



Amelia Island  
chamber music festival

**23rd Season**  
2023 - 2024

**Sheku Kanneh-Mason**  
Sheku Kanneh-Mason, cello

**Sunday, November 5**  
Amelia Plantation Chapel  
36 Bowman Rd.  
Amelia Island, FL

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 All venues for Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival in-person concerts are handicap accessible.

# program

November 5, 2023

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## **Cello Suite No. 2 in D Minor, BMW 1008**

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Menuet-Menuet II
- VI. Gigue

## **JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH**

(1685 - 1750)

## **Prayer for the Senses**

## **GWILYM SIMCOCK**

(b. 1981)

## **Cello Suite No. 1, Op. 72**

- I. Canto primo. Sostenuto e largamente
- II. Fuga. Andante moderato
- III. Lamento. Lento rubato
- IV. Canto secondo. Sostenuto
- V. Serenata. Allegretto pizzicato
- VI. Marcia. Alla marcia moderato
- VII. Canto terzo. Sostenuto
- VIII. Bordone. Moderato quasi recitativo
- IX. Moto perpetuo e Canto quarto. Presto

## **BENJAMIN BRITTEN**

(1913 - 1976)

intermission

## **Sonata No. 2 for Solo Cello**

- I.
- II.
- III.

## **LEO BROUWER**

(b. 1984)

*This work is dedicated to Sheku Kanneh-Mason and was commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society through the generous support of an anonymous donor.*

## **Five Preludes for Solo Cello**

- Prelude I
- Prelude II
- Prelude III
- Prelude IV
- Prelude V

## **EDMUND FINNIS**

(b. 1984)

## **Suite for Solo Cello**

- I. Preludio-Fantasia
- II. Sardana
- III. Intermezzo e danza finale

## **GASPAR CASSADÓ**

(1897 - 1961)

Sheku Kanneh-Mason appears by arrangement with Enticott Music Management . Sheku Kanneh-Mason records exclusively for Decca Classics. Sheku plays a Matteo Goffriller cello from 1700 which is on indefinite loan to him.

*\*Program subject to change*

## program notes

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### JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH Cello Suite No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1008

*"Bach takes you to a very quiet place within yourself, to the inner core, a place where you are calm and at peace." - Yo-Yo Ma*

Johann Sebastian Bach composed six suites for unaccompanied cello while serving as Kapellmeister to Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen (1717-1723). The composer played both violin and viola, but not the cello as it was a relatively new instrument. It was not until the early 1700's that the cello began to gain recognition as an instrument within its own right. These six suites were perhaps written for violinist and cellist Ferdinand Abel or Christian Bernhard Linigke, cellist in the Cöthen court orchestra. The six suites are arranged as a set, but no autograph score survives. The earliest copy dates from the late 1700's and is in the hands of Bach's second wife, Anna Magdalena. When Bach died in 1750 his music was considered old fashioned, and his compositions were largely forgotten until the early 19th century. In 1889 in Barcelona, a thirteen-year-old cello prodigy bought a copy of the Bach suites in a used music store. That young musician, Pablo Casals, and his performances of Bach's suites helped to make them an important part of the solo cello repertoire. All six of the suites consist of a prelude and a series of dances.

The opening arpeggio of the *Prelude* spells out a D minor triad. The dances following are in binary form. The second movement, the *Allemande* is a French word meaning "German." The *Courante* is

a Baroque dance with Italian and French nuances. Both of these movements are rhythmically driven and lively. A *Sarabande*, a slow, sensual dance that originated among the Berber people of North Africa would later become a courtly dance in France. Bach's rich *Sarabande* remains in the key of D minor. It is filled with yearning trills, is intensely dark and concludes with a descending octave leap landing on a low mournful D. The *Menuet I* and *II*, both lighter and more dance-like, are in contrasting keys: D Minor and D Major. The exuberant final movement, *Gigue*, is filled with rapid sixteenth notes that leave us balancing on the tip of a D minor arpeggio.

