

Cello Online

Welcome to the Nexus of the Next Step in Cello!

In this issue:

- [Message from the Director](#)
- [New Directions Cello Festival June 12-14, 2015](#)
- [New Directions 2015 Workshops](#)
- [Interview with Max Lilja](#)
- [CD Review: Kevin Olusola – *The Renegade* \(2015\)](#)
- [InCelligence Briefings](#)
- [Music in the Mail](#)
- [The Cellowdown: Final Words](#)

Don't forget to visit:

- [Cello City Store – CDs, sheet music and more](#)
- [The New Directions Cello Facebook page](#)



Message from the Director

By Chris White

Dear New Directions Cellists & Friends,

As we move into our third decade of the NDCF, new directions for cello continue to explode worldwide. Attending New Directions is a journey to the epicenter of this exciting movement!

We hope you can join us this year for our 21st annual festival, featuring **Apocalyptica** founding member **Max Lilja** from Finland, champion of Scottish Cello **Natalie Haas** with **Alasdair Fraser**, the amazing LA jazz cellist **Jacob Szekey** with his trio, NYC cellist/singer-songwriter extraordinaire **Trevor Exter**, Ithaca College wunderkind **Lizzie Simkin** with **Nicholas Walker** and **Stephen 'Flying Pizzicato' Katz**.

This year there will be some changes in our organization. I will be stepping back a little as director and moving toward a role as more of an artistic director. Long time NDCFer, board member and newsletter editor **Corbin Keep** will be stepping forward to help in some of the directorial roles with help from **Leah Kaller** and others. Assistant director and education coordinator **Sera Smolen** will be taking a hiatus this year due to some exciting performance and teaching opportunities she has on the west coast. Filling her shoes in workshop coordination will be **Sara Haefeli** and **Lizzy Simkin**, both on the music faculty at Ithaca College.

If the support, pure cello love and sheer excitement of NDCF 2015 is calling to you, don't hesitate! Visit <https://newdirectionscello.org/registration> where you can register for this year's festival right now!

Cellistically Yours,

– Chris



Chris White, Founder & Director
New Directions Cello Association and Festival
123 Rachel Carson Way
Ithaca NY 14850
(607) 277 1686 (phone & fax)

<http://www.newdirectionscello.org>
chris@newdirectionscello.org

New Directions Cello Festival 2015

Ithaca College, Ithaca NY, June 12 - 14, 2015

Join us for the 21st annual
New Directions Cello Festival

Guest artists for 2015:



Max Lilja

Founding member of Apocalyptica. Solo cello. Electronics. Music of a Different Order.



Natalie Haas and Alasdair Fraser

Scottish cello. Really, really good Scottish cello. World class fiddling. The combination is at once ancient, modern and timeless.



Jacob Szekely Trio

"The first time I have heard someone make the case for the cello as a leader in modern jazz." – *Eugene Friesen*



Lizzy Simkin with Nicholas Walker

Cello and double bass. Wonderfully eclectic, pristinely performed; truly unique in the best sense of the word.



Trevor Exter

Amongst the current crop of today's singing cellists, Trevor is one of the very best; his innovations define what is possible to do with the combination of cello and voice.



Stephen Katz

Angels in Engine Room is the culmination of many decades of exploratory cello. Prepare to be stunned by Katz' tour de force, in which the Bach Cello Suites, juggling and original cello techniques coalesce, transporting us to a place where Art and the Meaning of Life gloriously collide.

NDCA 2015 Workshops

Ithaca College, Ithaca NY, June 12 - 14, 2015

Each year, a plethora of instructional cello workshops delve into many aspects of new directions cello playing, including improvisation, fresh techniques, singing and playing, amongst many others. Nearly thirty(!) instructional workshops will be on offer from this year's awesome guest artists, as well as a few other intrepid, accomplished, passionate NDCers! The selections below are but a taste! Here is a preview of a few of the workshops that will be on offer this June:

Trevor Exter

The Discovery Loop

"We want to be creative and free, but also well-rounded and deep. Oftentimes our lofty goals can distract us from the necessarily dry and sometimes-monotonous routines we use to grow as a musician. While we've heard so much on the subject of "technique vs musicality," the reality is that you can't just choose a side. But here's a solution: structure a set of routines for yourself that lead to musical and personal epiphanies and enjoy the creative breakthroughs that result. Trevor observed a pattern in his own work habits which seemed toxic and counter-productive at first, but with further experience revealed some essential insights about musicmaking. This workshop will dig into these concepts and help you forge your own path."

