

Faculty and Guest Artist Recital

Jiamo Chen, cello
Kirsten Smith, piano

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SATURDAY, 7:00 P.M.
NOVEMBER 15, 2025
CAPISTRANO HALL 151

Sonata in F major, Opus 5, No. 1 Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Poco sostenuto - Allegro ma non troppo
Allegretto
Allegretto ma non troppo
Allegro

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

Modéré
Sans Vitesse et à l'aise
Vite et nerveusement rythmé

INTERMISSION

Sonata in A major César Franck
(1822-1890)

Allegretto ben moderato
Allegro
Ben moderato
Allegretto poco mosso

player across North America and Europe. In addition to his busy performance career, Mr. Chen is committed to nurturing the next generation of musicians. He serves as a cello instructor at the Pacific Institute of Music and manages J's Music Studio. An avid chamber musician, Jiamo has performed throughout northern California in duo collaborations with Kirsten Smith, as well as trio chamber music with pianist Shinae Kim and violinist Anita Felix. He has also appeared with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Sacramento Philharmonic Orchestra, North State Symphony, Stockton Symphony, and the Sacramento Choral Society. During his leisure time he enjoys spending time with his family, good food, and playing with his two cats.

American pianist **Kirsten Smith** completed her undergraduate and graduate degrees in piano performance at the Arizona State University School of Music under the tutelage of Steven De Groote, Gold Medalist of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. A winner of many competitions herself, Ms. Smith has been the recipient of awards, scholarships and invitations to music festivals including the Aspen Music Festival, Interlochen Center for the Arts and the Van Cliburn Institute. She has been chosen to premiere numerous new works by contemporary composers and has recorded several times for the Centaur label. In addition to the solo repertoire, Ms. Smith is devoted to the performance of collaborative works, and is a passionate teacher who believes deeply in the importance of discovering and sharing musical knowledge.

Ms. Smith has been on the faculty of Sacramento State since 1996, where she has taught piano, music theory, aural skills, collaborative piano and piano pedagogy. In demand as a lecturer, adjudicator and columnist, Ms. Smith was awarded a prestigious Pedagogy Enhancement Award at CSUS. Raised in a musical family, she began formal lessons with her mother at age four and began teaching piano and entered college by age thirteen. Ms. Smith resides in Sacramento, where she divides her time between teaching and performing. When she's not at the piano, she enjoys training for dog agility competitions as well as traveling, camping, and exploring nature.

whole bar but later move closer to just a half bar – a touching metaphor, along with the hint of wedding bells, for Ysaÿe's wedding.

Thank you for joining us tonight. This is our fourth program of chamber music together since we joined forces two years ago. Jia-mo and I always enjoy challenging ourselves with new repertoire and we have loads of fun growing and learning together. We refuse to speculate on the notion that we may be addicted to the learning curve; we choose our repertoire simply because we love it, and we hope that our performance tonight will allow you to enjoy and appreciate it as we do.

The Beethoven sonata is a piece I grew up hearing my pianist mother play with her cellist friends. It's not often played in concert. When Jia-mo suggested it, I thought, "Oh, that cute one with the fun tunes!" It wasn't until I put my own hands on it that I realized the depth and vision that Beethoven was bringing to the world with this revolutionary sonata. The Three Pieces by N. Boulanger were delightful upon first hearing and have revealed themselves to be excellent and lovely compositions. It is sad to me that her legacy as a composer was curtailed by so many setbacks, including gender discriminations of the time, her sister's untimely death, and her need to earn a living to support herself and her mother. Without question, she was a pivotal force in the musical development of the 20th century.

The Franck sonata is a piece that Jia-mo told me was "a dream piece" for him—something he had always wanted to play but hadn't yet had the opportunity. It's often transcribed for other instruments, and I first performed it in 2017 with flutist Cathie Apple. I feel I have returned to it with new ideas and a deeper understanding of one of the most challenging—and beautiful—chamber works I have encountered. This is, after all, the reason we do this.

Jiamo Chen is a cellist and dedicated music educator based in Sacramento, California. He holds a Bachelor's degree in cello performance from California State University, Sacramento, and Master of Music degree from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and has an extensive performance background as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral

Beethoven completed his Opus 5 cellos sonatas in his mid-twenties while on tour in Berlin, then the capital of Prussia. They are dedicated to the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm II, who was a great music lover and amateur cellist. Beethoven performed these new works at court with the fine cellist Jean-Louis Duport, for which the king rewarded a delighted Beethoven with a golden snuffbox filled with 100 gold coins. In the early classical period, the cello was typically relegated to "playing along" on an obligato part—merely doubling of the bass line of the keyboard part. With his Opus 5 cello sonatas, Beethoven broke new ground and gave birth to the modern cello sonata. Here, the cello finds its own voice in a fully composed and independent part.