The website "Fugue for Thought" describes Bach's Suite No. 2 in D minor with these words: "By the end, it seems an amazement that this entire sound world was created with a bow, ten fingers, and four strings."

### GWILYM SIMCOCK Prayer for the Senses

*"Gwilym's an original." - Chick Corea*

Welsh composer Gwilym Simcock is also known as a gifted pianist. According to the United Kingdom's online music database **last.fm** Simcock has been influenced "by jazz legends Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea, and John Taylor and classical composers Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky, and Mark-Anthony Turnage... Although principally a jazz artist, Gwilym is breaking new ground between genres and often uses classical reference points in his composed works."

## program notes (continued)

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*Prayer for the Senses* was composed for London's Royal Academy of Music Bicentenary Celebrations. Two hundred composers were each invited to write a new work for solo instrument or voice. Simcock's *Prayer for the Senses* was written especially for his fellow alumnus Sheku Kanneh-Mason. Written in 2021, it is an introspective piece set with changing rhythmic pulses and values. Simcock gives succinct, direct playing instructions throughout the piece as if in a conversation with the performer.

Beginning in 4/4 he advises "very free and 'improvisatory' throughout." At measure 13 the markings are to "Build and push on to [measure] 25." Later, quickening the tempo and changing the time signature to 3/2, he increases the value of the metronome marking value signaling the quarter note to increase from 80 to 160. A long ritard with fermatas occurs at measure 55 and we return to 4/4 where he instructs: "Feel free to pull it around..." As the piece progresses and the time signature again changes, Simcock includes these instructions, "Start slow and heavy, build into the tempo. 119-142 tempo gets faster as it gets quieter, but, again, you can make space to bring out the top + middle lines, esp. at 129-132."

As the piece is coming to a conclusion, he writes "(really sound the grace notes...)" and "cresc. and push on to 172." His final word is *con sord*, telling the performer to use a mute so that the dynamic marking *pp* will allow the piece to come to a close ever so quietly.

### **BENJAMIN BRITTEN** **Suite No. 1 for Cello Solo, Op. 72**

*"If wind and water could write music, it would sound like Ben's."*

- Yehudi Menuhin, violinist and conductor

**E**dith Britten believed the birth of her child on St. Cecilia's Day, the feast-day of the patron Saint of music, November 22, 1913 to be a good omen. Both she and her husband encouraged their son musically. His father, refusing to allow a radio or phonograph in their home feared it would interfere with the family's music making. At an early age, Benjamin quickly outgrew the local resources for his musical and compositional studies. His viola instructor Audrey Alston introduced his young student to the English composer, violist, and conductor Frank Bridge. Bridge became Britten's composition teacher and friend. The most valuable lesson Britten attributed to Bridge was the encouragement "that you should find yourself and be true to what you found." In 1930 he studied composition with John Ireland and honed his skills as a pianist at the Royal College of Music in London.

Benjamin Britten composed three suites for unaccompanied cello following the compositional model of J.S. Bach. Britten's *Suite No. 1 for Cello Solo, Op. 72* was composed in 1964 and dedicated to Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. While attending the London premiere of Dmitri Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 1, Britten heard and met the soloist, Rostropovich, and a musical friendship developed. The premiere of the First Suite was at the

## program notes (continued)

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Aldeburgh Festival on June 27, 1965. The approximately twenty-minute work has nine movements that are played without pause. Britten employs various key signatures and bowing techniques. Filled with pizzicato markings for the soloist to pluck the strings with the fingers throughout the piece, the Marcia includes passages with rhythmic rapping on the open strings suggesting a processional. The Bordone, the eighth movement, is a drone bass and the term is also known as a very low frequency organ stop. The melody sings over the elongated bass notes. The beginning is to be played pesante or heavily, and animato or animated. It concludes quietly with a triple *pianissimo*, instructing the soloist to remove the mute, senza sordino. The frenzied final movement marked *Presto* flies and spins to a dramatic conclusion.

Author and program commentator Melvin Berger described Britten as passionately upholding the conviction that "music should communicate directly with people, speak to them in ways that they could understand, and evoke their deepest feelings and emotions...Britten's music is always direct and honest in its appeal, intellectually stimulating and engaging."