Natalie Haas

The Cello in Celtic Music

We will explore how to play Celtic melodies on the cello in an idiomatic way, using interesting bowing ideas, ornamentation, and variation. Also how to create accompaniment, which will provide rhythmic and harmonic interest, using chopping, shuffle bowing, bass lines, double stops, muting, pizzicato, different chord inversions and substitutions, horn parts and more. Taught entirely by ear.

Jacob Szekely

Arranging/singer-songwriter Skills

Based on String Project Los Angeles' award winning curriculum, this class will teach participants how to interpret chord charts and arrange their own music in an hour (no, really!!!).

Jacob Szekely

Advanced Applications in Amplified Cello Playing

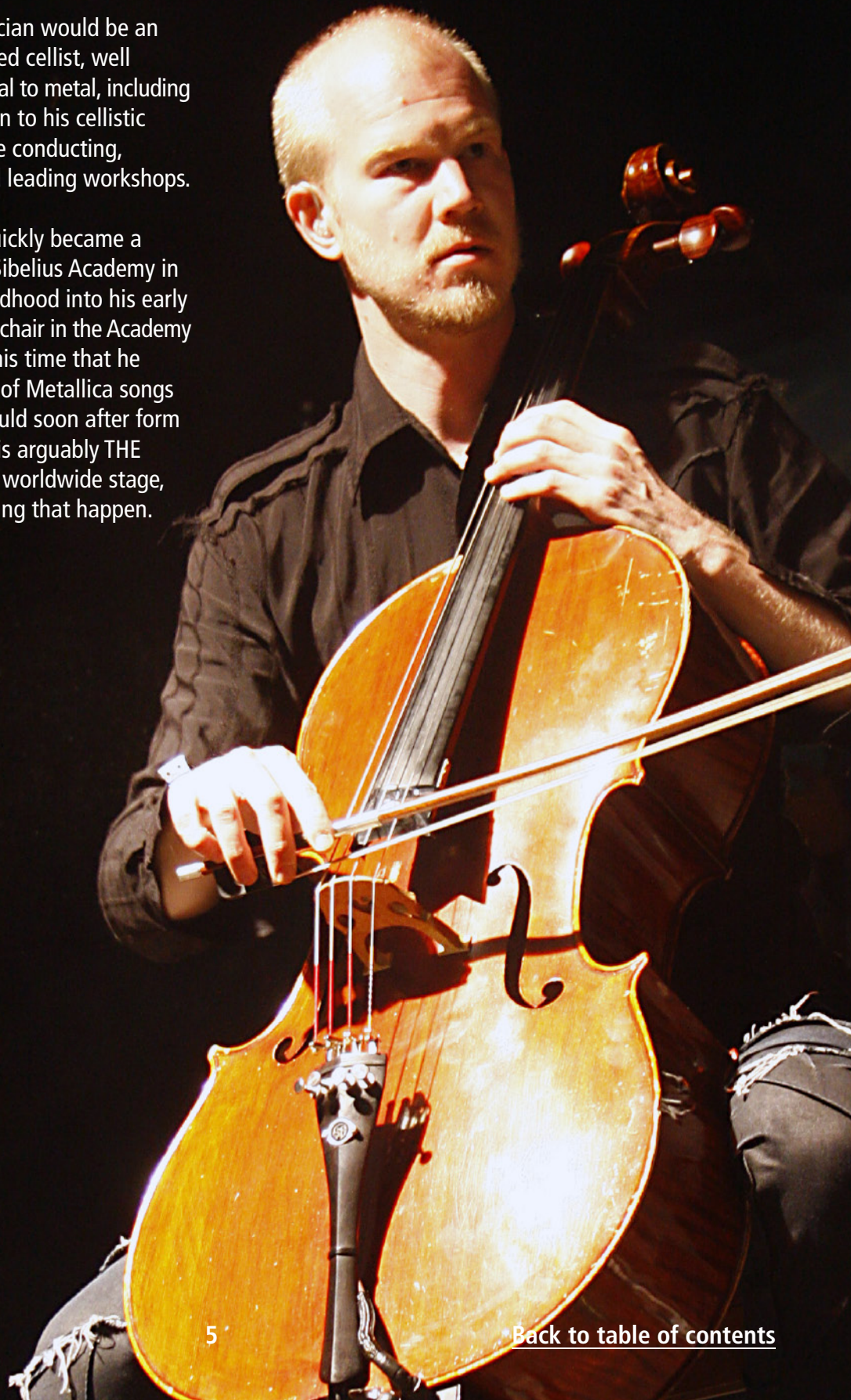
This class will explore how to choose the right pickups, preamps, monitoring options and also cover matters such as impedance and how best to eq your cello in different situations. In 2012, Jacob oversaw the first ever comprehensive pickup test, wherein every cello pickup on the market was put through its paces in a completely controlled environment.

