

BACH LIT

Friday, May 26, 2023 | 7:30 p.m.
PSI Theater, Durham Arts Council

Juan Álamo, marimba | Bonnie Thron, cello
Jason Salt, lasers

Song of 'Almah

I. "Rose of Sharon"

Andrew Beall

Suite No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1008

Prelude

Allemande

Courante

Sarabande

Menuet I & II

Gigue

J.S. Bach

INTERMISSION

Mariel

Oswaldo Golijov

(b. 1960)

Suite No. 1 in G Major, BWV 1007

Prelude

Allemande

Courante

Sarabande

Menuet I & II

Gigue

J.S. Bach



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Artists



Dr. Juan Álamo is an internationally known performer, composer, and educator. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, and Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees with Jazz as related field from the University of North Texas.

Originally from Cidra, Puerto Rico, Dr. Álamo has presented solo recitals at universities and percussion and jazz festivals throughout the United States, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. He has been featured as a soloist and with Jazz ensembles in television and radio shows in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Venezuela, and the United States. Currently Juan is an Associate Professor and the Director of the Percussion Ensemble at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

As a Marimba soloist and percussionist, Álamo has presented recitals in different areas of United States, Central and South America and the Caribbean. Dr. Alamo has been featured in TV and Radio shows in Venezuela, Puerto Rico and the United States.

His first solo marimba recording, *Remembrance*, was released in 2007. It features standard repertory as well as two of his compositions for marimba. In 2014, Dr. Álamo released his second CD, entitled *Marimjazzia*, featuring original compositions and arrangements of jazz standards such as “Afro Blues” and “Waltz for Debby.” *Marimjazzia* was selected to represent Parma Records at the 58th Grammy Awards in the category of “Best Latin Jazz Album,” and “Best Instrumental Solo.” His 2016 recording, *Pursuing Freedom*, was selected to represent Albany Records at the 2017 Latin

Grammy Awards in the category of “Best Solo Classical Album.” His 2019 Latin Jazz album reached and for four weeks remained on the list of the top 50 jazz tunes in the US, and it has been praised by critics and musicians for his unique blend of classical marimba, Latin rhythms and jazz. In September of 2021, Dr. Álamo released his fourth solo marimba album *Ensoñacion*. The album scheduled to be published by Summit records and it features an original composition written in the style of a Puerto Rican danza as well as Bach’s Cello suites No. 1 and No. 5, and Beethoven’s Bagatelles op. 119.

As a composer, Dr. Álamo has several pieces published by major publishing companies. In 2011, Dr. Alamo released his marimba method entitled: *Music for Four Mallets. A collection of original etudes for beginners and intermediate marimba players.* In 2014, Encore Mallets released his Signature Marimba Mallets, which can be purchased at Steve Weiss Music. Dr. Álamo is a performing artist and clinician for Yamaha, Meinl Percussion, and Encore Mallets Inc.



Being in love with laser his whole life, **Jason Salt** has been providing immersive abstract laser art to the entertainment scene since 2007. His first show was at the IEEE annual banquet and featured a self-built single color laser projector and used function generators out of the college lab to perform live abstracts to music. Intrigued with how laser projectors work, Jason started building his own systems in his garage. In 2013 Jason built his first full color RGB system. This was also the first system that interfaced with control software providing recording capabilities. Using Mathematics and Science, Jason was able

to transform a laser into an artistic display of abstract colors and patterns and sync it to music. Learning about various hardware and software platforms Jason decided to build a custom live performance console. The console features old school analog controls, as well as new school digital controls. What really sets his console apart are the two laser projector preview windows. Jason made his debut into the professional scene in 2017 by winning first place for abstract show, at the International Laser Display Association annual conference. With the power of the live console and the recognition of the community Jason formed Salty Robot Productions in 2018. Salty Robot Productions has been working out of the Charlotte NC area and

has been able to provide laser FX for the Carolina Panthers and All Elite Wrestling. Live laser shows have been included with Western Piedmont Symphony in Newton NC, Yuri's Night at Kennedy Space Center, and at Bach Akademie Charlotte. Salty Robot Productions partnered with local cellist Kelvin Chang to form Chromatic Strings in 2022, blending classical cello music with abstract laser entertainment.



Bonnie Thron joined the North Carolina Symphony as principal cellist in 2000. She is an active chamber musician and recitalist and locally has been a guest artist with the Mallarmé Chamber Players and the Ciompi Quartet, as well as occasionally joining the Jacobowitz-Larkin Duo to form a clarinet trio called Three For All. In the Washington, D.C. area, she has recently been a guest with the American Chamber Players and performs regularly on the Washington Musica Viva series. In the summers, she plays in the Sebago Long Lake Music Festival in Maine.

