

Newsletter of the New Directions Cello Association & Festival Inc.  
Vol 23, No. 2, Winter, 2017

# Cello **Online** city

Welcome to the Nexus of the Next Step in Cello!

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# Message from the Director

## By Chris White

Greetings! We have an incredibly exciting festival planned for this summer at Ithaca College, June 16-18. The guest artists for this, our 23rd annual festival, will be **Yaniel Matos** (São Paulo, Brazil), **Tomeka Reid** with Artifacts Trio (Chicago), **Malcolm Parson** (New Orleans), **Gunther Tiedemann** (Cologne, Germany), **Zach Brown & Friends** (NYC) and **Jake Charkey** (Mumbai, India). Please check out our new website at <http://newdirectionscello.org/> to read about these amazing players from around the country and the world. We hope that you can join us for this special long weekend in beautiful Ithaca, New York, in the heart of the Finger Lakes region of Central New York state.

As is no doubt obvious by now, we will not be holding our 2017 New Directions Cello Festival in Germany as we'd originally hoped. However, we are currently working on New Directions in Germany for 2018 – possibly in July.

In addition to Cello City Online, you can keep up on the latest New Directions Cello news and videos on our **Facebook page**. Remember: we're a 501c3 organization, the only one in the world dedicated exclusively to promoting non-classical uses of the cello. Send us your tax-deductible donation today! Or support us by joining the NDCA & F at any level on our **website**, **Click on membership**.

The reach of New Directions keeps growing, along with the cellos' coming of age in the 21st century, in its rightful place as a unique and beautiful voice in contemporary music of all types. Please spread the word amongst your cellist friends about our **website**, **Facebook page** and especially about the festival! If you've been to the festival, we hope you'll want to come back. We expect this will be the last in the US/east coast for a couple of years; if you've never been, this is one not to miss!

Hope to see you in Ithaca this summer!  
Chris

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The NDCA & F is a 501c3 non-profit corporation

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<http://newdirectionscello.org/about/chris-white-2/>

[www.cdbaby.com/cd/cayugajazz](http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/cayugajazz)

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# Interview:

## The Amazing Tomeka Reid

Tomeka Reid is a highly accomplished, deep feeling/thinking cellist and an incredibly inspiring musician overall. We spoke via skype early in the new year.



**Tomeka:** "I'm originally from the Washington, DC area and was first introduced to the cello via the public school system there. I went on to earn a degree in classical cello and during that time, also had a mentor who encouraged me to explore other music outside of the classical canon. We started getting together in a practice room on campus to work on playing jazz tunes and he would give me transcribed bass lines from bassists like Rufus Reid to play. I spent the summer of 1998 in Chicago and joined a local amateur symphony orchestra. There I met Nicole Mitchell, who would also mentor me. She encouraged me to explore various sounds and textures on my instrument, often resulting in me making what I felt were "weird" sounds, many of which were the very sounds that I had been actively trying to avoid in my cello practice!! It ended up being a revelation, to say the least. I carried on with school in Chicago, earning a master's in classical

cello. During that time, I spent a lot of time at the Velvet Lounge and performed often with the AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians), a group which emphasized finding ones' own musical voice. I also played in numerous other groups there, such as the Black Earth Ensemble and the Evolution Ensemble. My love of the classical string sound was still alive, but I found that I was very attracted to strings in other settings. I always loved the string arrangements in Curtis Mayfield's music and some of the pop artists I listened to growing up. That appreciation has stuck with me and continues to influence my work.

I attended the New Directions Cello Festival in Appleton in 2003, which was a good experience for me. As I got more into improvising, I started checking out other improvising cellists and began stretching further away from the classical tradition. I found myself on the fence: I was worried about being pigeonholed as "only" a non-classical player. But as I got more and more opportunities to perform in jazz and improvised music contexts, I decided to go back to school again for a DMA in jazz studies in 2009.

Abdul Wadud is one of my biggest inspirations. I also studied the works of jazz bassists who also played cello, such as Sam Jones, Oscar Pettiford, Ron Carter and Doug Watkins. I enjoyed the challenge of transcribing and learning to play their solos, which I soon discovered were generally played in bass tuning - but I stayed with standard cello tuning. Violinists Billy Bang and especially, Stuff Smith were also very important influences early on.

# Interview Continued: The Amazing Tomeka Reid

Over the years, I've become more and more involved in the improvising musical community of my adopted hometown of Chicago. Some highlights have included numerous opportunities to perform around the city as well as the opportunity to work with great composers, such as Roscoe Mitchell (co-founder of The Art Ensemble of Chicago), Anthony Braxton, Dee Alexander and Myra Melford, to name a few.

In 2015, I released my first album as a leader (**Tomeka Reid Quartet**) which was well received and am currently in the process of writing my second. I enjoy combining melody and groove with more outside playing - the juxtaposition of those different elements.



I feel very fortunate to have many outlets for my work these days. I'm passionate about paying tribute to those who've gone before me and artists who people may not be as familiar with. There are many musicians, from collectives like the AACM, who've literally had influence worldwide, and deserve continued recognition. The project that will be performing at this year's NDCF does just that."

