

CLEVELAND COMPOSERS GUILD

PRESENTS

THE CLEVELAND CELLO SOCIETY

WITH MEMBERS OF THE BGSU CELLO STUDIO

WORKS BY

JENNIFER CONNER

MARGI GRIEBLING-HAIGH

KOLTEN HEEREN

WILL HERMANOWSKI

CHRIS NEINER

GEOFFREY PETERSON

JEREMY PIPER

RYAN CHARLES RAMER

ADAM ROBERTS

MATTHEW SAUNDERS

STEPHEN STANZIANO

MUSIC BY CLEVELAND COMPOSERS FOR 1, 2, 3, & 4 CELLOS

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2026 | 3PM

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Cleveland

THE CLEVELAND

CELLO SOCIETY

Cleveland Composers Guild
2026-2027 Season
Concert 1: CCG Presents CCS & BGSU

Sunday, October 25 | 3:00pm
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Cleveland Heights, Ohio

Program

Windrush Hollow	Cleveland Cello Society Quartet Eleanor Lee Nora Willauer Kellen Degnan Mingyao Zhao	Stephen Stanziano
Diplych I. II.	Cleveland Cello Society Quartet	Ryan Charles Ramer
Waves and Ripples	Kellen Degnan Mingyao Zhao Nora Willauer	Jennifer Conner
Darkness Looming	Mingyao Zhao Kellen Degnan	Jeremy Piper
Little Risks	Brian Snow Calem Nagy	Margi Greibling-Haigh
Prayer Mosaic	Bowling Green State University Cello Quartet Brian Snow Calem Nagy Che Dixon Nick Callcut	Adam Roberts
Intermission		
Surveillance	Cleveland Cello Society Quartet	William Hermanowski
Bolero	Nick Callcut Che Dixon	Matthew Saunders
Teardrop	Eleanor Lee Nora Willauer	Kolten Heeren
Meditation	Cleveland Cello Society Quartet	Geoffrey Peterson
Happy Birthday, Alan!	Cleveland Cello Society Quartet	Chris Neiner

COMPOSERS & THEIR MUSIC

DR. STEPHEN STANZIANO is an active composer, educator, and bassist in Northeast Ohio, and holds a doctorate in music theory and composition from Kent State University. His works have been performed by the Cleveland Chamber Collective, Grammy-award winning guitarist Jason Vieaux, baritone Andrew White and several Cleveland Orchestra members including violist Lisa Boyko. His music has been recorded by the Gruca White Ensemble on Big Round Records, the St. Cecilia Foundation, and performed live throughout the United States and Europe, including St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. He is a 2024-25 ASCAPLUS award winner and past president of the Cleveland Composers Guild.

WINDRUSH HOLLOW is composed for three cellos. In addition, an optional fourth cello may be added with the purpose of creatively improvising a part that augments and accentuates the music of the three written cello parts and turning the work into an entirely different piece—a performance piece, if you will—each time it is performed.

RYAN CHARLES RAMER has been an active Cleveland Composers Guild member since 2012, and was composer-in-resident at Cleveland Public Theatre from 2023-2025. In February 2026, he was music director for an operetta at Whizbang Theatre in Cleveland Heights, and is currently music director for a show at Convergence-Continuum in Tremont.

DIPTYCH pairs two movements composed thirty years apart. The first section (completed in August 2026) features a high-register melody from a single cello, accompanied by hyper-dissonant arpeggiations in the other three cellos. In contrast, the waltz-like second movement has a melody in hocket between all four cellos, and avoids dissonance through carefully crafted voice-leading. Both movements were completely written out by hand when composed, the most recent in a book of staff paper hand-made by Ramer’s friend, Alex.

A professor of theory and composition at the Cleveland Institute of Music and an active Cleveland composer, **DR. JENNIFER CONNER** completed early studies as a Regents scholar at the University of California, Irvine. She completed graduate work under Donald Erb. at the Cleveland Institute of Music. Her orchestral music has been performed by the Cleveland Orchestra, Oregon, Akron, Canton and Grand Rapids Symphonies. The Cleveland Chamber Choir, Quire Cleveland, Panaramicos, Solaris, The Cleveland Chamber Collective, The Cleveland Baroque Ensemble and numerous renowned artists have performed her solo and chamber works in Cleveland and beyond.

