Musical Program

Zuill Bailey, Solo Cello

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Suite No. 2 in d minor for Unaccompanied Cello, BWV 1008

I. Prélude
II. Allemande
III. Courante
IV. Sarabande
V. Menuett I/II
VI. Gigue

Suite No. 4 in E-flat Major for Unaccompanied Cello, BWV 1010

I. Prélude
II. Allemande
III. Courante
IV. Sarabande
V. Bourée I/II
VI. Gigue

INTERMISSION

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Suite No. 5 in c minor for Unaccompanied Cello, BWV 1011

I. Prélude
II. Allemande
III. Courante
IV. Sarabande
V. Gavotte I/II
VI. Gigue

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Placitas Artists Series projects are made possiblein part by New Mexico Arts, a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

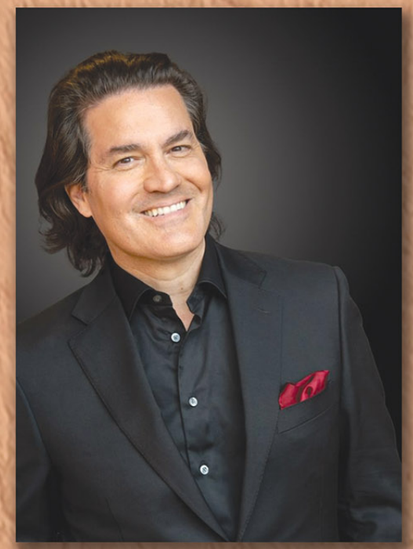
The Placitas Artists Series

Presents

Zuill Bailey

Solo Cello

Sunday, January 11, 2026



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Notes On Today's Concert

Almost exactly four years ago, on January 9, 2022, cellist **Zuill Bailey** performed a Placitas Artists Series concert featuring Johann Sebastian Bach's first, third, and sixth solo cello suites. The concert took place after the worst phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and PAS audiences were once again allowed to attend our concerts in person. Although that concert was not titled *Bach Cello Suites I*, PAS had high hopes that Bailey could be enticed to return and present Bach's second, fourth, and fifth cello suites at a future date. That date has now arrived and we are thrilled to welcome Zuill Bailey back to Placitas to complete the set!

As most of our audience members know, **Johann Sebastian Bach** was a composer and musician of the late Baroque period and one of the titans of classical music. As a musician, he was mostly known as an organist, but he composed for a wide variety of instruments and combinations thereof and his prolific output spanned many forms. Among his best-known works are the Brandenburg Concertos (orchestral), the Goldberg Variations and The Well-Tempered Clavier (keyboard), and the St. Matthew Passion (choral).

Chief among Bach's solo instrumental works are his sonatas and partitas for solo violin and his suites for lute and cello. These were all sets of short, stylized dances of the Baroque period, often preceded by a prelude-like movement; the movements in each set were composed in the same key. In the case of the Bach cello suites, each has six movements, beginning with a prelude and followed by an allemande, a courante, a sarabande, two minuets, bourrées, or gavottes, and a gigue.

The beauty and complexity of these suites have captivated some of the most prominent cellists of the 20th and 21st centuries, including Pablo Casals, Mstislav Rostropovich, and Yo-Yo Ma, all of whom have highly respected recorded versions to their credit. It was actually Casals who brought the suites back from relative obscurity after stumbling across the sheet music in a Barcelona secondhand shop as a teenager in 1890. (He would be in his 60s before he felt ready to record them.)

In notes to the 1988 reissue of a set of Casals's 78 r.p.m. recordings, English musician and writer Lionel Salter said that despite the structural parallelism among the suites, "the mood and even the form of these dances differ greatly from one suite to another; and Casals would tell his pupils that, in general, each suite takes its character from its prelude." Of the suites we will hear today, Casals considered No. 2, in d minor, to be "tragic," No. 4, in E-flat Major, "grandiose," and No. 5, in c minor, "tempestuous." (Rostropovich described No 2 as "sorrowful and intense," No. 4 as "majestic, with an opaque density," and No. 5 as being "an intensely dark color," per notes to his 1991 recording.)

Yo-Yo Ma, in notes to his third (2018) recorded version of the suites, said he believes that "in creating these works, Bach played the part of a musician-scientist, expressing precise observations about nature and human nature. He did so in the first three suites by experimenting with all that the cello can do as a solo instrument. In the final three, he demanded even more of the cello, and of himself, asking a single-line instrument to speak in multiple voices. His compositional invention is at once explicit and implicit, requiring the listener's unconscious ear to fill in what the cello can only suggest, achieving a sonic and architectural richness that ultimately transcends the instrument itself."

