach* project.

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 and has since 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 two young children.

ABOUT WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS

One of the most established and honored performing arts institutions in America, Washington Performing Arts has engaged for more than half a century with artists, audiences, students, and



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civic life. The city is truly our stage: for decades, in venues ranging from concert halls and clubs to public parks, we have presented a tremendous range of artists and art forms, from the most distinguished symphony orchestras to both renowned and emerging artists in classical music, jazz, international genres, and more. We also have an ever-expanding artistic and educational presence on the internet, envisioning ongoing opportunities for online connection and community.

Washington Performing Arts deeply values its partnerships with local organizations and other arts institutions. Through events online and in myriad performance venues and neighborhoods, we engage international visiting artists in community programs and introduce local artists to wider audiences. We place a premium on establishing artists as a continuing presence in the lives of both young people and adults through residencies and education programs.

Our achievements have been recognized with a National Medal of Arts and with three Mayor's Arts Awards from the DC Government. We have now embarked upon our second half-century, ever inspired by the motto of our founder, Patrick Hayes: "Everybody in, nobody out."

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