WAVES AND RIPPLES was written for the Cleveland Composer’s Guild’s annual Creativity: Learning Through Experience concert for a trio of talented young cellists. The work combines undulating accompaniment patterns in triplets and three-against-two rhythms. The melodic content is drawn from multiple scales, including diatonic, pentatonic and whole tone collections giving the overall timbre a watery color. Against these undulating lines, melodic waves gently emerge from the texture only to recede again.

JEREMY PIPER attended the Baldwin Wallace Conservatory of Music, majoring in music composition and music theory, with an emphasis in jazz studies. Jeremy received a master’s degree in composition from Kent State University. In 2020, Jeremy’s composition for orchestra, GATED MOUNTAINS OF YASPARIA, was recorded by the Brno Philharmonic in the Czech Republic and was featured on their ORCHESTRAL MASTERS VOL. 7 CD on the Ablaze label. It is available on Apple Music. Piper currently resides in Brunswick, Ohio with his wife, Kristy and son, Jaden.

DARKNESS LOOMING for cello duo was originally composed for the Creativity: Learning Through Experience concert series through the Cleveland Composers Guild in 2011, when it was premiered by two brothers. It explores the “dark” lower registers of the instrument, specifically using open strings with double stops to achieve its atmosphere.

MARGI GRIEBLING-HAIGH’S music has been praised for its haunting melodies, exotic harmonies, and crisp, energetic rhythms. Her works encompass chamber music, art song, orchestra, opera, and jazz. Composer-in-Residence at the Kent/Blossom Music Festival since 2011, she has received commissions from many Cleveland Orchestra musicians and national and international music organizations. Her opera THE HIGGLER premiered in 2025, and her music has been broadcast on Performance Today, Pipe Dreams, With Heart and Voice, and WCLV’s Innovations. Her works appear on numerous recordings, including VOICES FROM THE OTHER SIDE (2024). To be released in 2027 on the Navona label are two CDs of her music featuring Nashville Symphony Orchestra concertmaster Peter Otto and pianist Eric Charnofsky among others.

LITTLE RISKS (2015) is a compact adventure for two cellists who are willing to take a few chances. The players dart in and out of each other’s musical territory, trading fragments, accompanying and interrupting one another, and moving freely between arco and pizzicato. An energetic opening gives way to more mysterious and deliberately “sneaky” episodes before earlier ideas return in altered form. Shifting meters, sudden dynamic contrasts, harmonics, and changes of register keep both players alert, while the two equal voices alternate between cooperation and competition. The piece gradually retreats, ending with a final, quiet gesture.

ADAM ROBERTS’ (B. 1980) music has been commissioned and performed by the Arditti Quartet, the JACK Quartet, le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, and Play duo, Transient Canvas, the Boston Conservatory Wind Ensemble, and at festivals such as Wien Modern (Vienna), Tanglewood, the Biennale Musique en Scène (Lyons), and the 2009 ISCM World Music Days (Sweden). Roberts is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, Fromm Commission, the Benjamin H. Danks Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Leonard Bernstein Fellowship from the Tanglewood Music Center. Roberts is a dedicated educator and is currently associate professor of composition and theory at Kent State University. His music is available on the Tzadik and New Focus Recordings labels.

PRAYER MOSAIC (2022) was commissioned by the Johnstone Fund for New Music for Ten Score, a project that generated ten pieces by Ohio composers for UCelli (The Columbus Cello Quartet). I wrote my piece in response to learning of the sudden death of my friend, composer Alastair Putt. The music is generally slow and aching. In the middle section, the music becomes more anguished, with microtonal harmony intensifying the tension, while the final section is a farewell, drifting up and away.

