



DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Sunday, February 15, 2026 • 7:00 PM

THE COMPLETE BACH CELLO SUITES WITH NINA DECESARE

Murray and Michele Allen Recital Hall
2330 North Halsted Street • Chicago

Sunday, February 15, 2026 • 7:00 PM

Allen Recital Hall

THE COMPLETE BACH CELLO SUITES

WITH NINA DECESARE

PROGRAM

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Suite No. 1 in G major, BWV 1007

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Menuets 1 + 2
- VI. Gigue

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Suite No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1008

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Menuets 1 + 2
- VI. Gigue

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Suite No. 3 presented in G major, BWV 1009

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Bourrees 1 + 2
- VI. Gigue

As a courtesy to those around you, please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices. Flash photography is not permitted.

THE COMPLETE BACH CELLO SUITES WITH NINA DECESARE • FEBRUARY 15, 2026
PROGRAM

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Suite No. 4 presented in D major, BWV 1010

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Bourrees 1 + 2
- VI. Gigue

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Suite No. 5 presented in A minor, BWV 1011

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Gavottes 1 + 2
- VI. Gigue

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Suite No. 6 presented in G Major, BWV 1012

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Gavottes 1 + 2
- VI. Gigue

Please hold your applause until the end of the final suite.

BIOGRAPHIES

Nina DeCesare is one of the most versatile and exciting double bassists of her generation, regularly balancing her time between her position at the Baltimore Symphony, her faculty job at the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins, and her appearances around the country, as a masterclass clinician and soloist. Nina is regularly invited to perform with many of the highest caliber ensembles in the country, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. She is a leading advocate for gender equity in the bass community and recently launched The Artemis Bass Initiative, a nonprofit that provides mentorship, professional development, and community to women and nonbinary bassists as well as raises awareness nationwide through seminars.

Nina's energetic and passionate approach to solo playing is highly sought after and she will be touring the complete Bach Cello Suites in 2026 in a total of 12 cities. Nina has a unique approach to the Bach Cello Suites after recording all 36 movements for social media at the beginning of Covid in a project inspired by Alisa Weilerstein's #36daysofBach. She is a recipient of François Rabbath's Certificates of Teaching and Performance and a graduate of Rice University, where she studied with Paul Ellison. The multifaceted nature of her career and her work as an advocate makes her a well-rounded and compassionate teacher and she's presented masterclasses and workshops at the Juilliard School, the Curtis Institute, the New World Symphony, the National Orchestral Institute, and Domaine Forget Academy.

PROGRAM NOTES

Johann Sebastian Bach's Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello stand among the most profound achievements in Western music. Composed in Köthen between 1717 and 1723, these suites have transcended their original purpose as technical studies to become pillars of the solo string repertoire. Each suite follows the standard Baroque dance suite form, opening with a prelude followed by allemande, courante, sarabande, a pair of galantries (minuets, bournées, or gavottes), and concluding with a gigue. Within this formal structure, Bach creates six distinct emotional and spiritual journeys.

Tonight's performance presents this journey on the double bass, an instrument that brings new depth and resonance to Bach's writing. The bass's rich lower register reveals harmonic implications often hidden in higher-pitched performances, while the technical demands of translating this music to a larger instrument require both virtuosity and profound musical understanding. This complete cycle unfolds as a carefully curated emotional arc, beginning with the gentle emergence of Suite No. 1 and culminating in the transcendent arrival of Suite No. 6.

Suite No. 1 in G major introduces us to Bach's world with grace and accessibility. The opening Prelude, with its flowing arpeggios, represents an emergence into sound itself. The dance movements that follow explore the simple pleasures of musical form: the comfort of the Allemande's winding melodies, the ease of the Courante's running figures, the open harmonies of the first Sarabande in the series, and the gentle formality of the two Minuets that pair excitement with etiquette. The suite concludes with a joyous Gigue—straightforward bordering on raucous party.