Playing the suites seems to be a very personal, even spiritual experience, at least for many cellists. Rostropovich seems to express this sense in his remarks about the sarabande of the second suite. (The sarabande movement in Bach's suites is traditionally performed very slowly and meditatively.)

Notes (Continued)

"This suite has a wonderful Sarabande," Rostropovich said, "which is probably the saddest of any in the suites. It has a particular sincerity and candor, a musical vulnerability, like that of a person rapt in prayer." "You don't play this music for the audience," he continued, "you play it for yourself – the audience is merely eavesdropping, glimpsing the white-hot intensity of solitude, of an artist totally immersed in the music. I frequently play the Sarabande for all those who feel sad."

Zuill Bailey has recorded the six Bach cello suites twice. The first recording was released in 2010 and the second in 2021. Reflecting on the first recording project, Bailey stated, "I was unaware of the depths of the music as a young person, but came to realize that there are so many ways of interpreting Bach that it channels where a cellist is at that precise moment. It has become such a personal journey for me." Today he will give us a sense of where he is in that journey a decade and a half later.

Program notes compiled by Jay Rodman from sources cited above and Wikipedia.

About The Performer

Zuill Bailey is an internationally recognized cellist whose career encompasses solo performance, chamber music, recording, teaching, and arts leadership. A Grammy Award–winning artist, he is known for a combination of expressive musicianship, technical command, and a broad commitment to both standard repertoire and contemporary music.

As a concerto soloist, Bailey has appeared with major orchestras throughout the United States and abroad, including performances with the Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Detroit, Dallas, Toronto, Minnesota, Utah, and Israel Philharmonic orchestras, as well as the Philharmonia Orchestra in the United Kingdom and the Bruckner Orchestra Linz. He has collaborated with conductors such as Itzhak Perlman, Alan Gilbert, Neeme Järvi, Giancarlo Guerrero, and Andrew Litton, and has worked closely with chamber music artists including Leon Fleisher, Jaime Laredo, the Juilliard String Quartet, Lynn Harrell, and János Starker.

Bailey has performed in many of the world's leading venues, including Carnegie Hall, Disney Hall, the Kennedy Center, Alice Tully Hall, the United Nations, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. His appearances include U.S. and world premieres of works by composers such as Nico Muhly, Michael Daugherty, Lowell Lieberman, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, and Roberto Sierra, reflecting a sustained interest in expanding the cello repertoire.

A prolific recording artist, Bailey has released more than thirty recordings. His 2017 Grammy Award recognized his live recording of Michael Daugherty's *Tales of Hemingway* with the Nashville Symphony. His discography also includes acclaimed recordings of Bach, Haydn, Elgar, Dvořák, Brahms, and Schumann.

Educated at the Peabody Conservatory and the Juilliard School, Bailey performs on a 1693 Matteo Gofriller cello. He currently serves as artistic director of several music festivals and is professor of cello and director of the Center for Arts Entrepreneurship at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Bead Society of New Mexico

The Bead Society of New Mexico was founded in 1984. We are a nonprofit organization dedicated to the creative arts of beadwork, jewelry making, and mixed media. Our purpose is to provide for the benefit and development of our members and the community at large through education, appreciation, and involvement in the field of beads and bead-related subjects.

Julie Fear

"After retirement and moving back to NM, I decided to take a class in every craft that ever piqued my interest. So far, I've tried gourd art, beading, metal working, wire working, and lapidary. Of everything I've tried, beading is my favorite. I specialize in seed bead design jewelry and have won several awards for my necklaces at the New Mexico State Fair."

Pam Troutman

"I started beading in the 1990's, making functional jewelry as well as unique necklace designs. My bead creations have won awards in several media. Originally from Virginia, I retired to Rio Rancho, NM in June 2017. My work is available at Amapola Gallery in Old Town Albuquerque. StarFerrets@gmail.com / www.starartjewelry.etsy.com."

Sandy Johnson

"I am a metal working jewelry designer who primarily works in silver, fabricating necklaces, bracelets, earrings, rings, and chains. I use both precious and semi-precious stones and have the luxury of selecting from literally thousands of pounds of rough that I have cut and shaped for my designs by a master cutter. My work can be seen at Wild Hearts Gallery in Placitas."

Geri Verble

"I specialize in tribal and ethnic jewelry. While traveling with the Peace Corps, I developed a passion for collecting ethnic beads and pendants. This sense of design has influenced my work in creating one-of-a-kind, exceptional pieces from around the World. My work can be seen at Wild Hearts Gallery in Placitas, and by visiting: www.tribalbear.com"

Art On Exhibit 1/3/2026 - 3/6/2026

Julie Fear

Pam Troutman

Sandy Johnson

Geri Verble