Previously Thron was a member of the Peabody Trio, in residence at the Peabody Institute, during which time the group won the Naumberg chamber music competition. Early in her career Thron was assistant principal cellist of the Denver Symphony for a season and has performed and recorded with the Orpheus Chamber Ensemble. She has had a long history with the Apple Hill Chamber Players, as a guest artist and chamber music coach, and was involved in the group's first Playing for Peace tour to the Middle East in 1991. Thron has performed concertos with the North Carolina Symphony, the Orpheus Chamber Ensemble, the Juilliard Orchestra, the Panama National Orchestra, the Vermont Symphony Orchestra and various other orchestras in North Carolina and her original home state of New Hampshire.

Thron received both a bachelor's and a master's degree from The Juilliard School. Her teachers include Lynn Harrell, Norman Fischer, and Elsa Hilger. Thron also received a bachelor's degree from Johns Hopkins School of Nursing and worked as a nurse for several years at Johns Hopkins Hospital and as a case manager in home care nursing, during which time she was also a cello teacher at the Baltimore School for the Arts.

PROGRAM NOTES

Andrew Beall's Song of 'Almah was originally written for marimba and soprano, but it has been adapted other ensembles, in this case for marimba and cello.

The text is taken from the Old Testament book, Song of Solomon, written c. 945 BC. King Solomon, known for writing over 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs, called this composition his Shir Hashirim – his most exquisite "Song of all Songs." It is an incomparable celebration of romantic love in all aspects.

In the entirety of Solomon's 700 marriages and 300 additional maid-servant relationships, his search for true love led him to one 'almah, one young girl, one maiden, who captured his heart like no other.

From the Song of Solomon, we learn that 'Almah grew up with harsh brothers who forced her to labor in her family's vineyards. She viewed herself as a common girl, like the common meadow flowers "a rose of Sharon" and "a lily of the valleys." Yet, 'Almah's life changed forever when the most powerful ruler known to man fell deeply in love with her, making her his only beloved. Like a shepherd, Solomon gave her rest. Like an oasis, he gave her water and safety. Like an apple tree in the forest, he stood out broadly among men. Such are the beginning images in the Song that describe her new life with the king.

A student of a diverse range of composers, **Oswaldo Golijov** has blended Argentinean music, traditional Jewish idioms, and modern sounds into a distinctive style. His klezmer-influenced clarinet quintet *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind* (1994) first brought him to international attention and other works have received considerable acclaim, particularly *La Pasión según San Marcos*, commissioned by the Stuttgart International Bach Academy in commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the death of Bach. He received a MacArthur Fellowship in 2003, was *Musical America's* composer of the year in 2006, and won the 2007 Best Classical Contemporary Composition Grammy for his opera *Ainadamar*.

About **Mariel**: "I wrote this piece in memory of my friend Mariel Stubrin. I attempted to capture that short instant before grief, in which one learns of the sudden death of a friend who was full of life: a single moment frozen forever in one's memory, and which reverberates through the piece, among the waves and echoes of the Brazilian music that Mariel loved. The work was

written for and premiered by Maya Beiser and Steve Schick.”

J.S. Bach's six suites for solo cello are among the most revered works in the cello repertoire. Each suite consists of several movements, including preludes, *allemandes*, *courantes*, *sarabandes*, *minuets*, and *gigues*, as well as other dances.

Suite No. 1 in G Major, BWV 1007, is perhaps the most famous of the six cello suites. It begins with an iconic prelude in which the cello plays a series of arpeggios that ascend and descend the full range of the instrument. This prelude is followed by a series of dances that explore different tempos, meters, and moods. The *allemande* is stately and elegant, the *courante* is lively and syncopated, the *sarabande* is slow and expressive, and the *minuets* and *gigues* are sprightly and dance-like.

Suite No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1008, is a more dramatic and intense work than the first suite. It opens with a prelude that is faster and more virtuosic than the prelude of the first suite, featuring rapid scales and arpeggios, as well as double stops and chords. The *allemande* that follows is somber and introspective, while the *courante* is faster and more rhythmically complex than the corresponding movement in the first suite. The *sarabande* is perhaps the most poignant movement in the suite, with a haunting melody that showcases the cello's expressive capabilities. The suite concludes with a pair of lively dance movements – the *minuets* and a *gigue*.

Both suites are masterpieces of Bach's contrapuntal and harmonic writing, showcasing his ability to create complex and beautiful textures using just a single instrument. The suites have been performed and recorded by countless cellists over the centuries, and they remain among the most beloved works in the cello repertoire. *Generated by ChatGPT*

N.B.: Although Mallarmé presents plenty of HIP music concerts with the music of J.S. Bach, this performance is not that. The Bach suites are played by many instruments, not just the cello for which they are written. They serve as standard pieces of pedagogy that challenge and inform its player. I have even heard the suites played on the tuba! Regardless, in this performance we are alternating the suite movements between cello and marimba – I think you'll agree that they work perfectly on both instruments. And well, the lasers are an utterly modern touch to these already incredible pieces of music. SR

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Highlights: Schubertiad, the silent film *The Golem* and Violapalooza!