

# FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

## JOSEPH JOHNSON, CELLO

WITH

**JOONGHUN CHO**, PIANO

**MICHAEL BRIDGE**, ACCORDION

**YONATAN DVIR**, CONDUCTOR

Sunday, February 2, 2025

Kilbourn Hall

3:30 PM



**EASTMAN**  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

## PROGRAM

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<b>Très Lent (Hommage a Messiaen)</b> (1994)	Joan Tower (b. 1938)
<b>Starsail</b> (2008)	Kevin Lau (b. 1982)
<b>Ausencias</b> (1986)	Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)
<b>Escualo</b> (1979)	Astor Piazzolla

## INTERMISSION

<b>Sieben Worte</b> (1982)	Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931)
Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.	
Woman, behold thy son. Son, behold thy mother.	
Verily, I say unto thee: Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise.	
My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?	
I thirst.	
It is accomplished.	
Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.	

### **Violin**

Liliana Mahave  
Hannah Kim  
Kaitlyn McLaughlin  
Hagan Tran  
Amelia Posner-Hess  
Tiara Lai  
Nicole Cheng  
Erica Lin

### **Viola**

Vincent Kaverud  
Vivienne Lucier  
Matthew Vu

### **Cello**

Ryan Post  
Joseph Yang

### **Bass**

Austin Beck

## PROGRAM NOTES

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### **Très Lent (Hommage a Messiaen) (1994)**

Joan Tower

*Très Lent* was written as an homage to Oliver Messiaen, particularly to his *Quartet for the End of Time*, which had a special influence on my work.

When I was the pianist for the Da Capo Chamber Players, we frequently performed Messiaen's quartet over a seven-year period. During this time, I grew to love the many risks Messiaen took — particularly the use of very slow “time,” both in tempo and in the flow of ideas and events. *Très lent* is my attempt to make “slow” music work. It is affectionately dedicated to my longtime friend and colleague, who never stops growing as a musician and cellist, André Emelianoff.

— *Joan Tower*

### **Starsail (2008)**

Kevin Lau

Not long ago I encountered a stunning image from a source in popular culture. In this depiction, a ship sails the open sea on a clear, cloudless night; glimpsed from above, it appears that the vessel is gliding on a sea of stars.

This image had surprising resonance with me, as it seemed to suggest a metaphor for the lone individual's journey into the great unknown, both beautiful and terrifying in its infinitude and mystery. In *Starsail*, the cellist embarks on such a journey, venturing heroically beyond the comforts of 'home' (represented at the outset by a lush 'Romantic' theme) into the wilderness of human experience. The music's shifting stylistic idioms and adventurous structures are attempts to 'surf' the boundary between order and chaos, to navigate beyond the confines of what we know and understand (both essential to growth and inherently dangerous) while anchoring ourselves to the traditions that define us. As the piece veers into stranger and stranger worlds, the principal theme for *Starsail* resurfaces during crucial moments like a refrain, reminding us constantly of home -- where we are, and who we are.

— *Kevin Lau*

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### **Ausencias** (1986)

Astor Piazzolla

Piazzolla composed music for more than 40 films. *Ausencias* is a slow tango that appeared as part of the soundtrack for one of his last films: “Tangos, The Exile of Gardel”, released in 1986. *Ausencias* translates from Spanish into English as “Absences.”

### **Escualo** (1979)

Astor Piazzolla

Piazzolla’s *Escualo*, translates to “Shark” in English. He composed *Escualo* in 1979 for the quintet he had formed a year earlier. This quintet would end up touring the world for the next eleven years. It was included in the group’s first album, with pieces that were all related to shark fishing, Piazzolla’s favorite pastime.

### **Sieben Worte** (1982)

Sofia Gubaidulina

*Sieben Worte*, the seven last words of Jesus on the cross, is a depiction of Jesus’ death on the cross. The Seven Words are like the seven states of a lamentation that leads from suffering to redemption. The specific symbolic features of *Sieben Worte*, apart from the number seven itself, are the cross and the crucifixion. The first three words explore the more human side of Jesus Christ: he calls for the salvation of others, and, worried about what will happen to his mother after his death, presents St. John to her as her son, and forgives those who were crucifying him. This all culminates in the fourth word, when Jesus Christ cries out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”. This becomes the heart of the work, both numerically and by its weight and duration. In the last section, in addition to the natural and artificial harmonics, we can also hear a resource created by the cellist Vladimir Tonka to make the sounds that Gubaidulina wanted and to interpret the idea of the crucifixion: the ‘flirrende Akkorde’.

