

Bard College Conservatory of Music

presents

A Degree Recital:

Rowan Puig Davis, *double bass*

Friday, April 23, 2021, at 8:00 PM

View the concert on: <https://youtu.be/7glfiG0tWbk>

Cello Suite No.1 in G major, BWV 1007

**Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)**

Prelude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Minuet I and II
Gigue

Arpeggione Sonata in A minor, D. 821 (arr. Stuart Sankey)

**Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)**

Allegro moderato
Adagio
Allegretto

Elias Dagher, *pianist*

Alfonsina y El Mar (arr. Avishai Cohen)

**Ariel Ramirez
(1921-2010)
Félix Luna
(1925-2009)**

Program Notes

Cello Suite No.1 in G major, BWV 1007

By far one of the most famous cello suites ever written and performed around the world. Written around 1720, the Cello Suites by J.S. Bach are part of the normal soloist repertoire of every string instrument. Nowadays it is required to have at least a movement of Bach prepared when auditioning for a Conservatory or a professional orchestra. Although they were written for cello, the work has gained popularity on wind instruments and string instruments like the double bass.

Now then, playing a piece that is not written for double bass poses a challenge. The double bass is tuned in fourths (Strings GDAE) and the cello is tuned in fifths. That's a big difference right there. If you have an instrument tuned in fifths, that makes playing easier when you have fast string crossings and fast runs in the piece. The distance between each note is much closer together (this also has to do with the size of the instrument) and you have the opportunity to play chords more easily. An instrument tuned in fourths (like the bass) is the opposite of the cello. The distance between the notes is not close, it is not easy to play, and playing chords is a bit of a challenge. However, since the bass is such a large instrument, you get the full and deep resonance when each note is played!

Arpeggione Sonata in A minor, D. 821

After not being so successful with his opera *Alfonso und Estrella*, Schubert returned to instrumental music on a smaller scale in 1824. Intrigued by the new invention of the Arpeggione in 1823 by Viennese guitar-maker Johann Georg Stauffer, he wrote a sonata for his friend Vincenz Schuster, a guitar player at the time. The Arpeggione was a hybrid bowed instrument that had six strings, tuned and fretted like a guitar, and was held in between the knees like a cello. The advantage of being tuned like a guitar meant that the player had an extended range and had more accuracy with the help of frets. However, the instrument didn't last very long and was not really practical for the player. The Arpeggione was a very quiet instrument and the bridge was not as curved as that of a modern cello. Without a proper bridge curvature, the string angles would have been too close to each other. Even though the Arpeggione was not successful in promoting this sonata, it was well received in the versions for the viola, cello, and bass, among other instruments.

The **Allegro Moderato** starts with a 9-bar phrase, which is then further extended by the bass. The second theme of the first movement has an elegant character and plays with the motif of 16th notes and octave leaps with the bass and piano parts.

The **Adagio** is characteristic of Schubert lieder (German song) for voice and piano. The movement has a very introspective character and it's connected to the third movement.

The **Allegretto** is a joyous rondo that contains some traces of folk idioms and a lot of virtuosic playing.

Alfonsina y El Mar

Written in remembrance for the famous Argentinian poet Alfonsina Storni, the piece was debuted by Mercedes Sosa in the album *Mujeres Argentinas* 1980 (Argentinian Women). The album told the stories of the different women who left a social impact on the role of women in Argentina; Storni was one of them.

Alfonsina y El Mar is a fantasy written originally for piano and voice. It tells a fictional story of the moment of her death. Sadly, this song has been very romanticized and the actual story of Storni has been forgotten. The last years of Alfonsina's life were plagued by depression and breast cancer, and this affected her well being and her personal family life. I chose this piece in remembrance of a good friend of mine who was a Bard student.

Alfonsina y El Mar

Por la blanda arena que lame el mar
Su pequeña huella no vuelve más
Un sendero solo de pena y silencio llegó
Hasta el agua profunda
Un sendero solo de penas mudas llegó
Hasta la espuma

Sabe Dios qué angustia te acompañó
Qué dolores viejos calló tu voz
Para recostarte arrullada en el canto de las
caracolas marinas
La canción que canta en el fondo oscuro del mar
La caracola

Te vas Alfonsina con tu soledad
¿Qué poemas nuevos fuiste a buscar?
Una voz antigua de viento y de sal
Te requiebra el alma y la está llevando
Y te vas hacia allá como en sueños
Dormida, Alfonsina, vestida de mar

Cinco sirenitas te llevarán
Por caminos de algas y de coral
Y fosforescentes caballos marinos harán
Una ronda a tu lado
Y los habitantes del agua van a jugar
Pronto a tu lado

