DUO CANTABILE

In 2012, cellist Simona Barbu and pianist Nariaki Sugiura, distinguished international artists and pedagogues presently teaching at University of North Dakota, joined forces to establish the musical ensemble known as Duo Cantabile. The duo traveled extensively giving performances, clinics, lectures, and master classes at prestigious institutions around the world, including Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Mannheim (Germany), Zoltan Kodaly EZI Kecskemet (Hungary), Academy of Music Gheorghe Dima (Romania), Xinghai Conservatory of Music (China), National Taipei University of Arts (Taiwan), University of Antioquia (Colombia), University of Manitoba (Canada), and the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. The duo has also performed as part music festivals, performance series, national and international conferences including North Dakota Museum of Art Concert Series, Greencastle Summer Music Festival in Indiana, Masterworks Music Festival in Ohio, Dream Big Collaborative Piano Conference, and College Music Society National Conference. The duo's concert programs often include duo's transcriptions and newly commissioned pieces for cello and piano by contemporary American composers. In 2023, the duo founded the Medora Music Academy, assuming roles as the artistic directors, enriching the musical landscape and educational opportunities within the upper mid-west. The duo is regularly involved in community outreach activities, and they have created and engaged in inter-disciplinary events together with their students. The Duo's extensive performing, teaching and entrepreneurial activities resulted in receiving titles of 2025 Joyce and Aqueil Ahmad Endowment Scholars, honorable awards given to artists who make significant contributions to the Promotion of Peace and Nonviolence.

Be part of the UND Music legacy! We are committed to growing student scholarship opportunities, and a gift of any size can make a significant impact. Give today to support UND Music students of the present and future.
undfoundation.org/music-scholarships

UND UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

UND MUSIC



DUO CANTABILE LECTURE RECITAL

"Bridging Traditions: Japanese Musical Synthesis"

Dr. Simona Barbu, cello
Dr. Nariaki Sugiura, piano

7:30pm, Thursday, November 19, 2026
Josephine Campbell Recital Hall
Hughes Fine Arts Center

PROGRAM

Piano Suite (1933) — Akira Ifukube (1914-2006)

1. Bon-Odori: Nocturnal dance of the Bon-Festiva
2. Tana-Bata: Fête of Vega
3. Nagashi: Profane Minstrel
4. Nebuta: Festal Ballad

Nariaki Sugiura, piano

The Sea in Spring (1929) (arr. Sugiura) — Michio Miyagi (1894-1956)

Nocturne for Cello and Piano (1942) — Hisatada Odaka (1911-1951)

Danse d'une poupee japonaise (1937) — Takashi Kurata (1913-1945)

Simona Barbu, cello / Nariaki Sugiura, piano

PROGRAM NOTE

The integration of Western classical music into Japanese traditional music began during the Meiji Restoration (1868), a transformative period that ended over two centuries of isolationist policies under the Tokugawa shogunate. This cultural exchange introduced Western music education to Japan while fostering the creation of a unique national music that blended traditional Japanese aesthetics with Western styles. Traditional Japanese music, characterized by pentatonic and heptatonic scales, the concept of ma (silence and timing), and a distinctive rhythmic framework, significantly influenced these hybrid compositions.

Akira Ifukube's Piano Suite (1933) is a particularly vivid example of this synthesis. His only original composition for solo piano, the four-movement suite draws inspiration from Japanese festivals and seasonal celebrations. Each movement evokes a distinct atmosphere, incorporating energetic rhythmic patterns, folk-inspired melodies, and colorful piano sonorities. The work reflects Ifukube's interest in the vitality of Japanese cultural traditions while exploring the expressive possibilities of the modern piano.

The cello and piano selections offer contrasting yet complementary perspectives. Michio Miyagi's Haru no Umi (The Spring Ocean), originally written for koto and shakuhachi, paints an evocative musical picture of the sea in spring. Its flowing melodic lines and delicate gestures capture the movement of the waves and the serenity of the natural landscape. Hisatada Odaka's Nocturne for Cello and Piano explores a more intimate and contemplative musical atmosphere, highlighting the expressive and lyrical qualities of the cello. In contrast, Takashi Kurata's Danse d'une poupée japonaise (Dance of a Japanese Doll) brings a playful and imaginative character to the program, suggesting a meeting of Japanese imagery and dance traditions.