



Saturday, June 11, 2022 | 4:30pm

Zalk Theater, Besant Hill School

OJAI Dusk: The Cello Player

The Cello Player World Premiere

Created by **Or Schraiber** in collaboration with **Yiannis Logothetis** and **Coleman Itzkoff**

Co-produced by **AMOC* & Orsolina28**

Bobbi Jene Smith dramaturgy | **Victoria Bek** costumes | **Claire Cleary** lighting design

Jules Itzkoff furniture design and build

Coleman Itzkoff cello | **Yiannis Logothetis** dancer | **Or Schraiber** dancer | **Jesse Kovarsky** actor

Musical selections performed by **Coleman Itzkoff**:

Giovanni SOLLIMA

Lamentatio for Solo Cello

Coleridge-Taylor PERKINSON

Calvary Ostinato from *Lamentations*:

Black/Folk Song Suite for Solo Cello

György LIGETI

Dialogo from *Sonata* for Solo Cello

This concert is made possible
by the generous support of
Ruth Eliel and Bill Cooney

There is no intermission
during the concert.

Please note that there will
be some flashing lights
as part of the performance.

ZALK THEATER,
BESANT HILL SCHOOL
8585 OJAI SANTA PAULA ROAD

Giovanni SOLLIMA (b. 1962)
Lamentatio for Solo Cello (1998)

Coleridge-Taylor PERKINSON (1932-2004)
Calvary Ostinato from *Lamentations*:
Black/Folk Song Suite for Solo Cello (1973)

György LIGETI (1923-2006)
Dialogo from *Sonata* for Solo Cello
(1948-53)

"To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now."
"Dance first. Think later. It's the natural order."

—SAMUEL BECKETT

Two men wait on a stage. They each attempt to tell their tales, share their joys, their scars. They each lament their bygone lives.
A wandering kobzar appears in the distance...

The Cello Player is a work of dance-music-theater that was born out of the friendship and working relationship between its three creators:
Or Schraiber, Yiannis Logothetis, and Coleman Itzkoff.

—COLEMAN ITZKOFF

The Bard's Laments

The Cello Player is a spinoff of *Open Rehearsal*, AMOC*'s new dance-theater work directed by Bobbi Jene Smith (which receives a second performance on Sunday). Both works in turn have their roots in *Broken Theater*, a dance film that Smith and her fellow artists created during the height of the pandemic (see p. 50 for more background).

The initial idea for *The Cello Player*, explains choreographer and dancer Or Schraiber, emerged when he was preparing a duet for himself and dancer Yiannis Logothetis during the process of creating *Broken Theater*. Schraiber realized there was enough potential to expand this male duet into an independent dance theater piece.

"At the time, I was especially interested in the Theater of the Absurd of the 1950s and '60s in France, especially as found in the works of Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco," he recalls. "The way Beckett breaks the paradigm of linear narrative and the depth of his characters in *Waiting for Godot* but also in *Endgame* were a big inspiration."

Schraiber tapped into the energy that has developed between himself and Logothetis over their years of collaboration. He invited cellist Coleman Itzkoff, another close colleague who is a co-founding member of AMOC*, to participate and offer suggestions for the musical dimension. The trio began workshopping the new piece during a residency last year in Italy. Although

Schraiber's initial impulse was to think about how the theatrical sources that inspired him might be represented as dance, *The Cello Player* eventually went "in a completely different direction," according to Itzkoff.

The result is a piece about the indefinable but mysterious connection between three characters "in their attempt to coexist in different ways or within different physical or sonic manifestations," says Schraiber. The roles/personae performed by Schraiber and Logothetis, he adds, are "difficult to separate. We are almost the same character in two different bodies: like ancient friends, or like the angels in Wim Wenders's film *Wings of Desire*, two souls contemplating the world." Itzkoff, on the other hand, "suddenly injects a completely different vibe with his music."

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THE BARD'S LAMENTS

During the initial, amorphous stages of *The Cello Player*, Itzkoff tried out numerous pieces of music with Schraiber and Logothesis. One day, while he was practicing Giovanni Sollima's *Lamentatio*, his colleagues immediately took notice. "They were incredibly excited by it," he recalls. "So with that we found the first musical selection of the piece."

A native of Sicily, Sollima is a composer and cellist who has collaborated with Patti Smith and is especially acclaimed for the hypnotic power of his improvisations. Itzkoff first met him in 2016 during the Piatigorsky International Cello Festival in Los Angeles and describes Sollima as "a Baroque rock star living in the 21st century." *Lamentatio* demands an electrifying range of playing styles, from plaintive chant to aggressively percussive gestures, with the player adding wordless, at times almost feral, vocalizations.

The American composer, conductor, pianist, and educator Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson (his first name pays homage to the composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor) moved effortlessly between classical, jazz, and popular idioms. He was among the co-founders of the Symphony of the New World, established in 1965 as the first racially integrated orchestra in the United States. Perkinson composed *Lamentations* eight years later for Ronald Lipscomb, who performed with the new orchestra. He also named this four-movement solo suite *Black/Folk Song Suite*, drawing on sources from African American musical tradition. *Calvary Ostinato*, the third movement, adapts the spiritual about the crucifixion of Jesus, "Surely He Died on Calvary," into a repeated pattern and is played entirely pizzicato.

György Ligeti was still a student in Budapest when he wrote a single

movement for solo cello, *Dialogo*. His inspiration was a fellow student to whom he could confess his love only through music, but she never played it; five years later, he complemented *Dialogo* with a second movement to create the Cello Sonata. Because the Communist authorities refused permission to publish or even perform the Sonata, it fell into oblivion for decades. Ligeti was denied access to modern musical developments while he was still behind the Iron Curtain. With its intimation of folk song character, *Dialogo* shows the influence of Zoltán Kodály, one of his teachers. The paradoxical title of a solo instrument engaging in a "dialogue" gains fresh meaning in the context of *The Cello Player*.

"I'm a minstrel or bard or kobzar who travels with his cello and sings these laments," says Itzkoff. "All three of them have an ancient quality, giving an impression of having always existed."

—THOMAS MAY

This concert is approximately 60 minutes.