

Tuesday, August 12, 2014, 8pm  
Hearst Greek Theatre

## Yo-Yo Ma, *cello*

### PROGRAM

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) Suite No. 1 in G major, BWV 1007

Prélude  
Allemande  
Courante  
Sarabande  
Menuett I  
Menuett II  
Gigue

Bach Suite No. 5 in C minor, BWV 1011

Prélude  
Allemande  
Courante  
Sarabande  
Gavotte I  
Gavotte II  
Gigue

### INTERMISSION

Bach Suite No. 6 in D major, BWV 1012

Prélude  
Allemande  
Courante  
Sarabande  
Gavotte I  
Gavotte II  
Gigue

*This performance is made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsors Diana Cohen and Bill Falik.  
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**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)**  
**Suites Nos. 1, 5, and 6 for Unaccompanied**  
**Cello, BWV 1007, 1011, and 1012**

*Composed around 1720.*

In 1713, the frugal Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia dismissed his household musical establishment in Berlin. The young, cultured Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen took the opportunity to engage some of Friedrich's finest musicians, and provided them with excellent instruments and established a library for their regular court performances. In December 1717, Leopold hired Johann Sebastian Bach, then organist and *Kapellmeister* at Weimar, as his director of music. Inspired by the high quality of the musicians in his charge and by the Prince's praise of his creative work, Bach produced much of his greatest instrumental music during the six years of his tenure at Cöthen, including the "Brandenburg" Concertos, Suites for Orchestra, Violin Concertos, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, many chamber and keyboard compositions, and the works for unaccompanied violin and cello. The six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello were apparently written for either Christian Ferdinand Abel (whose son Carl Friedrich became the partner of Sebastian Bach's son Johann Christian in an important London concert venture in the 1760s) or Christian Bernhard Linigke, both master cellists in the Cöthen court orchestra.

The cello in Bach's time was still an instrument of relatively recent origin. It was the Cremonese craftsman Andrea Amati who first brought the violin, viola, and cello to their modern configurations around 1560 as the successors to the old, softer-voiced family of viols. (The modern double bass, with its tuning in fourths and its sloping shape—compare its profile with the square shoulders of the other orchestral strings—is the only survivor in the modern orchestra of that noble breed of earlier instruments.) For the first century of its existence, the cello was strictly confined to playing the bass line in concerted works; any solo passages in its register were

entrusted to the viola da gamba. The earliest solo works known to have been written specifically for the instrument, from the 1680s, are by Domenico Gabrieli, a cellist in the orchestra of San Petronio in Bologna (unrelated to the Venetian Gabrielis); notable among them are his *Ricercare* for Unaccompanied Cello of 1689. The first concerto for cello seems to be that composed by Giuseppe Jacchini in 1701. The instrument gained steadily in popularity as it displaced the older gamba, a circumstance evidenced by the many works for it by Antonio Vivaldi and other early-18th-century Italian composers. When Bach proposed to write music for unaccompanied cello sometime around 1720, however, there were few precedents for such pieces. The examples with which he was most familiar were by a tiny enclave of composers (Westhof, Biber, Walther, Pisendel) centered around Dresden who had dabbled in compositions for solo violin, and it was probably upon their models that Bach built his six Sonatas and Partitas for Violin and the half-dozen Suites for Cello. In comparing these two series of Bach's works, Philipp Spitta wrote, "The passionate and penetrating energy, the inner fire and warmth which often grew to be painful in its intensity [in the violin works], is here softened down to a quieter beauty and a generally serene grandeur, as was to be expected from the deeper pitch and fuller tone of the cello."

Bach's Solo Cello Suites, like his contemporaneous English Suites for Harpsichord (BWV 806–11), follow the traditional form of the German instrumental suite—an elaborate prelude followed by a fixed series of dances: *allemande*, *courante*, *sarabande*, and *gigue*. Between the last two movements of the cello works are inserted additional pairs of *minuets* (Suites Nos. 1 and 2), *bourrées* (Nos. 3 and 4), or *gavottes* (Nos. 5 and 6).

The First Suite (G major) opens with a fantasia-like *Prélude* whose steady rhythmic motion and breadth of harmonic inflection generate a sweeping grandeur that culminates magnificently in the heroic gestures of the closing measures. The ensuing movements

follow the old custom of pairing a slow dance with a fast one: an *Allemande* (here marked by wide-ranging figurations and swiftly flowing rhythms) is complemented by a *Courante*, a dance type originally accompanied by jumping motions; a stately *Sarabande* is balanced by a pair of *Minuets* (the second of which, in G minor, exhibits a delicious, haunted languor) and a spirited *Gigue* of vibrant character.

The Suite No. 5 (C minor), often characterized as the most profound and austere of the set, begins with a *Prélude* reminiscent of a French Overture: a slow, deeply melancholic opening section with dotted rhythms is followed by quickly moving music whose subtle shifts of register imply the intertwining of fugal voices. The ensuing movements use the forms and styles of the traditional dances, though their expressive state is not one of diversion but of sadness in the slow movements (*Allemande*, *Sarabande*) and firm determination in the fast ones (*Courante*, *Gavottes*, *Gigue*).