Interview with Max Lilja

By Corbin Keep

To call Max Lilja a consummate musician would be an understatement. He is an accomplished cellist, well versed in a range of styles from classical to metal, including some of his own invention. In addition to his cellistic endeavours, he keeps a busy schedule conducting, arranging, composing, producing and leading workshops.

Max began cello at age seven and quickly became a highly skilled classical player. At the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, which he attended from childhood into his early twenties, he earned the principal cello chair in the Academy Symphony Orchestra. It was during this time that he started arranging and playing covers of Metallica songs with fellow Academy cellists who would soon after form the band Apocalyptica. Apocalyptica is arguably THE band that first put metal cello on the worldwide stage, and Lilja was an integral part of making that happen.



Max: "In Apocalyptica, we were lucky, because there was a period during the 1990's in the industry when there was investment in young bands. We were able to ride that wave.

For us, it was never some sort of focus, like, 'now we're going to play metal.' It was very natural and organic. In the beginning, no one composed, so interpreting songs by Metallica or Sepultura was not fundamentally different than interpreting classical works. This is what we knew and how we operated in the beginning. There was never a plan to 'abandon classical;' for me there was really not a big difference. It was – and is – just music. It's about the emotion and the intention of that music, regardless of what label we may put on it. The metal just naturally came out of the classical; at their core they're the same, one's just a bit... heavier."

Corbin: "How did you come to be a composer?"

Max: "After I left Apocalyptica, I began to have a vision of the music I wished to create. Over time, I began to discover the artist inside and at the same time the composer. For many years, before, during and after Apocalyptica, I was experimenting with the cello. And with effects boxes. I realized that my musical vision would manifest perfectly, as long as I put the effects boxes at 11 or 12. This was the beginning of the evolution of my solo career. For several years, I only worked and created with no thought in mind of performing what I was creating. This was because I did not want to limit the music in any way. I have always been very drawn to electronic music like trip hop and I could hear electronic cello soundscapes in my mind, but it was a long process until they became reality."

Corbin: "When did things start to crystallize for you?"

Max: "About 2010 is when I started to seriously write. My first solo album was released in 2013. It took many years of gestation to get to that point. It was only after I was asked to perform that I began to think of how I might pull off this music live. You see, if I were to start thinking about how to do the material live from the start,

then it would limit things. After I have composed a piece, I then make a map of the parts which can be executed live and create the performance arrangement from there."

Corbin: "Can you give us a preview of what you might be sharing with New Directions participants in your workshops at the festival this summer?"