### LEO BROUWER Sonata No. 2 for Solo Cello

*"Every piece should have a magical moment. This helps to breathe the music."*

- Leo Brouwer

**A**lthough classical guitarist, composer, arranger, and conductor Leo Brouwer was born into a family with a musical heritage, he was mostly self-motivated and self-educated. His mother was a singer and multi-instrumentalist who performed on Cuban radio, his father was an amateur guitarist, his uncle, Ernesto Lecuona wrote "La Malagueña" and his second cousin, Margarita Lecuano wrote "Babalú", the song Desi Arnez brought to life in the comedy series "I Love Lucy."

His formal compositional studies were completed at Juilliard and Hartt College of Music. Brouwer's compositions include works for guitar, piano, and percussion as well as many film scores including the movies *A Walk in the Clouds* and *Like Water for Chocolate*.

In an article by Julia Crowe for the publication *Classical Guitar*, she writes that Brouwer has "earned near-legendary status as a contemporary composer for the body of well-loved composition work he has created for the guitar. He has imprinted his own voice and musical style upon the guitar with his fusion of traditional Cuban music, Afro-Cuban strains, and an avant-garde sensibility, all conveying a thorough understanding of the instrument's idiosyncrasies, idioms, and tonal beauty."

His Sonata for *Solo Cello* was composed in 1960 and revised in 1964. He said, "My godfather at Juilliard, a cellist

## program notes (continued)

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named Leonard Rose, had me teach there and I learned the cello at home to be able to write my Sonata for cello. I was twenty-one years old at the time and I used cello tuning on my guitar to write." The music published by Chester Music carries this inscription: "...this wonderfully lyrical solo Sonata offers a substantial challenge to the performing cellist...A superb showcase that explores the full range of the instrument." The *Sonata No. 2* is best explained in the composer's own words. "Completed on 18 December 2020, *Sonata No. 2* was composed expressly for the excellent cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason. His special sound and professionalism, even at his young age, motivated me greatly to make my second sonata for this instrument. It is really very difficult for me to talk or write about my music, I prefer to compose it and not to explain it. Thanks to Mr. James Murphy, Chief Executive of the Royal Philharmonic Society for encouraging these projects in favor of the cello repertoire in the 21st century and promoting young artists."

### **EDMUND FINNIS** **Five Preludes for Solo Cello**

*[He is] "a very, very special composer."*  
- Sheku Kanneh-Mason

**E**dmund Finnis was born in Oxford, England in 1984. He studied at the Guildhall School with Julian Anderson. Since 2015 he has been a professor of composition at the Royal Academy of Music. His works include music for soloists and duets, immersive electronic pieces,

music for films, ensemble, and choral works as well as large works for orchestra. "Magical, iridescent, compelling, exquisite, ethereally beautiful" are examples of the words written to describe his music. *Klassik begeistert* chose the words, "spherical, exceedingly inspiring, and intoxicating."

His *Five Preludes* were composed for the '200 pieces' project marking the bicentenary of the Royal Academy of Music. The Times wrote, "the real standout was Edmund Finnis's five Preludes for solo cello, which made the instrument sing, speak, trace shapes in the air, growl in the depths and reach up into the ether." The world premiere of the *Preludes* was November 25, 2021, at the Royal Academy of Music in London performed by Sheku Kanneh-Mason.

In an interview for *Strings Magazine*, Sheku Kanneh-Mason talks about the set of five preludes and their composer who is also a cellist. "[Finnis] is very interested in subtle and detailed things in the sound, which is something that I spend a lot of time thinking about and exploring. The collaboration really works well because of that, I think. He's a very sensitive musician to the aspects of music that I care about, like harmony and melody, sound and subtlety, and the vocal qualities of the instrument that's the cello."

The publicized words describing the music of Finnis, and the *Five Preludes* fall short of capturing the depth and beauty of these five short pieces. However, what words truly do adequately convey the sounds we call music.