Composer-conductor **WILL HERMANOWSKI** is inspired by imagery from life and art. He has collaborated with ensembles such as Quince Ensemble as well as members of the Cleveland Orchestra, Alexander String Quartet, Decoda Ensemble, and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. His piece DANCE ADJACENT was broadcast on Performance Today and won the 2024 Ohio Federation of Music Clubs prize. He is the 2025 European Classical Music Awards Gold Prize winner and a multi-year ASCAP finalist. Will is currently a second-year doctoral student at Bowling Green State University, where he studies with Dr. John Eagle.

SURVEILLANCE: What do we gain from mass surveillance? I’m not sure, but I know what we lose.

DR. MATTHEW C. SAUNDERS (born 1976) is an Ohio composer, conductor, trombonist, husband, and father. He finds inspiration in the vastness of space, the waterways and forests, mountains and prairies of America, and the motion of atoms. After a hard day’s work, he relaxes with his wonderful wife Becky, who is the love of his life and parenting teammate. Dr. Saunders loves, Cincinnati-style chili and Carolina barbecue, road trips, movies, and random facts. His favorite dinosaur is the Parasaurolophus. Dr. Saunders is professor of music at Lakeland Community College, where he directs the Lakeland Civic Orchestra.

BOLERO is a short cello duet taking its structure from the Prelude of J.S. Bach’s Suite No. 1 in G Major for solo violoncello, one of the best-known works for the instrument. My work bears little intentional resemblance beyond meter and tempo to the most famous piece of the same title, but as a trombonist, I use Ravel’s BOLERO as a mnemonic for setting an *andante* tempo without recourse to a metronome. While I may have added a bar or two to Bach’s structure, I hope that I haven’t diminished the master’s architecture.

KOLTEN HEEREN is an American composer whose music explores vibrant colors through emotional storytelling. His music ruminates on themes of memory, nostalgia, and wistful dreaming, painting with melodies that remind us of old friends from places we once called home. His music has been performed across the United States and Europe. Kolten is also assistant principal bass at the Sarasota Opera. He founded the Bass Repertory Projects, an initiative that commissions and performs new works for the double bass. He studied composition and double bass at the University of Illinois and Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.

TEARDROP (2026) is a short duet depicting a melancholic separation. For most of the piece the two lines move together intertwined, as if clinging to a final embrace. It isn’t until the very end that they diverge, peeled apart as they unwillingly confront farewell. A poignant teardrop falls, a brief mourning against an inevitable leaving.

GEOFFREY PETERSON’S recent music includes a cappella choral works ASHES, STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING, and MICAH 6:8; DRONES for chamber ensemble and recorded sounds; RACE RIOT for jazz band; A MIGHTY HANDFUL: SYMPHONIC PORTRAITS OF THE RUSSIAN FIVE for wind ensemble; DANSE DIABOLIQUE for orchestra; SUITE FROM VINEGAR TOM for clarinet and piano; SEASONS JOURNEY for string quartet; THE EDMUND FITZGERALD, a concerto for piano and string orchestra; HOMAGE TO DONALD ERB for solo bassoon; and THREE HOPPER PAINTINGS for piano. He studied composition with Richard Hoffmann at Oberlin Conservatory of Music and with Donald Erb at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

MEDITATION for four cellos is dedicated to my father, my mother-in-law, and a dear friend, all of whom passed away this year. The music is slow and sorrowful. Each voice enters in succession, gradually forming a four-note chord. After a few repetitions, each voice exits, concluding with a single, vanishing note.

CHRIS NEINER is a Cleveland-based composer and pianist whose music has been praised for its “zazzy colors, pleasant shocks, and melting cadences” (Cleveland Classical). In 2026, he served as an artist-in-residence at the Ellis-Beauregard Foundation and received an Individual Excellence Award from the Ohio Arts Council. Neiner chairs the Cleveland Composers Guild and serves as Co-Artistic Director of the Sunday Studio Series, a concert series in Cleveland’s historic Little Italy neighborhood. His music has appeared on programs by the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra, Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra, Boston New Music Initiative, and the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ALAN! premiered on August 8, 2026, in Rochester, New York, celebrating cellist Alan Harris’s 90th birthday. Harris has devoted his career to guiding generations of musicians. He taught at the Eastman School of Music (1965–1976, 1986–1987, 1994–1998, and 1999–2018) and the Cleveland Institute of Music (1976–1984 and 1987–1999), retiring in 2018. In 2004, he received Indiana University’s Eva Janzer Memorial Award for his contributions to the art and teaching of cello playing. This set of variations takes “Happy Birthday” on a tour through the cello repertoire in tribute to his legacy.



