

CSUSB Proudly Presents

# Cello and Early Music Ensembles



*April 21, 2026 ~ 7:00 PM*  
*Recital Hall (PA 102)*



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO

The California State University San Bernardino  
Department of Music Presents

# *Early Music / Cello Ensemble*

## *Joint Concert*

Dr. Esther Back, Director of Cello / Early Music Ensembles  
Recital Hall, Performing Arts Building (PA) – 102  
April 21, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

### *Program*

*Canzon prima “La Spiritata”* Giovanni Gabrieli  
from *Canzoni per sonare* (Venice, 1608) (c. 1554/57–1612)

*Sonata XXI con tre violini* Gabrieli

*Sonata “La Foscarina con il tremolo”* Biagio Marini  
from *Affetti musicali, Op. 1* (1594–1663)

*Sonate, symphonie, canzoni... e correnti, Op. 8* Marini  
*Sonata in ecco*

*Three Parts upon a Ground* in F major, Z 731 Henry Purcell  
(1659–1695)

*Concerto in D major* for 2 violins, 2 cellos,  
strings, and continuo, RV 564 Antonio Vivaldi  
(1678–1741)

I. *Allegro*  
II. *Largo*  
III. *Allegro*

Courtney Kuroda, *solo baroque violin I*  
Edgar Villegas, *solo baroque violin II*  
Dr. Esther Back, *solo baroque cello I*  
Annabelle Su, *solo baroque cello II*

Performed on period instruments at A=415 (see Early Music Ensemble roster)

Harpichord: William Hyman, 1977, double-manual after 18th-century  
French models, range FF-f”,  
transposable A415/A440, disposed 2x8’, 1x4’, buff.

# Intermission ~ 10 Minutes

*The Cello Song: Inspired by Bach's  
Unaccompanied Cello Suite in G Major, No. 1  
I. Prelude*

Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685-1750)  
arr. Steven Sharp Nelson  
(b. 1977)

*The Swan (from Carnival of the Animals)*

Camille Saint-Saëns  
(1835-1921)  
arr. Hans Erik Deckert  
(1927-2022)

*Canon in D major*

Johann Pachelbel  
(1653-1706)  
arr. Nelson

*Libertango*

Astor Piazzolla  
(1921- 1992)  
arr. Mitsu Saeki

*Requiem for 3 Cellos and Piano, Op. 57*

*Andante cantabile*

David Popper  
(1838-1875)

*Bachianas Brasileiras for 8 Cellos, No. 1, W 246  
I. Introduction [Embolada]*

Heitor Villa-Lobos  
(1887-1959)

*Overture to Il barbiere di Siviglia  
(The Barber of Seville)  
Allegro vivace*

Gioachino Rossini  
(1792-1868)  
arr. D. Moore  
(b. 1946)

CSUSB Cello Ensemble (see roster)

## CSUSB Early Music Ensemble

### Baroque violin/viola

Edgar Villegas  
Courtney Kuroda\*  
Holly Knoch\*  
Ashley Salinas\*  
Vincent Steger

### Baroque cello

Annabelle Su  
Alberto Hernandez  
Dr. Esther Back\*\*

### Harpsichord

Gabriel Cruz  
Robert Zappulla\*

## CSUSB Cello Ensemble

Dr. Esther Back\*\*  
Ana Maria Maldonado\*  
Annabelle Su+  
Adeline Epstein+  
Alberto Hernandez+  
Arianna de la Cruz++  
Camila Vega-Espinoza++  
Evan Hesskamp+  
Jaclyn Fernandez++  
Karina Gomez-Torres+  
Kyle Champion\*

\*\*Artistic Director of CSUSB  
Cello/New Music Ensemble

+CSUSB Music Cello Major  
Student

/ CSUSB Student / CSUSB  
Alumni

\*Guest(s)

++CSUSB Selected Open  
University/High School  
University Program Student

## *Faculty/Guests Performers' Bios*

**Dr. Esther Back** is a versatile cellist and Baroque specialist praised for her “passion and expressiveness that is wholly accessible to modern ears yet entirely authentic, learned, and respectful of the sources” (D. Tenbrook). A former student of Jaap ter Linden, she has appeared as Baroque cellist with leading early music ensembles, including Musica Angelica, Bach Collegium LA, and Musica Transalpina, and has participated in respected programs such as the Tafelmusik Baroque Institute. Equally committed to ensemble leadership, Dr. Back is the founder and director of California State University/San Bernardino’s Cello and Early Music ensembles. Under her direction, such ensembles have performed at major venues (Walt Disney Concert Hall), toured internationally, and have been featured on KUCI radio. In 2025, she was invited to lead educational and performance tours in Italy, with appearances at the Milan Conservatory’s Puccini Hall and Palazzo Borromeo Sala Aurora Hall. Dr. Back is a tenured cellist with the San Bernardino Symphony and serves on the faculties of Claremont Graduate University (CGU) and CSUSB. Her students have been prizewinners in major competitions and have appeared as soloists with professional orchestras. She has received invitations to present masterclasses and lectures at the Conservatorio di Como in Italy, California State University, Fullerton, and elsewhere. She is also an active adjudicator, including recent service as a judge for the American String Teachers Association State Finals. Dr. Back holds a D.M.A. in Historical Performance Practices (Baroque cello/viola da gamba) and is currently pursuing Ph.D. in Musicology at CGU, with a dissertation on the life and works of Louis de Caix d’Hervelois. She released the album *Miracle of the Cellos* and is preparing a complete recording of J. S. Bach’s six unaccompanied cello suites for the Athene Label, reflecting her ongoing commitment to both modern and historically informed performance.