The sonata you will hear tonight is in just two movements. The first movement begins with a languid adagio, leading directly into a lively proper sonata-allegro form. In the allegro, we hear the main theme in the piano, then echoed by the cello. The sharing of themes and alternation from one instrument to the other is reminiscent of his piano concertos. The development modulates into minor, providing the drama we expect from Beethoven. Following the recapitulation, we hear another concerto reference—a clearly demarcated cadenza for both instruments, including a bit of *fugato* writing.

The second movement is a lively rondo. It begins with the cello announcing a relaxed, playful theme, but we soon hear its latent energy with exhilarating bursts of energy and rapid exchanges between the pianist and cellist. A moment of tranquil serenity over a drone bass provides contrast, but never for long before the excitement renews. Finally, Beethoven returns to a falling motive from the opening rondo theme and allows it to devolve into a questioning and tender adagio before surprising us with an energetic closing flourish.

Nadia Boulanger was a towering talent of the 20th century whose life and career spanned almost a century. She maintained an unrelenting schedule of composition, performing, conducting and teaching throughout her long life. In 1939, she was the first woman to conduct the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Washington National Symphony Orchestra and presented 102 lectures in 118 days.

Born in Paris to French composer Ernest Boulanger and his wife Raissa Myshetskaya, a Russian princess, Nadia's prodigious talent showed itself early. By the age of nine, she entered the Paris Conservatory. By twelve, she had memorized the entire well-tempered Clavier of Bach. A student of Fauré, she did not think highly of her own compositions but nonetheless became a trusted advisor to the likes of Stravinsky and Poulenc.

The ripple effects of her teaching are still felt today. While we don't have records of everyone she taught, the estimates are close to a thousand students from around the world including composers Aaron Copland, Elliott Carter, Phillip Glass, George Walker, Soulima Stravinsky, Manuel Ponce, Walter Piston, and Astor Piazzolla. Her piano students are a similarly star-studded cadre, including Daniel Barenboim, Idil Biret, Clifford Curzon, Grant Johannesen, Dinu Lipatti and Robert Levin. She considered teaching to be a pleasure, a privilege, and a duty. Her students were in awe of her.

Copland recalls:

Nadia Boulanger knew everything there was to know about music; she knew the oldest and the latest music, pre-Bach and post-Stravinsky. All technical know-how was at her fingertips: harmonic transposition, the figured bass, score reading, organ registration, instrumental techniques, structural analyses, the school fugue and the free fugue, the Greek modes and Gregorian chant.

Most of her musical compositions were written between 1904–1918 (the year her younger sister, Lili, died). The Three Pieces for cello and piano, from 1914, embody her expressive lyricism through lush harmonies, nuanced textures, and a keen awareness of instrumental timbre. The first piece, in E-flat minor, opens with a flowing cello melody supported by a hushed piano accompaniment. After a brief climax, the opening serene melody returns. The second piece, in A minor, is more relaxed, using a simple tune to provide an inspired, lovely canon that has an almost chorale-like effect. The last piece, in C-sharp minor, is quick and rhythmic, with playful exchanges between the cello and piano, creating a lively conclusion.

César Franck (1822-1890) was born in Liège in what is today Belgium but at the time was under the control of the Netherlands. Pushed by an

ambitious father, who moved the family to Paris to further his career, Franck finally broke with his father when he disapproved of the girl who Franck would eventually marry. As a 'failed' prodigy, Franck was forced to reinvent himself as an organist, and gradually gained fame and importance in this manner, eventually becoming an instructor at the Paris Conservatoire. Franck is unusual in that a relatively small number of works have cemented a large reputation as a composer and helped to revitalize the chamber music and orchestral traditions in France.

The Violin Sonata heard here tonight was completed in 1886 and presented as a wedding gift to virtuoso violinist and composer Eugène Ysaÿe. Franck presented the work to Ysaÿe on the morning of his wedding. After a hurried rehearsal, Ysaÿe performed the Sonata at the wedding. He gave the first public performance later that year at the Brussels Museum of Modern Painting. By the end of a long program, the light was fading, and since the gallery authorities permitted no artificial light, the last three movements had to be played from memory in virtual darkness.

Ysaÿe programmed it frequently and its success did much to further Franck's reputation. Today it is often played in transcriptions for cello, viola, flute, alto saxophone(!) tuba (!!) and even organ with choir. However, there is an oral legend that Franck had in fact conceived the work as a cello sonata, and only converted it to a violin sonata when he found himself in need of a wedding gift for Ysaÿe. There is some evidence that backs, or at least does not undermine this claim, and it is certain that Franck approved the printing of the cello version during his lifetime. One characteristic of his style that can be seen in the sonata is his use of 'cyclic unity' where ideas from previous movements re-appear, perhaps modified, in later ones. The cello's opening theme of the gentle first movement provides a foundation for the whole work. The following Allegro is more like a conventional first movement, an energetically rising start contrasting with a falling second subject that mirrors the work's opening figure. The third movement is an original Recitative and Fantasy whose opening echoes that of the first movement and whose climax introduces both a theme which will recur in the last movement and another that provides a variant on the work's opening. Much of the final movement is written as a canon on a theme which is again related to the work's opening. The two parts of the canon are initially separated by a