PERFORMERS



Established in 1997, the **CLEVELAND CELLO SOCIETY** is celebrating three decades of presenting recitals, masterclasses, and lectures by cellists from Northeast Ohio and beyond. Beginning with a kick-off Janos Starker masterclass in May 1997, the CCS pursues its mission to “foster greater appreciation for and enjoyment of the cello and musical arts through performance, education, and the sharing of ideas.” The

CCS is an organization for students of all ages and skill levels, amateurs, professionals, and non-playing cello fans. In its thirtieth anniversary season, 2026-2027, the CCS is presenting recitals by Santiago Cañó-Valencia, Rebecca Landell, and the CCS 2026 Scholarship Winners, as well as a collaboration with the Cleveland Composers Guild. Further information can be found at WWW.CLEVELANDCELLO.COM.

ELEANOR LEE is Associate Principal Cellist of the Erie Philharmonic, a founding member of Forest City Strings, and a substitute cellist with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, and Detroit Opera Orchestra. An avid chamber musician, Lee is the core cellist of Fever’s Candlelight quartet concert series in Cleveland, Akron, and Stark County. Lee holds a master’s degree in cello performance and Suzuki pedagogy from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she studied with Stephen Geber and Mark Kosower and a bachelor’s degree from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where she studied with Alan Harris.

DR. NORA WILLAUER is a freelance cellist and music educator based in Cleveland and Midcoast Maine. She completed her doctoral studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music with Melissa Kraut and Mark Kosower with a culminating lecture-recital exploring the relationship between groove and cello pedagogy, receiving CIM’s Kaplow Prize for uncommon creativity. Willauer maintains an active chamber music schedule in NEO and New England, playing with the Bernhardt-Kowal-Willauer Trio and touring with Strings Attached, an interactive program for cello and piano. Willauer performs as a substitute cellist with The Cleveland Orchestra, and has held section positions with the Cleveland Pops and Canton Symphony.

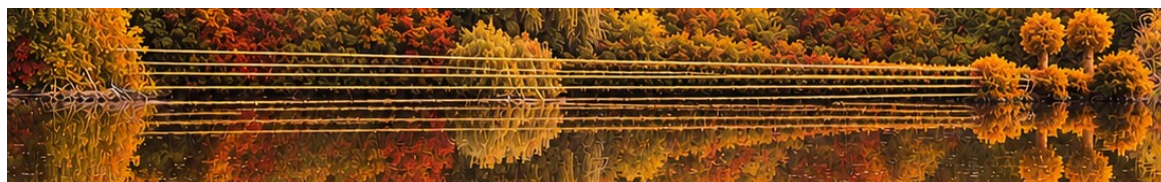
MINGYAO ZHAO, studied with several phenomenal teachers, including Mula Na (Beijing Central Conservatory of Music), Jesus Castro-Balbi (Texas Christian University) and Aldo Parisot (Yale University). She is currently pursuing a professional studies diploma at the Cleveland Institute of Music in the studio of Mark Kosower. Mingyao Zhao has performed extensively as soloist and recitalist in her native China, US, Canada, Korean and Poland, and is the 2018 winner of Cleveland Institute of Music Concerto Competition.

KELLEN DEGNAN has been a member of the Toledo Symphony Orchestra since 2018, and he regularly joins the cello sections of the Canton Symphony Orchestra and the Erie Philharmonic. From 2018 to 2020 he was the cello instructor at Mercyhurst University’s D’Angelo School of Music in Erie, Pennsylvania, and was the cello instructor at the Western Reserve Suzuki School for six years. He currently enjoys being an on-call guest coach for many Cleveland-area institutions, including Agnew Performance Academy and the cello section of the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra. Kellen’s primary teachers have included Yeonjin Kim, Anthony Elliott, Richard Weiss, and Martha Baldwin.