***Tomeka will be performing with the Artifacts Trio, featuring Nicole Mitchell on flute and Mike Reed on drums.***

- Corbin Keep

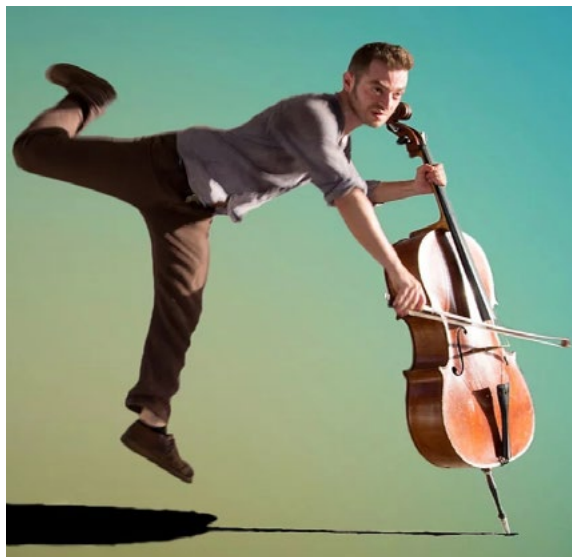
# New Directions Cello Festival 2017

## Ithaca College, Ithaca NY

### Guest Artists:



Gunther Tiedemann



Jake Charkey



Malcolm Parson



Tomeka Reid with Artifacts Trio



Zach Brown & Friends



Yaniel Matos

# New Directions Cello Festival 2016

## A Look Back

Arcata, California. The mighty Pacific. Redwoods. A cool university town with one of the most picturesque campuses anywhere. Cheap burritos. Summer, 2016. Bernie still had a chance.



We gathered, cellos in hand, with a lineup of, once again, stunningly great guest artists. It's one thing to read about and listen to recordings of the great Jaques Morelenbaum, who is one of the progenitors, if not the progenitor of Brazilian jazz cello. It quite another to be in the man's presence. He is one of those artists whose humanity and huge heart make just being around him a wonderful experience. It's often been said by New Directions participants over the years that they feel a sense of family when cellists gather for the festival. People may have never met before, but they share a devotion and love for exploration and expression via the cello.

Having

Jaques with us was like a father, or grandfather, come to visit; he was family.

Artyom Manukyan. His original piece for the All Cello Big Band was positively transcendent. Imagine something with the emotional clout of Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, but even more alive, because the man behind the music is right there. When Artyom first arrived at the festival, there was a jam happening in the lobby of the dormitory. In the blink of an eye, his was cello out and he was in. As with

so many of us, he'd found a home and knew it instantly. No thought; no need for it. A knowing. And music to be made! The jams in this iteration of New Directions were some of the best ever. The feeling of togetherness was strong; there was no sense of separation

between guest artists and participants. And from literally the moment he arrived, Artyom exemplified that.

The other artists were Mark Summer, CelloJoe, The Bee Eaters and Greg Byers, each of whom brought something fresh and awesome to the festival. Mark: sheer mastery. The Bee Eaters: a window into traditional music that few have peered through - or more accurately, heard into. CelloJoe: inclusivity and *fun*. Greg Byers: participants in his workshops felt empowered and inspired.

That was then. Now, perhaps more than ever, High Cello Art is necessary and important. This June 16-18, we shall gather once again for New Directions Cello Festival 2017, in Ithaca, NY. (important note: impromptu, late night cello jams will commence on the evening of the 15th and will also happen again on Sunday night, after the official festival ends at 3:00 PM that day)



- Corbin Keep



# CD Review

## Oso Perezoso - Bryan Wilson

**Oso Perezoso's** first track, *Beater*, begins with a synth line reminiscent of a Casio keyboard one would have been thrilled to put batteries into back in 80s - that is, pure, unadulterated cheese. Kitschy and charming, it could possibly catch a first time listener unawares - they might've been expecting to hear something more "typical" of a solo cello album. Ah, but it is in that moment of unpreparedness wherein lies the magic! Ten seconds of "Casio cheese," and then the CELLO enters! We are treated to a simple, but super catchy legato line that clutches plaintive emotion. The resultant contrast is a bit of musical brilliance. It is perhaps no accident that cellist Wilson, who also sports a considerable gift as a comedian, would be fluent in the art of musical surprise.



Continuing in the vein of contrast, the cd artfully ricochets between solo cello, more tracks done to electronic beats and some heretofore untrod (at least to my ears) territory of effected cello.

There are a number of addictive tracks: the aforementioned *Beater*, *Oceans* (!) and *Swins*, to name but three. The record ends off with a wonderfully wrought rap by Wilson, whose broad New Jersey accent lends itself to an authentic "rapper guy" sound, but with a crucial difference from what one usually hears in such music: unabashed love. In a heartfelt, no holds barred shoutout to his wife, Wilson is equal parts raw, real, passionate and funny as hell. It's pretty much the antithesis of self aggrandizement - it's inclusive. In my book, inclusivity is a hallmark of great art, and *Oso Perezoso* falls, nay, dive-bombs into that category.


Bryan Wilson is a young man, but this reviewer's takeaway from his music is that he knows something of the world, of suffering, of the suffering of others and the importance of truth (which is not always easy to hear, but necessary for a fulfilled and authentic life.) Not to mention, humour and a willingness to go out on the edge - whatever that may be. In some moments on the album, Wilson has created music for solo cello which was likely not written on cello and is thus hard to play. It's an edge - wherein a melody of the mind might not line up perfectly with the reality of the cello. But Wilson goes for it - and goes for it in many other ways and moments over the course of the record and in so doing, gives something of himself that others might not have the courage to openly present. His courage is a gift.

*Oso Perezoso* is a gift. It is a gift of contrasts - the "perfectly rendered" alongside the "just made that note!" In the latter, we are right alongside Wilson, in our own journey, working our toes to the edge and then, leaping and looking at the same time.

- Corbin Keep

# The CelLowdown

## Final Words

A silhouette of a person playing a cello against a green background. The person's head is in profile, facing left, and the cello's body and scroll are visible on the right side of the frame. The lighting is soft, highlighting the contours of the person and the instrument.

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!

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, please visit the [Cello City Store](#).

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