



New England  
Conservatory

# Concert Program

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# Welcome to NEC!

I am thrilled to share New England Conservatory's 2023-24 concert season—a celebration of the power of music to connect and inspire one another.

Whether you are seated in one of our concert halls or watching online, we hope you are uplifted by the performances of our students, faculty, and guest artists.

Above all, we thank you for your support of our students as they cultivate their artistry and contribute to the world through music.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrea Kalyn".

Andrea Kalyn  
President

A Joint Faculty Recital by

Laurence Lesser  
*cello*

and

MinSoo Sohn  
*piano*

Monday, November 13, 2023

7:30 p.m.

NEC's Jordan Hall

## PROGRAM

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**Béla Bartók**  
(1881–1945)

**Rhapsody No. 1 for Cello and Piano**

**Johann Sebastian Bach**  
(1685–1750)

**Suite No. 6 for Solo Cello in D Major, BWV 1012**

Prélude  
Allemande  
Courante  
Sarabande  
Gavotte I,  
II Gigue

*Intermission*

**Sergei Rachmaninoff**  
(1873–1943)

**Sonata in G Minor for Cello and Piano, op. 19**

Lento – Allegro  
moderato Allegro  
scherzando Andante  
Allegro mosso

A native of Los Angeles, **Laurence Lesser** was a top prizewinner in the 1966 Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow and a participant in the historic Heifetz-Piatigorsky concerts and recordings. Mr. Lesser has appeared as a soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the New Japan Philharmonic, the Tokyo Philharmonic and other major orchestras. His New York debut recital in 1969 was greeted as "triumphant" and "magical." His Tchaikovsky *Rococo Variations* in Hamburg, *Die Welt* stated, "could not have been more thoroughly realized than is this staggering performance."

As a chamber musician he has participated at the Casals, Marlboro, Spoleto, Ravinia, Music@Menlo and Santa Fe festivals. He has also been a member of juries for numerous international competitions, including chairing the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow in 1994, the 2002 and 2006 Grand Prix Emanuel Feuermann, the 2002 and 2018 International Paulo Cello Competition, the Naumberg International Cello Competition, and twice on the Isang Yun competition in Korea.

A 1961 graduate of Harvard College, where he studied mathematics, Lesser went to Köln, Germany the following year to work with Gaspar Cassadó. Just before, he played at the Zermatt master classes for Pablo Casals, who declared, "Thank God who has given you such a great talent!" He won first prize at the Cassadó Competition in Siena, Italy in 1962. When he returned to Los Angeles, he studied with Gregor Piatigorsky and soon became his teaching assistant and regular faculty member at the University of Southern California.

During the remainder of the 60s he was a frequent contributor to the artistic life of Los Angeles. Notably, his 1965 performance of the Schoenberg Cello Concerto to inaugurate the Bing Auditorium at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art was its first hearing with orchestra after Emanuel Feuermann introduced the work in the late 1930s. He recorded it the following year for Columbia Masterworks. He left Los Angeles in 1970 to become Professor of Cello at Baltimore's Peabody Institute.

Lesser was invited in 1974 by Gunther Schuller, the then President of New England Conservatory, to head NEC's cello department. In 1983 he was named the school's President, a position from which he retired in 1996 to return to performing and teaching. A high point of his tenure as President was the complete restoration of the 1000-seat Jordan Hall, one of the world's greatest acoustical spaces.

Teaching has always been an important part of Lesser's artistic activity. His former students, numbering in the hundreds, are soloists, orchestra section leaders and members, chamber musicians and teachers, active throughout the USA and in many other countries around the world. He taught summer courses regularly at the Banff Centre from 1998 to 2004 and continues at Orford Music in Quebec annually since 2001. He has also performed and taught at Verbier and has taught in summer sessions at the Perlman Music Program since 2021. In addition, he has been a participant at the Heifetz International Music Institute in Staunton, VA.

In September, 2005 Lesser was named "Chevalier du Violoncelle" by the Eva Janzer Memorial Cello Center at Indiana University.

Lesser's previous recordings include the complete Beethoven with pianist HaeSun Paik on Bridge Records and the complete Bach Cello Suites, recorded in

Jordan Hall, produced by Judith Sherman. Other labels include RCA, Columbia, Melodiya and CRI.

**Minsoo Sohn** is a Korean-American pianist known for his musical intelligence and masterful virtuosity. Described by the *New York Times* as “a genuine artist, with a thoughtful and poetic interpretation,” and by the *Boston Globe* as “born to play the piano,” Sohn continues to expand his reputation as one of the foremost pianists of his day. Sohn has toured extensively throughout North and South America, Europe, Israel, and Korea, appearing in important venues and festivals.

Sohn is particularly noted for his interpretation of Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, and the *New York Times* praised his Honens label recording of the work as a “beautifully articulated, radiant interpretation,” placing it as one of the top classical recordings of 2011. His recordings also received critical acclaim from *New Yorker Magazine*, *Plain Dealer*, *Gramophone*, *Calgary Herald*, and *Toronto Star* among others.

In 2020, coinciding with the 250th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth, Mr. Sohn concluded his four-year immersion in the composer’s music, which included a concert series, recordings, and writings. Over the course of his Beethoven project, Mr. Sohn performed and recorded the composer’s thirty-two sonatas in a series of recitals at Seoul Arts Center and recording sessions at Tongyeong Concert Hall. The recital series also included Beethoven’s monumental *Diabelli Variations and Bagatelles*. Sony Classical released the highly anticipated nine-album set of “*Complete Beethoven Piano Sonatas*” in the Fall of 2020.

He held positions at Michigan State University and Korean National University of Arts before joining his alma mater, New England Conservatory, in the Fall of 2023. He is indebted to Russell Sherman and Wha Kyung Byun for guiding him to follow his bliss.

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