Bájame la lámpara un poco más
Déjame que duerma nodriza, en paz

Y si llama él no le digas que estoy
Dile que Alfonsina no vuelve
Y si llama él no le digas nunca que estoy
Di que me he ido

Te vas Alfonsina con tu soledad
¿Qué poemas nuevos fuiste a buscar?
Una voz antigua de viento y de sal
Te requiebra el alma y la está llevando
Y te vas hacia allá como en sueños
Dormida, Alfonsina, vestida de mar

English Translation

For the soft sand that the sea laps
His little footprint does not come back
A path alone of sorrow and silence came
To deep water
A path alone of mute sorrows came
Up to the foam

G-d knows what anguish accompanied you
What old pains your voice silenced
To lie lulled in the song of the
seashells
The song that sings in the dark bottom of the sea
The conch

You're leaving Alfonsina with your loneliness
What new poems did you go to look for?
An ancient voice of wind and salt
It breaks your soul and is taking it
And you go there like in dreams
Asleep, Alfonsina, dressed in the sea

Five little mermaids will take you
Along paths of algae and coral
And phosphorescent sea horses will do
A round by your side
And the inhabitants of the water are going to play
Soon by your side

Lower the lamp for me a little more
Let me sleep, nurse, in peace

And if he calls, don't tell him I'm here
Tell him that Alfonsina does not come back
And if he calls, don't ever tell him I'm here
Say I'm gone

You're leaving Alfonsina with your loneliness
What new poems did you go to look for?
An ancient voice of wind and salt
It breaks your soul and is taking it
And you go there like in dreams
Asleep, Alfonsina, dressed in the sea

Artist Biographies

Born in Puerto Rico, **Rowan Puig Davis** is a student at Bard College, New York, where he is finishing his double major in art history and double bass performance with Leigh Mesh. Puig was awarded a full scholarship to study with Professor Mesh. Before Puig came to Bard, he completed his first year of college at the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico with Professor Maricarmen Rivera.

Puig began his musical career in 2010 in the program 100×35, a program inspired by “El Sistema de Orquesta de Venezuela.” In this program, he performed under the direction of Eddy Marcano, Karlo Flores and Roselin Pabón. Puig has been part of festivals such as Symphonic Experience, a festival of the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra, where he was chosen for two consecutive years to be assistant of the Principal Double Bassist. Puig was also part of the Dali Quartet Music Festival where he played with violinist Simon Gollo and members of the Dali Quartet including Adriana Linares, Carlos Rubio, and Jesus Morales.

Aside from his career as a classical musician, Mr. Puig has had experience with other musical genres such as jazz, blues, American folk music, Irish music, Latin American music, choral, and religious music. In 2015, Puig was part of the local Puerto Rican band Lethologica who played jazz and indie music at various venues in San Juan such as Poet’s Passage, Carli’s Fine Bistro & Piano, and El Zipperle, where the band performed weekly.

Puig has been a part of the Classical Music Institute of San Antonio, Texas since its debut in 2016 where he has worked with musicians from Puerto Rico, South America, Mexico, Japan, and Spain. CMI seeks to “cultivate classical music education and performance as a gateway to the arts.” Looking for more leadership opportunities, in 2018 Leonardo Pineda invited Puig to lead Cuerdas para Cali/Strings for Cali, an annual summer project in Cali, Colombia. Strings for Cali is a group of classically trained musicians who inspire students and encourage cultural exchange through music education. Thanks to the Trustee Leader Scholar Program at Bard that created this program in 2014, Rowan continues to work with Cuerdas para Cali to inspire and support the youth of Colombia. In Fall 2020, Bard musicians were able to provide weekly Zoom lessons for many of our students in Colombia.

Rowan will continue his graduate studies at Bard with Leigh Mesh in the Conservatory’s Advanced Performance Studies Program in the fall.

Elias Dagher is in his first year as a collaborative pianist at the Bard Conservatory. Born in Boston to a family of Lebanese immigrants, he comes to Bard by way of Columbia University and New England Conservatory, two places where he was lucky to meet amazing teachers and lifelong friends. His principal piano teachers have included Eugene Kaminsky, Jerome Lowenthal, Julian Martin, Alexander Korsantia, Vivian Weilerstein, and Cameron Stowe. If he can’t be found at the piano, he is likely practicing the traditional Zimbabwean mbira, chopping garlic and cooking with his roommates, or going on an aimless drive through the countryside, deliberately trying to get lost and find his way back again.