The fifth movement, “I thirst”, is dedicated to the crucifixion with the sound of the bayan, and it prepares the dramatic climax of the death of Jesus Christ in the sixth word, which begins with the apparent difficulty in breathing of the accordion. Then whilst the orchestra displays a clear melodic line, the accordion appears to be screaming and the cello ‘crucifies’ its fourth string. At the end of the sixth word the cello bow

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moves towards the bridge and the sound becomes progressively more eerie. The bow and the body of the instrument make a cross shape, thus portraying the crucifixion. In the seventh word, the bow exceeds the limits of the instrument, playing on the other side of the bridge, whilst the player uses his left hand to play harp-like harmonics. Finally, the voice of the cello is the only voice that can be heard, as if waiting patiently for salvation.

“With reverence and respect for the great spiritual and cultural tradition, I have turned to a theme that Heinrich Schütz and Joseph Haydn had already inspired in the past: The seven last words of Jesus Christ on the cross, as found in the various Gospels.

Of course, a work that is purely instrumental cannot have the task of illustrating the Gospel text. This is more about purely tonal and instrumental metaphorical gestures. And in this respect, the two solo instruments, violoncello and bayan, as well as the string orchestra, provided me with a wealth of material. I am thinking, for example, of the protracted note in the violoncello, which is crossed (‘crucified’) by the glissando sound of the neighbouring string. In the bayan, this crossing happens with the help of special pressure on the neighbouring key. In the string orchestra there is the possibility of a glissando transition from unison to multi-octave and back to unison (= cross figure). When the cello bow moves behind the bridge, it is like entering another sphere. These instrumental metaphors form the thematic basis of the work, which unfolds over the course of six movements with an incessant increase in tension. At the end of the 6th movement (‘Es ist vollbracht’), the tension is broken: The bow plays on the bridge. And in the 7th movement, the bow transcends the bridge - and thus, as it were, the limits of the instrument.

This basic theme, which is assigned to the solo instruments, is contrasted with the music of the string orchestra, which is reminiscent of choral singing in its character. These two thematic lines are joined by the threefold repetition of a five-bar quotation from the work of Heinrich Schütz: the melody to the exclamation ‘Mich dürstet’. This figure has an essential form-forming function.

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The work is dedicated to the first performers Vladimir Toncha and Friedrich Lips, two remarkable musicians from Moscow, from whom it was greatly inspired. In the course of working on this work, they discovered numerous new playing possibilities on their instruments. For example, on the bayan: the simultaneous playing of a sustained and a glissando note, the crossing of a sustained note with two parallel glissando lines; or on the cello: enchanting, shimmering chords created by vibrating double harmonics, and much more. All of this owes its creation to the happy imagination of these brilliant musicians. I express my deep gratitude to them!”

— *Sofia Gubaidulina*

## MEET THE ARTISTS

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**Joseph Johnson** has been heard throughout the world as a soloist, chamber musician and educator. His festival appearances include performances in all classical genres at the American festivals of Santa Fe, Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society, Bard, Cactus Pear, Grand Teton, and Music in the Vineyards as well as the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan, and the Virtuosi Festival in Brazil.



Highlights of Joseph Johnson's 2023/2024 season include concerto performances of the Brahms *Double Concerto* with Symphony Nova Scotia, C. P. E. Bach *Concerto in A Minor* at U of T, Strauss *Don Quixote* with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, as well as the Beethoven *Triple Concerto* with Jonathan Crow and Jan Lisiecki with the Toronto Symphony. Recent recital and chamber music appearances include performances at the Faculty of Music Walter Hall series at the University of Toronto, the Chatter series in Albuquerque, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, as well as the Shostakovich Cello Concerto with the Niagara Symphony.

A champion of new Music, Joseph has played the Canadian Premiere of the Unsuk Chin *Cello Concerto* with the Esprit Orchestra, Canadian Premiere of the Miguel del Aguila *Cello Concerto* with the Toronto Symphony and Edmonton Symphony, North American Premiere of the Peter Oetvos *Cello Concerto* with the Toronto Symphony, and the Marc-Andre Dalbavie *Cello Concerto* with the Esprit Orchestra.

Principal cellist of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra since the 2009/2010 season, Mr. Johnson previously held the same position with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. He also serves as Principal Cellist of the Santa Fe Opera, and during the 2008-2009 season, was acting Principal Cellist of the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Johnson has also performed as guest Principal Cellist with the San Francisco Symphony, Detroit Symphony, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and Trondheim Symphony. Prior to his Milwaukee appointment, Joseph Johnson was a member of The Minnesota Orchestra cello section for eleven years. He was a founding member of both the Prospect Park Players and the Minneapolis Quartet, the latter of which was honoured with The McKnight Foundation Award in 2005.