**Kyle Champion** recently retired after a distinguished career, including 29 years as Artist Teacher of Cello at the University of Redlands and Principal Cellist of the Redlands Symphony. His extensive orchestral background includes tenures with the Long Beach Symphony and Oklahoma Symphony. An educator for over 30 years, he also led the orchestra program at the Webb Schools. A USC and SMU alumnus, Kyle has performed with the LA Opera and on numerous film soundtracks. He is a founding member of the quartet *Quatracelli* and a past president of ASTA-LA, where he remains a board member and active adjudicator.

**Holly Knoch** is a violinist from Dallas, Texas, based in Los Angeles. She works as a freelancer, improviser, arranger, and teacher in all different styles including Classical, Baroque, and folk genres. She has most recently studied under the tutelage of Andrew McIntosh at the California Institute of the Arts, during which she received both modern and Baroque violin instruction. Holly currently plays with the Los Angeles Baroque as their Concertmaster and Personnel Manager, and has performed with Tesserae Baroque and Musica Transalpina.

**Courtney Kuroda** is an active performer of early music in Southern California with period ensembles Bach Collegium San Diego, San Diego Baroque and Opera Neo. She has also performed throughout the U.S. and Canada with ensembles including Portland Baroque Orchestra, Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque in Vancouver, B.C., Ensemble Mirable, Indianapolis Baroque and has recorded with Opera Lafayette in Washington D.C under the Naxos label. She has participated in both the Bloomington and Boston Early Music festivals as well as the Pacific Baroque Festival in British Columbia and the Oregon Bach Festival. She received her master's degree in Historical Performance from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, where she studied Baroque violin with Stanley Ritchie.

**Ana Maria Maldonado** holds a Master of Music in cello performance from USC and a Bachelor of Music in Cello performance from Texas Tech University. She received a J.D. Rockefeller Fellowship to promote Western Classical Music in Bangkok, Thailand performing with the Kennedy String Quartet which toured Asia under the US Information Service. The fellowship included teaching at the Royal Music Academy. She later performed with the Heidleberg Stadtisches Opera Orchester in Germany. Maldonado currently teaches at Cal Poly Pomona, UC Riverside, Chaffey College, and Mt. Sac and serves as principal cellist of the San Bernardino Symphony.

**Ashley Salinas** Violist and Texas native, Ashley Salinas earned her DMA and MM from UNT and BM from SHSU and primary teachers include Susan Dubois, Cynthia Roberts, Paul Leenhouts, and Lisa Burrell. While living in North Texas, she participated regularly with various ensembles including Dallas Bach Society, Denton Bach Society Players, La Novella Baroque, La Follia (Austin), and the Orchestra of New Spain. Mrs. Salinas has appeared in the Victoria Bach Festival, Boston Early Music Festival, Cervantino Festival of Mexico, and Siglo d'Oro Festival (El Paso). Mrs. Salinas performed with Musica Angelica and currently performs with Opera Neo in San Diego and Baroque Collegium Los Angeles.

**Karina Gomez-Torres** is a cellist and dedicated educator currently pursuing a Master of Music in Cello Performance at Claremont Graduate University. She earned her Bachelor of Music in Performance from California State University, San Bernardino, where she studied under cellist Esther Back. Karina has performed in masterclasses with distinguished artists including Ben Hong, Associate Principal Cellist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic; Hans Jørgen Jensen of CelloMind; Bongshin Ko of California State University, Fullerton; and Daniele Bogni of the Como Conservatory of Music. As a member of the CSUSB Cello Ensemble, she toured Italy in summer 2025, collaborating with students from the Como Conservatory and performing at the Conservatorio di Milano. In addition to her performance career, Karina maintains an active teaching studio and currently serves on faculty at Bertrand's Music in San Bernardino.

