

Weston Public Library Music Committee

Leland Ko, Cello
Adria Ye, Piano

Sunday, December 3, 2023 at 3:00pm

Leland Philip Ko is the kind of person who's always had an overflow of energy. His restlessness has led him to various callings, from competitive tennis and distance running to calligraphy and origami, but so far he's found that making music with and for others – and the process that goes into that – are the things that best focus his mind, and that this restlessness is what gives him an almost stubborn desire to experience something with his audiences and colleagues every time he walks out on stage. Though he has chosen to dedicate himself to classical music, he does his best to remember and live by a former mentor's advice that music is about life, not the other way around.

A cellist of Chinese-Canadian descent, yet born and raised in the Boston area, Leland has performed as a soloist and chamber musician in venues across America's east coast, such as Merkin Concert Hall and Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall in New York, and Symphony Hall, Jordan Hall, and Sanders Theatre in Boston, as well as internationally in Belgium, Italy, Sweden, Israel, and Spain, including Auditorio Manuel de Falla in Granada. Violinist Itzhak Perlman has described Leland as someone that "plays with the beauty of sound and subtlety that we don't often encounter in a cellist of his age," someone who is "a musician who willingly considers all aspects of music." Leland was the Grand Prize winner of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra String Competition in November 2023. He was named a recipient of the Presidential Scholar Award at New England Conservatory for 2022-2024 and the Spark Fund from The Joy of Music Inc. and was a Young Artist in Residence for American Public Media's radio program Performance Today in 2023. He also holds claim to a second prize at the inaugural 2020 Bader and Overton Canadian Cello Competition, a finalist appearance in the 2020 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, first prize at the 2021 Hudson Valley Philharmonic String Competition, and most recently won first prizes at the 2023 inaugural Boston Concert Artist Society auditions and the 2023 National Federation of Music Clubs Young Artist Competition, and was named a winner of the 2023 Canada Council Musical Instrument Bank auditions.

The 2023-2024 season sees Leland making appearances with the NEC Philharmonia under Hugh Wolff, the Symphony Pro Musica under Mark Churchill, the Apollo Ensemble of Boston under Elias Miller; recitals in Jordan Hall, for the Foundation for Chinese Performing Arts, at the Chautauqua Institute, and as part of his first ever recital tour across Arkansas; and chamber music with Wellesley Chamber Players, the Clark Chamber Series with Trio Rai, and at the Goethe Institute in Boston with the Borromeo Quartet. Past engagements over the last decade have included concerto appearances with the Boston Landmarks Orchestra, the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra, the Arlington Philharmonic, the Brockton Symphony Orchestra, Symphony Pro Musica, the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Princeton University Orchestra, the Adelphi Orchestra, and multiple appearances with the Wellesley Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, and the Farmington Valley Symphony Orchestra.

Despite growing up a part of Boston's strong youth orchestra culture and occasionally appearing as a guest member with orchestras like the Boston Ballet or touring with Sejong Soloists in New York and Korea, Leland has sought out chamber music throughout his life, having attended Yellowbarn, Ravinia's Steans Music Institute, Four Seasons Chamber Music Workshop, and the Perlman Music Program's Summer Music School and its Chamber Music Workshop. Through these festivals, Leland has had the chance to study with and occasionally perform alongside artists such as Ronald Leonard, Merry Peckham, Joel Krosnick, Donald Weilerstein, Vivian Weilerstein, Roger Tapping, Miriam Fried, Paul Biss, Marcy Rosen, Ralph Kirshbaum, Frans Helmerson, Gary Hoffman, Ida Kavafian, Ara Gregorian, and Itzhak Perlman. Leland's love for chamber music has also led him

to be a former Artist in Residence of New York Piano Society (NYPS), and former Music Director of Opus 21, a student-run chamber music collective at Princeton. As of September 2023, he is the cellist of Trio Rai.

Leland was a long-time student of Ronald Lowry and Paul Katz before attending Princeton University, where he graduated with an A.B. in German Literature. He went on to complete an M.M. at The Juilliard School under the teaching of Minhye Clara Kim, Timothy Eddy, and Natasha Brofsky, and is currently an Artist Diploma candidate at the New England Conservatory under guidance of Yeesun Kim and Donald Weilerstein. He plays a Spanish cello ca. 1769 attributed to Juan Guillami and nicknamed “El Tiburón,” and a bow ca. 1830 by Jean Dominique Adam, both on generous loan from the Canada Council. He resides in Boston, with his 11-year-old cat, Ham.

Chinese-American pianist **Adria Ye** has been driven from a young age by a hopeless fascination with music, old and new. Described by David Finckel as having a “naturally beautiful sound and lyric instinct,” she has performed as soloist and chamber musician across Europe, China, and the United States. She has been featured in radio broadcasts of “Performance Today” with Fred Child, and National Public Radio’s “From the Top” with Christopher O’Riley. Most recently, she was the winner of the 2022 Music Academy of the West Solo Piano Competition.

Growing up with the sound of her brother practicing the piano, Adria began her own studies at age four and soon discovered an innate love for music and the keyboard. At age eleven, she moved across the country from her home in Portland, Oregon to study at The Juilliard School’s Pre-College Division in New York City. Outside of her solo repertoire, Adria is an avid chamber musician with a wide-ranging repertoire and spent three years in Wu Han and David Finckel’s intensive chamber music studio at the Aspen Music Festival and School.

When she was seventeen, Adria developed playing injuries in both arms that forced her away from performing and serious practice for nearly two years. Finding life away from the piano abjectly miserable, she completely relearned and rebuilt her technique to be able to return to the instrument. The absence of music in her life gave her a much greater understanding of the joy that music can bring—a lesson which has reinforced her desire to share that joy with others.

Adria has in recent years embarked on various adventurous projects with fellow pianist Huan Li, including performances of Messiaen’s Visions de l’Amen and George Crumb’s Makrokosmos III: Music for a Summer Evening with percussionists Jonathan Haas and Alana Wiesing, as well as Steve Reich’s Six Pianos, with pianists Umi Garrett, Tengku Irfan, Theo Rockas, and Derek Wang. Adria has also performed Thomas Adès’s Catch with AXIOM and Jeffrey Milarsky, and premiered Jack Frerer’s Last In, First Out with clarinetist Ning Zhang and violinist KJ McDonald.

Adria earned her Bachelor and Master of Music degrees at Juilliard with Yoheved Kaplinsky and Julian Martin, and currently studies with Wha-Kyung Byun at the New England Conservatory.

Covid precautions will be observed: audience members are encouraged to wear a mask.

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