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A gifted and inspiring teacher, Mr. Johnson is the newly appointed Associate Professor of Cello at the Eastman School of Music. He previously held the position of Associate Professor of Cello at the University of Toronto. Mr. Johnson was the cello coach for the Toronto Youth Symphony for ten years, and is a regular coach and teacher at the New World Symphony in Miami. He has conducted numerous master classes for a wide range of institutions and ensembles, including The Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, Eastman School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, Northwestern University, the youth orchestras of the Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Chicago, Madison, and Toronto symphonies, as well as The Glenn Gould School of The Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto.

A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Joseph Johnson earned his Master's degree from Northwestern University. Awards and honours include a performer's certificate from the Eastman School of Music and first prize from the American String Teachers Association National Solo Competition.

Mr. Johnson performs on a magnificent J.B. Vuillaume cello crafted in 1840.

Praised by *El Comercio* as a “pianist with a masterful display of artistry,” **Joonghun Cho** is a dedicated performing artist known for his versatility as a pianist, chamber musician, and pedagogue. He has concertized widely giving performances across South Korea, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Slovakia, the UK, Japan, the United States and Canada. His performances have included solo appearances with renowned orchestras, such as the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra, Flint Symphony Orchestra, Kalamazoo Philharmonia, and Brescia Master Orchestra. His musical prowess has also led to invitations as a guest artist at esteemed music festivals such as the Gijón International Piano Festival, Porto Pianofest, Palmetto International Piano Festival, Yeon-Eum Summer Music Festival, Festival Internacional de Música José Luis Vega "Pelis," and American Liszt Society Festival.





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Joonghun's passion for collaborative music extends to his flourishing career as a chamber musician. He has had the privilege of showcasing his chamber music performances at numerous renowned institutions and festivals, such as the Eastman School of Music, University of Michigan, University of Toronto, Royal Conservatory of Music, International Cello Institute and Caledon Music Festival. Notably, he recently participated in a recording project featuring new compositions by William Horne, which was released by Blue Griffin Recording Label in 2024.

In addition to his performing career, Joonghun has garnered numerous prizes in international competitions. His achievements include the gold medal in the Vienna International Music Competition, first prize in the Master Orchestra International Concerto Competition, second prize in the William C. Byrd Young Artist Competition, first prize in the International Chopin Piano Competition in Japan, second prize in the Schimmel USASU International Piano Competition, and third prize in the Glasgow International Piano Competition for Young Pianists.

Born in Suwon, South Korea, Joonghun commenced his musical journey at the Yewon School and Seoul Art High School in Seoul, studying under the guidance of Min Sook Jeon, Tong-il Han, and Hyung-Joon Chang. Upon relocating to the United States, he pursued his Bachelor of Music in piano performance at the Eastman School of Music, studying with Barry Snyder. Joonghun continued his musical education at the University of Michigan under the mentorship of Logan Skelton, completing both his Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts.

Currently based in Toronto, Canada, Joonghun serves as the artistic director for the Gibson Classical Concert Series, where he continues to inspire audiences with his musical expertise.

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**Yonatan Dvir** is an Israeli-Italian conductor and composer based in Rochester, NY. He is currently assistant conductor to both the Eastman School Symphony Orchestra and the Eastman Philharmonia, as he pursues his Master of Music in Orchestral Conducting. Yonatan is also a Conducting Fellow at OAcademy 2025, under the direction of Carlos Miguel Prieto, Scott Wilson, and Alexander Shelley.

During his time at Eastman, he has also collaborated and performed with the Eastman Film and Media Ensemble, OSSIA New Music Ensemble, the Eastman Chamber Orchestra, and a variety of other independent projects.

Between the years of 2020 and 2022, Yonatan served as the artistic director of the Temple University Repertory Orchestra, and as the inaugural assistant and cover conductor for the Temple University Symphony Orchestra.

In recent years, Yonatan has worked as guest conductor with the Susquehanna Symphony Orchestra, Abington Festival Strings, and as assistant to the National Symphony Orchestra in Santiago, Chile. In July 2022, he was a conducting fellow with the Chamber Orchestra of Belgrade. Among his mentors are Neil Varon, Andreas Delfs, Tito Muñoz, Jerry Hou, and José-Luis Domínguez.

Yonatan holds a Bachelor in Music Composition from Temple University, which he obtained in December 2022. As a composer, he has had several works premiered with ensembles such as the Jasper Quartet (May 2022), the Temple University New Music Ensemble (2019-2022), and Contemplum's Soundprints concert series (2020-2022), and projects like NPR's 'From the Top' (2024). He has also participated in masterclasses with Samuel Adler, Tonia Ko, and George Tsontakis.