## program notes (continued)

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### **GASPAR CASSADÓ** **Suite for Solo Cello**

*"We artists are like butterflies: when you die, it's finished."* - Gaspar Cassadó

On December 27, 1966, The New York Times published Gaspar Cassadó's obituary. It began: GASPAR CASSADO, SPANISH CELLIST Soloist and Composer dies at 69 -Pupil of Casals.

This great cellist, Gaspar Cassadó, was born in Barcelona in 1897. After giving his first concert at age nine, the young cellist was given a scholarship to study in Paris with Pablo Casals. Here he would also study with French Impressionist Maurice Ravel and the Spanish composer Manuel de Falla. The friendship and tutelage of Casals was invaluable for the young composer's career until the relationship between the two was torn over political views. Casals, a pacifist, left Spain and refused to play in any country that recognized Francisco Franco's government. The younger Cassadó continued his career, touring and described himself as "apolitical." He was well received at his American debut in 1936 (the year the Spanish Civil War broke out) at Carnegie Hall with the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Sir John Barbirolli. During World War II, Cassadó lived in Florence, Italy keeping a low profile. In 1949, he returned to New York to perform a critically acclaimed recital. However, an accusatory letter written by Casals was published in the New York Times. Cassadó was forced to cancel his U.S. tour and lost a contract with Columbia Records. Through the efforts of a mutual friend, Yehudi Menuhin, British violinist, the two cellists eventually reconciled in the mid-1950's.

Cassadó was the first cellist to perform with steel strings rather than gut. He also invented an adjustable fingerboard for the cello that would compensate for weather

related changes affecting the instrument's bridge. Although he was a talented performer, composer and transcriber, his name is not particularly well known. According to a recent interview with cellist Katie Tertell on NPR, "Only a small handful of Cassadó's works are performed today, pieces like his cello suite...or the "Dance of the Green Devil." She further explained, "he had a very successful solo career in Europe, performing both on his own as a soloist, but also with his wife, Chieko Hara, who was a pianist. As a result of that, we don't know his name the way we know Casals' name, even in the music world...Only about twenty-five of Cassadó's works were published in his lifetime. Many have gone out of print." Through negotiations in Japan, there is now hope to gain access to his sixty-four unpublished scores. In her will, Chieko Hara left the composer's papers to Tamagawa University's Museum of Educational Heritage in Japan.

Cassadó's *Suite for Cello* was composed in the mid-1920's. It is dedicated to the German cellist and art collector Francesco von Mendelssohn. It is thought to represent three important cultural regions of Spain: Castilla-La Mancha, Catalonia, and Andalusia. The first movement of this collection of dances begins with a *zarabanda* which is related to the Baroque dance in triple meter known as a Sarabande. The second movement is a folk dance closely associated with the Catalonian nationalist revival of the 19th century, a *sardana*. The third movement begins longingly and quietly before the sound of a fiery guitar accompanied by castanets swirl into a *Jota*. "Jota" literally means "jump."

This traditional Spanish courtship folk dance dates to the 18th Century in the Aragon region. The couple would raise their arms high, click castanets and dance to the fast and lively rhythms.

-Emma Mills Bledsoe, 2023



## about sheku kanneh-mason

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Celloist Sheku Kanneh-Mason's career and performances span the globe. Whether performing for children in a school hall, at an underground club or in the world's leading concert venues, Sheku's mission is to make music accessible to all. After winning the BBC Young Musician competition in 2016, Sheku's performance at the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex at Windsor Castle in 2018 was watched by two billion people worldwide.

