

**Cello Sonata No. 2 in D Major, Op.58 (1843)
composed by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)**

I. Allegro assai vivace

II. Allegretto scherzando

III. Adagio

IV. Molto Allegro e vivace

Mendelssohn penned the Op. 58 Sonata in 1843, a year of considerable personal upheaval. Having at last concluded an unhappy residency in Berlin, Mendelssohn and his family returned to Leipzig, where they had previously spent the years 1835–1840, during which time, Mendelssohn scholar R. Larry Todd notes, the composer, still in his twenties, “stood at the forefront of German music.” Despite the turbulence surrounding this time, 1843 nevertheless represented a solidly productive year. In addition to the Op. 58 Sonata, Mendelssohn completed his incidental music to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the *Capriccio* for string quartet (later published as Op. 81, No. 3), five *Lieder ohne worte* for piano, and numerous choral pieces, among other works. Befitting Mendelssohn’s mature compositional language, the D major Sonata is firmly rooted in the tenets of Classicism inherited from Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, but meanwhile demonstrates the pathos of the Romantic period.

Each of the sonata’s four movements portrays a vital dimension of Mendelssohn’s musical identity. The opening *Allegro assai vivace* is all soaring lyricism and propulsive rhythmic energy, even at its tender second theme. The movement’s ecstatic tone dispels the misguided aphorism that music’s emotional content must correlate to biography—there is nothing in this movement, after all, to betray Mendelssohn’s grief over his mother’s passing—but, rather, its great emotive breadth reflects the *Zeitgeist* of the Romantic period at large. The second movement offers further Romantic cantabile, but couched in a signature Mendelssohnian scherzo. The cello complements the piano’s sly staccato figures with piquant pizzicati before indulging in breathless melody. The homophonic, hymn-like piano introduction to the slow movement furtively recalls Bach—one of Mendelssohn’s formative influences—but with an unmistakably 19th-century touch: Mendelssohn’s instruction *sempre arpeggiando col pedale* (arpeggiated and with pedal) imbues each chord with a distinctly more lush and immersive sound than would characterize a Baroque organ chorale. The cello answers with a dramatic recitative, marked *appassionato ed animato*. The spirited dialogue between cello and piano continues in the finale, now returning to the effervescence of the opening movement. An increased restlessness in the piano accompaniment matches the virtuosic cello writing measure for measure until the stirring final cadence.

**"Invisible Arc (for solo cello)" (2016-2017)
composed by Raven Chacon (born 1977)**

Originally from the Navajo Nation, Raven Chacon is a composer of chamber music, a performer of experimental noise music, and an installation artist. He performs regularly as a solo artist as well as with numerous ensembles in the Southwest and beyond. He is also a member of the Indigenous art collective Postcommodity, with who he recently premiered the two-mile-long land art/border intervention, Repellent Fence. Chacon's work explores sounds of acoustic handmade instruments overdriven through electric systems and the direct and indirect audio feedback responses from their interactions.

**Duetto for Cello and Double Bass in D Major (1824)
composed by Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)**

- I. Allegro**
- II. Andante molto**
- III. Allegro**

Rossini, whose name is known throughout the civilized world as a synonym for opera, actually composed a fair amount of chamber music, some of it for highly unusual combinations of instruments. His earliest such works, composed in just three days when he was all of twelve, are six Sonate a quattro. Rossini avoided calling them "string quartets," even though technically they are, since they were written for two violins, cello and double bass instead of the traditional two violins, viola and cello. Then there is an Andante con variazioni for harp and viola; a Serenata for string quartet, flute, oboe and English horn; and so on.

The Duet was written in 1824 for a wealthy cellist, Sir David Salomons, who wanted a piece for himself and the famous double bassist and composer Domenico Dragonetti (1763–1846) to play. The only known performance until modern times was a private one, at Salomons' home in London on July 21, 1824.

The Duet remained virtually unknown until the manuscript was sold by the Salomons family at a Sotheby's auction in 1968. Since then it has impressed those listeners fortunate enough to hear a rare performance with its melodic invention, richness of texture, absolute equality of the partnership, and the bass's surprising agility and singing quality.

Cello Sonata in G Minor, Op. 19 (1901)
composed by Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

I. Lento - Allegro moderato

II. Allegro scherzando

III. Andante

IV. Allegro mosso

The absolute failure of Sergei Rachmaninov's First Symphony at its premiere in 1897 thrust the young composer into such a mental depression that he suffered a complete nervous collapse. His family, alarmed at the prospect of Sergei wasting his prodigious talent, sought professional psychiatric help. Rachmaninov, who began treatments in January 1900, recalled years later:

My relatives had informed Dr. Dahl that he must by all means cure me of my apathetic condition and bring about such results that I would again be able to compose. Dahl had inquired what kind of composition was desired of me, and he was informed "a concerto for pianoforte," which I had given up in despair of ever writing. In consequence, I heard repeated, day after day, the same hypnotic formula, as I lay half somnolent in an arm-chair in Dr. Dahl's consulting room: "You will start to compose a concerto—You will work with the greatest of ease—The composition will be of excellent quality." Always it was the same, without interruption. Although it may seem impossible to believe, this treatment really helped me. I began to compose again at the beginning of the summer.

The Second Piano Concerto was completed and launched with enormous success within a year; it was the first music to carry Rachmaninov's name to an international audience. In gratitude, the new work was dedicated to Nicholas Dahl. Full of confidence and pride, Rachmaninov immediately followed the concerto with a Sonata for Cello and Piano, written during the summer of 1901 for his longtime friend Anatoly Brandukov. Composer and cellist gave the first performance of the new sonata on December 2, 1901, in Moscow.

Rachmaninov's Cello Sonata is symphonic in its scope and its expressive ambition. The work opens with a large movement in sonata form prefaced by a dreamy, slow introduction. The cello states the lyrical main theme over a busy accompaniment, while the complementary melody, a simple, almost chant-like theme of touching simplicity, is initiated by the piano. Much of the development section is ingeniously extrapolated from a half-step motive first heard in the introduction. As is characteristic of several of Rachmaninov's large formal structures, the recapitulation emerges without pause or strong demarcation from the climax of the development. The whirling scherzo that follows presents some extremely challenging problems of bowing to the cellist, who, in compensation, is rewarded with two superb melodies—one serving as the second theme of the scherzo and the other as the principal theme of the central trio. The Andante is a wonderful, moonlit song of great warmth and nostalgia. The finale is another fully realized sonata form, with a second theme even more melodically ingratiating than that of the opening movement and a robust, invigorating coda.