Max: "Different playing techniques. If they want to learn rock tricks I can show that, but getting down to the essence of what technique fundamentally is, is what interests me much more. If we learn to constantly question the traditional techniques that we are doing and always continue to refine them and tailor them to fit the music at hand – this is what is important to me and what I would like to teach. You need to play differently in each situation to truly serve the music. These are things which are not taught – at least they weren't in the school that I went to!"

Corbin: "I'd imagine that doing a workshop about effects would also be really valuable."

Max: "Yes. Anyone can go to the store and buy a box – but you need to have vision of your own sound – a vision of what you want to create. How can this machine get to what I'm hearing? It's fine to just plug it in and see where it takes you, but the true art – and artistic challenge – is to have your inner ideas lead the way; where the effects serve those ideas and not so much the other way around."

Corbin: "Where do you turn to for inspiration?"

Max: "One place I always come home to is classical cello. I play most every day on my Number One. I love it, the feeling deep inside is so rich. That daily experience helps to inform my own musical creations. It's an essential piece – both of myself and the music."

CD Review

Kevin Olusola: *The Renegade* (2015) by Corbin Keep

Kevin Olusola has created a great niche for himself, which is to take recent pop songs and record killer cello arrangements of them. On his first solo ep, *The Renegade* (2015) he's created cello versions of *All of Me* (the 2013 John Legend song, not to be confused with the jazz standard), *Heart Attack* by Demi Lovato and *Stay With Me* by Sam Smith (which at Olusola's tempo, sounds more like Tom Petty's *Won't Back Down* than ever – no wonder Tom's collecting royalties on this one!).

Particularly if these are songs that you've grown up with, I suspect that the emotional charge upon hearing them would be quite strong. Not that such is lacking for those who don't have a close bond to the originals, but I think that the distinction is worth making. If an intense part of your teen/ya years happened to have had these songs playing as a soundtrack, Olusola's renditions would be tears/joy inducing must-haves. For the rest of us, the strident, wonderfully honest, keenly felt playing is a treat, even if we don't know the words. You can feel the man's authenticity and exuberance in every note.

Filling out the rest of the five song ep is an original tune, also titled *Renegade*, which features Kevin's famous beatboxing-cello combination; the other track is a fresh take on Mark Summer's iconic solo cello opus, *Julie-O*. Though *Julie-O* was penned back in 1988 (the year Olusola was born) over the past 10-15 years, it has come into its own as a staple of non-classical cellists' repertoire. Its first five notes are an ascending major scale – but as is often the case with exceptional tunes, you don't notice that – or at least I didn't until five minutes ago. But now that I have, small wonder it makes me happy every time I hear it! And Kevin's beatbox infused version is 'happy' bursting at its joyous seams.

Kevin Olusola is very much in his early stages as an artist, but clearly has an already well developed sense of that "musical something" which can easily be recognized, but not so easily pinned down. When he plays, his inner musical smile becomes ours. Who could ask for anything more?



Epilogue: how many times have we said, "the album's great, but they were even better live!" In today's world, we can drive around listening to records like Kevin's, but we can also journey right to a stage that an artist was just on (via youtube) or is on right now (via Concert Window) or into their living room... Here's a [recent video](#) uploaded to youtube by Kevin, recorded in his bedroom.

The top comment at the time of this writing says, "I LOVE U KEVIN."

Hear, hear!

InCelligence Briefings

A WWI 'trench cello,' fashioned from an oil can(!) was recently played for what may be the first time since 1917. Yet another 'trench cello,' this one made of wood, can be heard here.



On November 24, 2014, NASA emailed instructions to a 3D printer installed on the International Space Station to print a wrench. The implications of this event are quite profound and are set to impact the future of space exploration in ways yet to be fully imagined. If you have your own 3D printer, you can download the exact same instructions that NASA sent and print your very own wrench!

How does this relate to the cello?

The first ever 3D printed cello debuted at 3D Print Week NY (April 13-17, 2015) and while it is no Strad, its portability is of a different order. Are you having an issue with an airline over buying a seat for your baby? Just email the specs for your cello to the venue where your next gig is and they'll print your cello out for you!



