

TOMMY MESA

CELLIST

Recipient of the 2025 Avery Fisher Career Grant & Sphinx Organization's 2023 Medal of Excellence

Dr. Tommy Mesa has established himself as one of the most charismatic, innovative, and engaging performers of his generation. The recipient of Avery Fisher Artist Program's 2025 Avery Fisher Career Grant and the Sphinx Organization's 2023 Medal of Excellence, its highest honor, Mesa has appeared as soloist at the Supreme Court of the United States on multiple occasions and with major orchestras including the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, The Cleveland Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, and the symphony orchestras of Ann Arbor, Elgin, Indianapolis, Madison, New Jersey, and Santa Barbara, among others. Mesa gave the world premiere of Jessie Montgomery's cello concerto *Divided* in 2022 and exclusively performed the work for three seasons at major halls across the United States and Brazil including Miami's New World Center, Nashville's Schermerhorn Center, and Carnegie Hall. His orchestral recording debut of the work was released in 2023 on Deutsche Grammophon. Mesa is also a recent addition to the cello faculty at the Manhattan School of Music.

The 2026-27 season is a major one for Mesa, including the world premiere of Michael Abels' new cello concerto with the Dallas Symphony, followed by a return to the Quad City Symphony to perform and record the work. Mesa also gives the New York premiere of *Da Pacem* by Stephen Hartke with the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall and launches a new collaboration and tour with the sensational pianist Olga Kern, leading to a recording together. Recital debuts this season include Birmingham Chamber Music Society, Dumbarton Concerts, Howland Chamber Music Circle, and Parlance Chamber Concerts, among others, and return performances with Impromptu Chamber Concerts and Longwood Gardens. Highlights of the previous season included performances with the Greenville Symphony, Hartford Symphony, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the Cleveland Institute of Music, New Orleans Friends of Music, Virginia Arts Festival, and a special performance at Detroit's Orchestra Hall with the Interlochen Orchestra and members of the Detroit Symphony, where he gave the Midwest premiere of Wynton Marsalis' new cello concerto in collaboration with conductor Cristian Măcelaru, Yo-Yo Ma, and the composer himself.

In recent seasons, Mesa served as Artist-in-Residence with the Tucson Symphony and performed with orchestras including the Calgary Philharmonic, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, and the Ann Arbor, Columbus, Delaware, Elgin, Fort Wayne, Greenwich, and Rogue Valley Symphony Orchestras, among others. His recent recital debuts include leading series such as University of Vermont's Lane Series, the Phillips Collection, Chamber Music Pittsburgh, Linton Chamber Music in Cincinnati, and The Schubert Club in St. Paul. Other past performance features include recitals at The Academy of Arts and Letters, Bay Chamber Concerts, California Center for the Arts, Columbia University, Flagler Museum, The Heifetz Institute, International Beethoven Project, Kaufman Music Center, Meadowmount School of Music, University of Miami's Signature Series, Newport Classical, Perlman Music Program Alumni Recital Series, Strad for Lunch Series, Virginia Arts Festival, and major universities across the United States.

Mesa recently celebrated several releases, including a recording of tango works for cello and bandoneon with performer-composer JP Jofre and an album of world-premiere recordings by Black and Latinx composers with pianist Michelle Cann which was featured in an exclusive showcase on NYC's classical station WQXR. Mesa and Cann will record a new album together reflecting their new "American Immigrant" program, which includes new works—funded by Mesa's Avery Fisher Career Grant—that were inspired by composers' families' immigration stories. Upcoming albums include an American

recording with the iconic pianist Olga Kern and another release with the multiple GRAMMY-award winning vocal ensemble, The Crossing Choir.

Mesa's first solo album, *Division of Memory* on the PARMA Recordings label, received rave reviews such as in PianoMania: "Do not hold your breath for Yo-Yo Ma to record this repertoire, for the just-as-excellent Mesa has the field entirely to himself." Mesa was featured on the GRAMMY-nominated album, *Bonhoeffer*, with the multiple GRAMMY winning group, The Crossing Choir. He has appeared with them as soloist at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC, Longwood Gardens, The Winter Garden, and the Theological Seminary in NYC. Mesa and The Crossing Choir also collaborated on the U.S. premiere of *Astralis* for choir and solo cello by renowned composer Wolfgang Rihm and have more collaborations and premieres scheduled for future seasons.

As an ensemble musician, Mesa has been on tours with Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and is the principal cellist of Sphinx Virtuosi who play every year on tour at almost every major venue across the United States. He also collaborates with Jupiter Chamber Players and has toured with Itzhak Perlman both nationally and internationally.

In September 2025, Mesa joined the performance faculty of The Manhattan School of Music. He has given masterclasses at institutions such as U.C. Berkeley, Boston Conservatory, the Colburn School, DePaul University, Meadowmount School of Music, University of Miami, University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Northwestern University, and Walnut Hill School. Previously, he held faculty positions at SUNY Purchase, Sphinx Performance Academy, The Heifetz Institute's PEG Program, Music Mountain Festival and School, Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, Montecito International Music Festival, St. Petersburg International Music Academy, and The Mozart Academy at John Jay College in New York City.

Mesa's career launched following after becoming the First Prize winner in the 2016 Sphinx Competition and a winner of the 2017 Astral Artists National Auditions. He received his BM from The Juilliard School, MM from Northwestern University, and his DMA from the Manhattan School of Music. His principal teachers were Timothy Eddy, Julia Lichten, Hans Jørgen Jensen, Mark Churchill, Ross Harbaugh, and Wells Cunningham.

INSTRUMENT: Tommy Mesa performs on a Nicolò Gagliano cello made in 1767 and a bow by André Richaume, both generously loaned to him by CANIMEX INC in Drummondville, Canada.