

## Cellist Deborah Pae to give solo recital on LCCC Signature Series November 3

by Mike Telin



What does the dream classical music career look like? One example is that of cellist Deborah Pae. A member of the award-winning [Formosa Quartet](#) and [Trio Modetre](#), she regularly performs as a soloist at festivals including Marlboro and Ravinia. She has shared the stage with Itzhak Perlman, Pamela Frank, Charles Neidich, and members of the Guarneri, Juilliard, and Takács Quartets. Later this year, her live recital recording will be released on the Outhere Music Label in partnership with Musiq3 Radio.

On Thursday, November 3 at 7:30 pm in Cirigliano Studio Theatre at the Stocker Center for the Arts, [Deborah Pae](#) will present a recital of solo cello works by J.S. Bach, Jeffrey Mumford, and Toshiro Mayuzumi. The concert is part of LCCC's Signature Series.

“All of my passions have come together in a really nice way,” Pae said during a recent Skype conversation from Ypsilanti, Michigan, where she serves on the faculty of Eastern Michigan University. “Many times people get categorized, and I think that is counterintuitive to what we do as creative individuals.”

The Livingston, New Jersey, native said that she chose her program because she wanted to showcase how malleable and versatile the cello is, noting that like a chameleon, the instrument can take on many different characteristics. Pae will open and close her program with unaccompanied cello suites of Bach.

“His music is something that is always with me — everywhere I go I'm always playing Bach. I have a small Anna Magdalena manuscript that Anner Bylsma gave to me that I carry in my bag. When I was living in Brussels, I would go to Amsterdam and play for him, and he would describe the suites with anecdotes that made me look at Bach in a

completely different light. He's not just a great cellist, he's also an incredible human being. He's so creative and loves to tell stories."

Fittingly, the Juilliard and New England Conservatory graduate will begin the concert with Bach's *Suite No. 1 in G*, a piece she has lived with for a long time. "People may not know anything about classical music, but when they hear that iconic opening they immediately know that it is Bach," Pae said. "Playing a work that has been performed hundreds of thousands of times — and recorded almost as much — is a very personal experience. I also think it's a great way to open a program." The cellist will close her recital with the *Suite No. 3 in C*. "I've also lived with this Suite for a long time, and hope to for many more years. I love the way that it ends on such a high note, and I think it will bring the entire program together in a very nice way."

In between the Bach bookends will be two contemporary works. The first, Jeffrey Mumford's nine-minute *revisiting variazioni elegiaci...once more* (2001), opens with a drone that Pae said sounds like a ringing gong. "It begins and ends in a similar way and it has a beautiful arc that I find very expressive. I'm so happy to get to play Jeffrey's music, and I think this particular piece showcases another side of the cello."

Japanese composer Toshiro Mayuzumi's *Bunraku* (1960) is full of extended techniques that imitate the sound of a *shamisen*, a three-stringed Japanese guitar. "Bunraku is a form of Japanese puppetry that was created in Osaka in 1684," Pae explained. "It's like Kabuki theatre but apparently not as refined. In the piece, I'm supposed to be the *shamisen* player and the narrator, and portray the different characters in the story. When you listen to it, it sounds very modern, although it is mimicking an ancient form of music. I really enjoy playing it, and I wanted to bring a different sound world to the audience to show them what is possible on the cello."

From 2012 to 2015, Deborah Pae took part in an artist residency at Queen Elisabeth Chapelle in Brussels, Belgium, an experience she described as incredible. "It's hard to explain exactly what it is because I don't know if there is an equivalent here in the States, but the residency acts as a quasi-management for the artists. It's also free-form so it's really what you make of it. There were a number of opportunities for me to expand as an artist and really engage with audiences. Being around so many high-level musicians who come from completely different traditions was fantastic."

When asked about her teaching, Pae said that although she has the very official title of Professor of Cello, she sees her position more as a collaboration with the students. "It's problem solving and figuring out what works for them. What I love about teaching is that it's constantly challenging me and forcing me to look at myself and how I'm playing music."

Regarding her career, Pae said that she would be lying if she said it was easy and not hard work. “But that’s what musicians do. It’s a labor of love, and I feel so lucky to be able to do it all.”

*Published on ClevelandClassical.com November 1, 2016.*

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