Highlights of the 23/24 season include the Last Night of the Proms with the BBC Symphony and Marin Alsop, performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Orquesta Nacional de España, National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, Oslo Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Gävle Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic on tour in Germany, Cincinnati Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, and San Francisco Symphony. With his sister, Isata, he appears in recital in Japan,

Singapore, and South Korea in addition to an extensive European recital tour. Sheku will also perform a series of duo recitals with guitarist Plinio Fernandes as well as continuing his solo cello recital tour in the USA and Canada. He returns to Antigua, where he has family connections, as an ambassador for the Antigua and Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra. Since his debut in 2017, Sheku has performed every summer at the BBC Proms, including in 2020 when he gave a breath-taking recital performance with his sister Isata, to an empty auditorium due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A Decca Classics recording artist, his 2022 album, *Song*, showcases his innately lyrical playing in a wide and varied range of arrangements and collaborations. Sheku's 2020 album *Elgar* reached No. 8 in the overall Official UK Album Chart, making him the first ever celloist to reach the UK Top 10. Sheet music collections of his performance repertoire along with his own arrangements and compositions are published by Faber.

Sheku is a graduate of London's Royal Academy of Music where he studied with Hannah Roberts and in May 2022 was appointed as the Academy's first Menuhin Visiting Professor of Performance Mentoring. He is an ambassador for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Future Talent, and Music Masters. Sheku was appointed a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2020 New Year's Honours List. He plays a Matteo Goffriller cello from 1700 which is on indefinite loan to him.

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Lott's Furniture  
Lyn DeRoy  
Martha Wilkins  
Mocama Beer Company  
Nassau County Council on Aging  
Penny Reid, Mouth of Amelia  
Phil Kelly, Amelia Islander Magazine  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

Raintree Graphics  
Steve & Cille Ramsey  
Skip Becker, piano tuner  
St. Peter's Episcopal Church  
Story and Song  
Sue Braddock  
Sue Sinor, grant writer  
Susan Dodge, Amelia Island Dance  
Festival  
The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island  
Vicki Whittemore, volunteer coordinator  
Will Howery, luthier services

### volunteers

Cynthia Bonczkiewicz  
Peter Carter  
Linda Cooley  
Ken and Carol Copithorne  
Joyce Ellenson  
Jaqui Galbreth  
Lucinda George  
Steve Halloway  
Ruth Igoe  
Linda Janca  
Lis Krawiecki  
Dan Knight  
Alwynne Lamp  
Karen Lavine  
Elizabeth Limbacher

Greg Livshitz  
David Olson  
Anne Oman  
Jackie Piersanti  
Stewart Pikula  
Janet Plosser  
Tim Sharron  
Sara Snell  
Phyllis Stabler  
Ed and Judy Stanley  
Rosemary Szczygiel  
Lou and Joyce Tonti  
Diana Twiggs  
Tom and Vicki Whittemore  
Steve Zebrask



## upcoming events:

- Thursday, Nov. 30, 2023 **JLCO with Wynton Marsalis** featuring Ashley Pezzotti  
7:00 pm | First Baptist Church
- Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024 **Meet The Artistic Director:** William Ransom  
5:00 pm | Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
- Friday, Jan. 19, 2024 **The Magic of Mozart**  
7:00 pm | The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island
- Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024 **Family Concert**  
3:00 pm | Fernandina Beach Middle School
- Sunday, Feb. 25, 2024 **Jerry Douglas Band**  
5:00 pm | The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island
- Saturday, March 9, 2024 **Sibling Rivalry**  
5:00 pm | Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
- Friday, April 5, 2024 **Meet the Author: Rita Dove**  
5:00 pm | Peck Center Auditorium
- Saturday, April 6, 2024 **Sonata Mulattica:** Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata  
5:00 pm | Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
- Sunday, April 14, 2024 **Juilliard String Quartet**  
5:00 pm | Amelia Plantation Chapel
- Sunday, April 28, 2024 **CelloBration!** - featuring Zuill Bailey  
5:00 pm | Amelia Plantation Chapel
- Sunday, May 11, 2024 **Picnic Concert** in the Park  
5:00 pm | Central Park
- Wednesday, May 29, 2024 **Beethoven & Beer**  
5:00 pm | Mocama Beer Company
- Saturday, June 1, 2024 **Festival Finale** - Christopher Rex String Seminar  
3:00 pm | Prince of Peace Lutheran Church



Tickets available at [aicmf.org](https://aicmf.org)  
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and on Instagram [@aicmfestival](https://www.instagram.com/aicmfestival)