At the **BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF MUSICAL ARTS**, string playing participation helps our students grow, learn, and thrive while they use and develop their personal, physical, and intellectual skills. Our internationally acclaimed string faculty value the lessons that have long been taught by musical participation: the pursuit of excellence through personal development and teamwork, ethical and responsible behavior, adherence to the spirit of rules, leadership and strength of character, and musicianship. Additionally, we promote respect for one's colleagues, acceptance of success with humility, and the acknowledgement of less successful endeavors with grace. In teaching these lessons to our students, the string area instills habits which will lead our students to professional goals in performance, education and related disciplines. Further information can be found at WWW.BGSU.EDU/CONTENT/BGSU/EN/MUSICAL-ARTS/AREA/STRINGS.HTML



BRIAN SNOW is Associate Professor of Cello at Bowling Green State University. He has performed and recorded with a variety of artists, including Meredith Monk, The National, Max Richter, Björk, and the Emerson String Quartet and has worked closely with composers including Nico Muhly, David T. Little, and Martin Bresnick. In 2027, he and violinist Caroline Chen will release a CD of violin/cello duos by Samuel Adler, Christopher Dietz, and Jessie Montgomery on the Toccata label. As principal cellist of New York Symphonic Ensemble, Dr. Snow performed in halls throughout Japan on that ensemble's annual tours and has appeared as soloist at halls in Fukuoka and Sendai. He was formerly a member of the New Haven Symphony cello section and often performs as a substitute in The Cleveland Orchestra. Dr. Snow received a DMA from Stony Brook University, a MM from Yale, and holds degrees from Hartt and Longy Schools of Music. His teachers have included Aldo Parisot, David Finckel, and Colin Carr. Dr. Snow has previously served in faculty positions at Sarah Lawrence College, Western Connecticut State University, and Brooklyn Conservatory.



The **CLEVELAND COMPOSERS GUILD** is one of the nation's oldest new music organizations, and has had over 200 composer members over its sixty-nine-year history. In recent years the Guild has collaborated with Opus 216, the Cleveland Institute of Music, the John Carroll University Humanities Department, the American Guild of Organists, the Poesis Quartet, Sestina Choir, the North Coast Winds, Factory Seconds Brass Trio, Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Burning River Baroque, the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, and various local artists, to create live concerts every season featuring the finest performers in Northeast Ohio. In addition to regular series programs, the Guild produces an annual Creativity: Learning Through Experience concert in tandem with the Music Settlement in University Circle and recognizes young undergraduate composers in Northeast Ohio through its Collegiate Composition Contest.



Upcoming Performances

Our 2026-2027 Season

Join us during our 67th season for thrilling collaborations, in exciting venues across Northeast Ohio!

Cleveland Cello Society | October 25, 2026 | 3pm

St. Paul's Episcopal Church | Cleveland Heights

Music for 1-4 cellos performed by CCS members and the BGSU cello studio.

The ___ Experiment | January 22, 2027 | 6pm

Ames Family Atrium | Cleveland Museum of Art | University Circle

Performances by this exciting Midwest-based reed quartet along with additional chamber works by Guild composers.

Brown Bag Concert | March 17, 2027 | 12pm

Trinity Episcopal Cathedral | Euclid Avenue

The Guild joins the tradition of lunchtime concerts as part of the longest-running free concert series in Greater Cleveland.

Suburban Symphony Orchestra | April 4, 2027 | 3:30pm

Disciples Christian Church | Cleveland Heights

A evening of orchestral readings of works by Guild members, giving insight into the collaborative and creative process.

Creativity: Learning Through Experience XXXV | May 16, 2027 | 3pm

The Music Settlement | University Circle

Latest edition of our annual Junior Concert! Works written specially for young musicians by Guild members.

Innovations!

Sundays | 9pm | WLCV 90.3FM

Don't miss Mark Satola's weekly radio program of music by local composers.

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