Suite No. 2 in D minor delves into darker emotional territory, introduced immediately with the Prelude's monologue. The descending motives and single voice texture suggest deep vulnerability and melancholy, finishing with the cold simplicity of the final chordal sequence. The following Allemande feels structured and yet teems with desperation. The quick and testy Courante churns with anxiety, giving way to the desolate isolation of the Sarabande. The first Minuet is one of the most challenging movements of all the suites when performed on the bass – *inhale* – while the second Minuet in D major, comes as a relief – *exhale*. The stubborn Gigue demonstrates resilience, its driving rhythm refusing to surrender to darkness.

Suite No. 3 in G major returns to a brighter and simplistic mood with renewed optimism in its expansive Prelude. The Allemande is as matter of fact as it is whimsical, while the Courante bubbles with effervescence. The opulent Sarabande reminds us of the elegance and poise of the Baroque dance form. The paired Bourrées, the movements most commonly performed on the bass, present a dialogue between tradition and resistance, finishing with the sparkling Gigue – charismatic in its virtuosity.

Suite No. 4 in D major is perhaps the most harmonically adventurous of the six. Its Prelude is a study in expansion, exploring harmony through a simple arpeggiated structure, suddenly interrupted by a series of quick outbursts, before returning to a restatement of the sunrise of the beginning sequence. The simple Allemande demonstrates deep empathy, its melodic lines seemingly engaged in intimate conversation. The Courante explodes with euphoria, mixing duples and triples to create a sense of uncontained enthusiasm, giving way to the Sarabande's controlled and expansive serenity. The first Bourrée reprises the enthusiasm of the Courante, building anticipation to the joyous arrival of the second Bourrée's rustic chords. The *da capo* return of the first bourrée borders on manic excitement, giving way to the buoyant duple feel of the Gigue.

Suite No. 5 in A minor stands apart as the most dramatic and emotionally demanding of the cycle. The sprawling prelude begins with a narrative even darker than the second suite before quietly transitioning into an academic fugue. It teems with severity, at times seething under the surface and growing to allow glimpses of unbridled intensity. The Allemande, reminiscent of the beginning of the prelude, explores deep rumination, while the Courante unleashes pure rage. The Sarabande, sparse and desolate, expresses profound grief, the root of the entire suite. The first Gavotte's persistence collapses into the second Gavotte's manic spiral, returning stubbornly for a *da capo*, before the release of the Gigue.

Suite No. 6 in G major brings the cycle to a transcendent conclusion, with an opening Prelude that achieves catharsis after the fifth suite's intensity. The Allemande is a peaceful reflection on the journey traversed. The virtuosic Courante overflows with pure joy, while the Sarabande looks back across all six suites with wisdom and tenderness. The rustic Gavottes celebrate folksong, grounding their tricky technical feat in human connection. The final Gigue represents

arrival—not just at the end of a musical journey, but at a destination of spiritual and artistic fulfillment.

Performing all six suites in one evening creates a unique opportunity to experience Bach's complete vision, to hear the relationships between the suites, and to undertake a profound musical pilgrimage. From emergence to arrival, from darkness to light, from solitude to community, these works map the full spectrum of human experience through the pure language of music.

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Concert Dress: At any given concert, you will observe some concertgoers dressed up and others dressed more casually. Many patrons wear business attire or casual business attire. We encourage you to wear whatever makes you feel most comfortable.

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Late Seating: Late seating breaks usually occur after the first piece on the program or at intermission in order to minimize disturbances to other audience members and those performing on stage. Late patrons will be seated at appropriate breaks at the discretion of the house management staff.

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February 18 • 7:00 P.M.
Allen Recital Hall
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February 19 • 7:00 P.M.
Allen Recital Hall
DePaul Composers Forum

February 22 • 7:00 P.M.
Allen Recital Hall
Scott Ramsay Studio Recital

February 26 • 8:00 P.M.
Gannon Concert Hall
DePaul Ensemble 20+

February 28 • 3:00 P.M.
Allen Recital Hall
DePaul Trombone Choir

February 28 • 8:00 P.M.
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DePaul Chamber & Concert Choirs

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Allen Recital Hall
Jon Nakamatsu, piano

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February 21 • 7:00 P.M.
Allen Recital Hall
Ann Marie Brink, viola, Jason Moy,
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