

# RICCARDO PES

*Cellist · Composer · Artistic Director*

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Riccardo Pes is an Italian cellist, composer and artistic director whose work moves between the classical tradition, contemporary creation and an exploration of the relationship between music, nature and place.

Born into a family in which music has always played a central role — his mother is a pianist and his father was a lawyer and amateur cellist — he began studying the cello at an early age. A decisive influence came through his encounter with Teodora Campagnaro, soloist and member of the renowned Trio Italiano, who inspired his growing fascination with the expressive and communicative possibilities of the instrument.

Pes completed his studies at the Conservatorio di Venezia under Angelo Zanin, cellist of the Quartetto di Venezia. He subsequently continued his advanced training with Giovanni Sollima at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, before moving to the United Kingdom to study with Melissa Phelps at the Royal College of Music in London, where he completed an Artist Diploma.

Alongside the classical repertoire, composition gradually became an increasingly important part of his artistic identity. His work is centred on the cello as a narrative voice: an instrument capable not only of interpreting a score, but of evoking landscapes, memories, physical phenomena and the relationship between human beings and the natural world. His programmes often bring existing repertoire into dialogue with his own compositions, creating concert experiences in which music unfolds as part of a wider narrative.

He has performed internationally in concert halls, festivals and cultural institutions, including the Sala Sinopoli at the Auditorium Parco della Musica Ennio Morricone in Rome, the Fondazione Pergolesi Spontini in Jesi, the Elgar Room at the Royal Albert Hall in London, and Schloss Laudon in Vienna. His work has increasingly developed beyond the conventional concert setting, leading him to perform and create music in direct relationship with the environments and communities that inspire it.

A defining moment in this artistic journey came in 2023 following the deliberate felling of the Sycamore Gap Tree, the celebrated tree beside Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland which had become one of Britain's most recognisable natural landmarks. Deeply affected by its destruction, Pes composed *Lament for the Tree* and travelled to Sycamore Gap to perform the work at the site itself, playing in the rain as a musical response to the loss.

What began as a personal artistic gesture subsequently reached an international audience. His music was used by the BBC in productions connected with the Sycamore Gap Tree and environmental themes, reinforcing a strand of his work in which composition becomes a way of responding directly to events affecting the natural world.

With the support of Arts Council England, Pes later undertook a month-long artistic residency in Scotland devoted to exploring the relationship between sound and landscape. Travelling through remote areas and allowing the character of individual places to shape the compositional process, he developed music inspired by the atmosphere, colours, movement and acoustic identity of the Scottish landscape.

The residency resulted in *Sgrioban Diomhair – Mystic Trails*, an EP of original works in which the cello becomes a means of translating the experience of landscape into sound. This research has continued through compositions and projects including *Green Echoes*, *Indian Songbook*, *Lament for the Tree* and *Green Symphony*, as well as works inspired by mountains, water, forests and different cultural landscapes.

His interest in nature is accompanied by an equally strong fascination with science. In a number of recent projects, Pes has explored the encounter between music and physics, using concepts such as the Big Bang, dark matter and the structure of the universe as starting points for musical creation and live performance. These interdisciplinary projects reflect a broader approach in which the concert becomes a space for connections between apparently distant languages — music and science, landscape and memory, spirituality and contemporary experience.

Since 2024, Pes has lived in Gualdo Tadino, Umbria, where a new chapter of this research has developed through his encounter with the Umbrian landscape and the Franciscan tradition. The mountains, woods and hills surrounding Gualdo Tadino, together with the poetic legacy of the *Canticle of the Creatures*, provided the inspiration for his *Green Symphony*, a project in which the relationship between humanity and the natural world is explored through contemporary musical language.

Pes is the founder and Artistic Director of the Orchestra d'Archi Blanc, an Italian string orchestra with which he develops concert programmes and interdisciplinary projects combining classical repertoire, new compositions and site-specific work. As both composer and artistic director, he has created projects in which the orchestra interacts with landscapes, architecture, literature, scientific thought and environmental themes, often bringing performances outside the traditional concert hall.

His work with the ensemble has also led him to develop festivals and cultural projects between northern and central Italy, with a particular interest in bringing high-level musical performance into areas away from the major metropolitan centres and creating a closer relationship between artists, audiences and territory.

Education and the transmission of musical experience form another important part of his activity. In the United Kingdom he is a Visiting Professor at Langley Hall Arts Academy, where his work has included cello masterclasses and orchestral projects with young musicians. His approach to teaching reflects the same principles that shape his performing career: technical development is combined with curiosity, listening, ensemble awareness and the search for an individual artistic voice.

Whether performing the established cello repertoire, composing music in response to a landscape, working with an orchestra or creating interdisciplinary projects, Riccardo Pes approaches music fundamentally as a form of communication. At the centre of his work is the belief that sound can create connections — between people and places, tradition and the present, the visible world and what lies beyond it.