**Robert Zappulla** holds the Fred W. Smith and Grace Hobson Smith Chair in Music at Claremont Graduate University and is known primarily as a harpsichordist and scholar specializing in the field of historical performance practices. He is the author of *Figured Bass Accompaniment in France* as well as a translation with commentary of Vincenzo Manfredini's *Regole Armoniche*, and is Editor of *Early Keyboard Journal* and *Performance Practice Review*. Professor Zappulla has appeared as harpsichordist throughout North America and Europe and is director of the period-instrument ensemble, Concordia Clarimontis. He currently is recording two harpsichord CDs (Louis Couperin and Frescobaldi) for the Delos label.

### **About the Cal State University, San Bernardino Cello Ensemble**

*“The CSUSB Cello Ensemble is proud to be the first, pre-selected cello ensemble group to be invited to perform at the Milan Conservatory’s facility as part of their concert series as well as participate in concerts and masterclasses with Como Conservatory cello students.”*



The CSUSB Cello Ensemble provides a wide range of performances, career development, and educational outreach opportunities. The Ensemble performs many different genres of music and a wide variety of classical (both original and great, familiar arrangements) that is more challenging than typical orchestral music. We provide a fun environment where cellists play together and bring out the sound and capabilities of the cello. We would like to develop cellists and bring out their highest levels every season and perform concerts at prestigious venues! This ensemble is modeled after the elite professional chamber cello group (consisting of twelve members) formed by the members of the Berlin Philharmonic and London Cello Orchestra.

In the summer 2025, the CSUSB cello ensemble received an official invitation to perform at the Milan Conservatory, an historic venue, and at Borromeo, Aurora Hall in Milan—in collaboration with Como Conservatory cello students.

In order to assure the highest levels of performance and musicianship, the CSUSB Cello Ensemble provides master classes/workshops that feature world-renowned professional artists/cellists and highly-respected instructors. The group also consistently provides opportunities to perform with professional artists and faculty-in-residence at CSUSB, which constitutes a significant experience for these students.

The CSUSB Cello Ensemble provides unique opportunities for cellists to perform as SOLOISTS within an orchestral setting before local, national, and international venues and audiences. Each year, the Ensemble holds a Solo Concerto Competition to identify a talented and deserving student to perform a concert/solo piece with the Cello Orchestra. The Ensemble is dedicated to challenging and motivating students to bring out their potential to be outstanding young musicians and help them with their artistic and professional development.

The Orange County Cello Ensemble, the director's former premier cello ensemble group, was synonymous with passion and dedication. As its artistic director, Dr. Back helped the OCCE members gain acceptance to prestigious colleges or achieve bright futures and successful careers. These members won prestigious awards and have contributed with unmatched service to their communities. We welcome you into this distinguished group and look forward to the impact you will make as a future CSUSB Cello Ensemble member for this upcoming academic year.

## **Join the CSUSB Cello Ensemble**

- Transferable University/College credits available - Please email to receive forms to complete the registration (High school students are eligible to apply for both Open University and High School University Programs)
- Auditions are required for interested high school/middle school students are acceptable - but must audition)
- Rehearses weekly every semester 6:15 - 8:05 p.m. on Tuesday (upcoming Fall Semester: August 17 – December (dates TBD, 2026)
- Offers Soloist opportunities (Annual solo concerto competition)
- Admission into a Cello Ensemble group is by audition only, and non-majors are welcome.

All inquiries, including auditions, please contact Dr. Esther Back at [Esther.Back@csusb.edu](mailto:Esther.Back@csusb.edu)

### **About the Cal State University, San Bernardino Early Music Ensemble**

The CSUSB Early Music Ensemble is a collegiate-level student ensemble that specializes in the performance of instrumental and vocal music work from the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Baroque periods; music from this period is now commonly referred to as “early.” The ensemble is consistently involved in a dynamic range of activities, including solo and ensemble performance, research, and program writing, enabling students to gain historical and practical knowledge of the music and performance practices of a particular period or style of early music that is rehearsed and performed using period instruments—a high quality French double-manual harpsichord, two Baroque violins, a Baroque viola, and a Baroque cello—and modifying/enhancing playing techniques in order to authentically interpret the music under consideration.

In order to assure the highest levels of performance and musicianship, the ensemble provides master classes and workshops that feature world-renowned professional artists and early music specialists. The group also provides opportunities to perform with professional artists and faculty-in-residence at CSUSB, which provide meaningful experiences for these students.

The ensemble is dedicated to challenging and motivating our students, helping them reach their artistic and professional potential. Students in this ensemble represent music majors or minors in various areas of study; students do not need any prior early music experience to join. Any inquiries concerning the Early Music Ensemble should be directed to its co-instructors, Dr. Esther Back ([Esther.back@csusb.edu](mailto:Esther.back@csusb.edu)) and Dr. Jessica Getman ([jessica.getman@csusb.edu](mailto:jessica.getman@csusb.edu)).