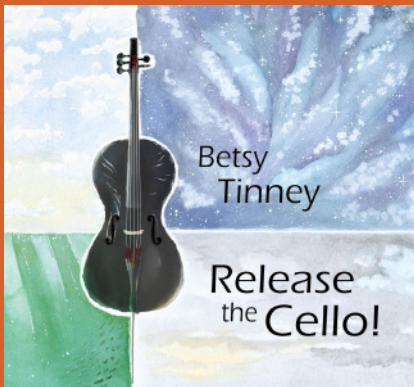
For several decades, it has been a conundrum, studied to death by scientists from NASA, Space X and many other space focused agencies and think tanks: how will astronauts play cello in space, given the comparatively large size of the instrument, in the face of the extreme cost of launching things into orbit?

At last, 3D cello printing offers a solution. Cellos in space. Once a dream, it will soon be reality.

Music in the Mail

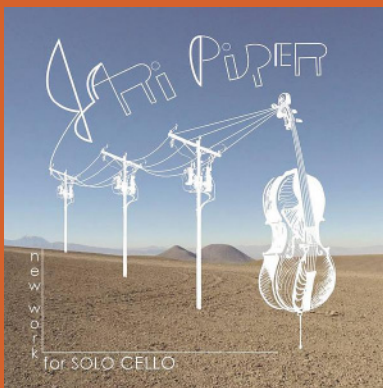
Betsy Tinney – *Release the Cello!* (2014)

Tinney does indeed release her cello, and not only into the wild, but also a plethora of different environments, cultures and realities. If you were previously unsure about the existence of Faerie Folk and their ilk before, by the end of track two of this cd, you will be forever convinced. This is magical music that not only gets in between the cracks, it hangs out there.



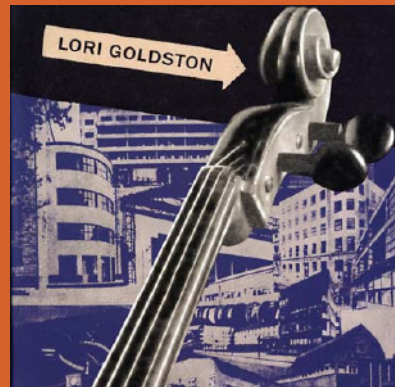
Jari Piper – *New Works for Solo Cello* (2015)

This album consists of 20th & 21st century classical works. Not only is the music great, the album cover is fabulous! Like Matt Hamovitz, Jari has taken it upon himself to deliver modern classical cello to those places where you would not expect to hear such music - coffeeshops, pizza joints and the like. Go Jari!



Lori Goldston – *Creekside: Solo Cello* (2015)

If you ever saw that old **Nirvana Unplugged** video from the 90's and wondered who the cello player was, wonder no longer. From Lori's website: "Classically trained and rigorously de-trained, possessor of a restless, semi-feral spirit... Her experiments are guided by how nature produces multidimensional sounds from simple measures and life in a still wild place; water, weather, echoes, field recordings, insects, plants, folk songs, and myths."



Jeffrey Zeigler – *Something of Life* (2015)

The Kronos quartet cellist has released a stunning album, rife with fresh cello techniques, found sounds and tasteful electronics.



The CelLowdown

Final Words

Cello City Online has an important mission, which is to inform people about what is new exciting and different in the world of cello, especially cello which spans genres, techniques and technologies that expand beyond the classical tradition. What would make this mission even more successful? You! Ideas, pitches for articles, how-to-columns, cds to review... You name it.

[Chris White](#), director
[Corbin Keep](#), editor
[Stephen Katz](#), membership

To keep abreast and abow of all things New Directions Cello, visit the [official New Directions site](#), as well as the [New Directions Cello Facebook Page](#).

For New Directions Cello style recordings, sheet music and method books, visit the [Cello City Store](#).

New Directions is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Photography credits

"Space Cello," by [Yann-nguema](#) (cover page)
"Dusty Cello Strings," by [TM Photography](#) (page 4)
"Scroll," by [Kapyrna](#) (page 9)