The Suite No. 6 (D major) was originally composed for a now-obsolete instrument with an added fifth, high E string. The extended upper register that this configuration prompted from Bach make the D major the most overtly virtuosic of the six suites, a quality reinforced by the music's many string crossings, elaborate figurations and frequent double stops. The *Prélude* is given a glistening sonorous sheen by its many cross-string bowings. The *Allemande*, the largest movement in the Suites, is spacious and smoothly lyrical. The *Courante* is imbued with the leaping energy of its model dance. The *Sarabande* moves through long arches of carefully embellished melody. The first *Gavotte* is joyous and energetic; the second imitates the drone of the *musette*, a small French bagpipe. The *Gigue* provides a brilliant close to one of Bach's most remarkable achievements.

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Todd Rosenberg

YO-YO MA's multifaceted career is testament to his continual search for new ways to communicate with audiences, and to his personal desire for artistic growth and renewal. Whether performing new or familiar works from the cello repertoire, coming together with colleagues for chamber music or exploring cultures and musical forms outside the Western classical tradition, Mr. Ma strives to find connections that stimulate the imagination.

One of Mr. Ma's goals is the exploration of music as a means of communication and as a vehicle for the migrations of ideas across a range of cultures throughout the world. Expanding upon this interest, in 1998 Mr. Ma established the Silk Road Project, a nonprofit arts and educational organization. Under his artistic direction, the Silk Road Project presents performances by the acclaimed Silk Road Ensemble, engages in cross-cultural exchanges and residencies, leads workshops for students, and partners with leading cultural institutions to create educational materials and programs.

The Project's ongoing affiliation with Harvard University has made it possible to broaden and enhance educational

programming. With ongoing partnerships with arts and educational organizations in New York City, it continues to expand *Silk Road Connect*, a multidisciplinary educational initiative for middle-school students in the city's public schools. Developing new music is also a central undertaking of the Silk Road Project, which has been involved in commissioning and performing more than 60 new musical and multimedia works from composers and arrangers around the world.

As the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant, Mr. Ma is partnering with Maestro Riccardo Muti to provide collaborative musical leadership and guidance on innovative program development for the Institute for Learning, Access and Training at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and for Chicago Symphony artistic initiatives. Mr. Ma's work focuses on the transformative power music can have in individuals' lives, and on increasing the number and variety of opportunities audiences have to experience music in their communities. Mr. Ma and the Institute have created the Citizen Musician Initiative, a movement that calls on all musicians, music lovers, music teachers, and institutions to use the art form to bridge gulfs between people and to create and inspire a sense of community. The website [citizenmusician.org](http://citizenmusician.org) features stories of Citizen Musician activity across the globe.

Mr. Ma is also widely recognized for his strong commitment to educational programs that bring the world into the classroom and the classroom into the world. While touring, he takes time whenever possible to conduct master classes as well as more informal programs for students—musicians and nonmusicians alike. He has also reached young audiences through appearances on *Arthur*, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, and *Sesame Street*.

Mr. Ma's discography of over 90 albums (including more than 17 Grammy Award-winners) reflects his wide-ranging interests. He has made several successful recordings that defy categorization, among them *Hush* with Bobby McFerrin, *Appalachia Waltz* and

*Appalachian Journey* with Mark O'Connor and Edgar Meyer, and two Grammy-winning tributes to the music of Brazil, *Obrigado Brazil* and *Obrigado Brazil: Live in Concert*. Mr. Ma's recent recordings include the Mendelssohn Trios with Emanuel Ax and Itzhak Perlman. His recent album, *The Goat Rodeo Sessions*, with Edgar Meyer, Chris Thile, and Stuart Duncan, received the 2013 Grammy for Best Folk Album. Also in 2013, the Silk Road Ensemble released its latest recording, *A Playlist Without Borders*. Across this full range of releases, Mr. Ma remains one of the bestselling recording artists in the classical field. All of his recent albums have quickly entered the *Billboard* chart of classical bestsellers, remaining in the Top 15 for extended periods, often with as many as four titles simultaneously on the list. In fall 2009, Sony Classical released a box set of over 90 albums to commemorate Mr. Ma's 30 years as a Sony recording artist.

Mr. Ma was born in 1955 to Chinese parents living in Paris. He began to study the cello with his father at age four and soon came with his family to New York, where he spent most of his formative years. Later, his principal teacher was Leonard Rose at the Juilliard School. He has received numerous awards, including the Avery Fisher Prize (1978), the Glenn Gould Prize (1999), the National Medal of the Arts (2001), the Dan David Prize (2006), the Sonning Prize (2006), the World Economic Forum's Crystal Award (2008), the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2010), the Polar Music Prize (2012), and the Vilcek Prize in Contemporary Music (2013).

In May 2014, Mr. Ma received the Fred Rogers Legacy Award, which recognizes individuals who have creatively advanced the legacy of Fred Rogers, through their own contributions to the well-being of children and by inspiring others to help children develop their unique talents and human potential. In 2011, he was recognized as a Kennedy Center Honoree. Appointed a CultureConnect Ambassador by the U.S. Department of State in 2002, Mr. Ma has met with, trained, and mentored thousands of students worldwide

in countries including Lithuania, Korea, Lebanon, Azerbaijan, and China. Mr. Ma serves as a U.N. Messenger of Peace and as a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. He has performed for eight American presidents, most recently at the invitation of President Obama on the occasion of the 56th Inaugural Ceremony.

Mr. Ma and his wife have two children. He plays two instruments, a 1733 Montagnana cello from Venice and the 1712 Davidoff Stradivarius. He is managed exclusively by Opus 3 Artists, 470 Park Avenue South, Ninth Floor North, New York, New York 10016. Visit [www.opus3artists.com](http://www.opus3artists.com).