Yonatan is the recipient of the Milan Conservatory prize in piano studies (2017) – where he studied trombone performance and music composition - and the Frances G. Lumsden memorial scholarship (2020).

## MEET THE ARTISTS

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**Michael Bridge** is a 21st-century musical maverick—toppling popular expectations of what it is to be a professional accordionist.



He's a virtuoso performer—a superstar on both acoustic accordion, and its 21st-century cousin, the digital accordion. He's won a slew of competitions in Canada and abroad and offers lectures and masterclasses around the world.

He embraces a musical aesthetic that is alternatively irreverent, deadly serious, meticulously prepared and completely in-the-moment. He's at home with jazz, folk and classical music. He's premiered 53 new works. If pushed, he'll say he likes Baroque music best because of its unforgiving demand for clarity of intent and execution.

He began playing when he was 5 and growing up in Calgary. His mom bought an accordion at a garage sale for \$5. A family friend started teaching him to play by ear. Formal lessons began at 7.

He spent weekends at prairie accordion competitions, playing polkas and learning to dance.

At 15 he attended the World Accordion Championships as a spectator. For the first time he heard classical accordion and fell in love with it. He started all over again, mastering a completely different kind of accordion and a whole new technique.

He was soon offering a hundred community concerts a year. As a soloist with orchestra or string quartet, with his two ensembles, he continues that pace, playing in concert halls all over the world. He received his doctorate in accordion performance from the University of Toronto with Joseph Macerollo (the first Canadian to do so) and was a Rebanks Fellow at the Glenn Gould School.

Bridge (along with his clarinet partner Kornel Wolak) performs on a digital accordion—essentially a computer housed in a conventional accordion case. This extraordinary piece of technological wizardry imitates

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the sound of just about any instrument you can imagine. He can single-handedly shake the rafters with a convincing *1812 Overture*, canons and bells included. Bridge & Wolak concerts capture the energy and panache of stadium rock with the discipline and finesse of chamber music. Think Bach on steroids.

He's also mastered the more familiar acoustic accordion, a soulful, highly expressive instrument, essential to the music of Toronto-based Ladom Ensemble. Along with cello, piano and percussion, the Ladom quartet creates a sophisticated blend of everything from traditional Persian melodies, to Bach and Piazzolla, to Radiohead.

Dr. Bridge also gives back through an online Music Mentorship Program. After performing hundreds of concerts in schools—usually in the less-than-ideal setting of a packed gymnasium with a tight time limit—Bridge & Wolak determined to build more meaningful relationships with musically inclined teens. With help from composers, tech people and producers, they introduce emerging artists to the wide world of professional music.

When he's not being a musical renaissance man, you'll find Bridge salsa dancing, cooking vegan dishes and talking to smart people. He loves to travel and he's trying to live a more minimal life—abandoning anything that isn't essential to his life and work.

But what really matters for Michael Bridge is making your world more bearable, beautiful and human—even if only for the length of a concert.

He is grateful for the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Sylva Gelber Foundation, and the Women's Musical Club of Toronto.

*We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the "Great Hill People" and "Keepers of the Western Door" of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.*

## UPCOMING EASTMAN SERIES CONCERTS

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Tickets for all series concerts can be purchased at [EastmanTheatre.org](http://EastmanTheatre.org)

### FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

#### **Mikel Kuehn, composer & Eastman Saxophone Project**

Kilbourn Hall

Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 7:30 PM

### FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

#### **Christine Jensen, jazz composition & saxophone**

Hatch Recital Hall

Wednesday, February 5, 2025 at 7:30 PM

### KILBOURN CONCERT SERIES

#### **Kevin Hays Trio**

Kilbourn Hall

Thursday, February 13, 2025 at 7:30 PM

Grammy Award-winning jazz pianist composer Kevin Hays is internationally recognized as one of the most original and compelling musicians of his generation. His many recordings have received critical acclaim from *The New York Times*, *Downbeat Magazine* and *Jazz Times*, as well as the “Coup de Coeur” award from the Académie Charles Cros (France).

## UPCOMING STUDENT ENSEMBLE CONCERTS

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All student performances are free unless otherwise noted.

#### **Eastman Wind Orchestra**

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre

Monday, February 3, 2025 at 7:30 PM

#### **Eastman Wind Ensemble**

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre

Wednesday, February 5, 2025 at 7:30 PM

Music of Hindemith, Leslie Bassett, Varèse, & Kuster



For the most up to date information on Eastman concerts and events, scan this code to visit our online calendar.



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