



cello city ONLINE

Newsletter of the New Directions Cello Association & Festival Inc.
Vol 17, No.2 Fall 2010

Welcome to the Nexus of the Next Step in Cello!

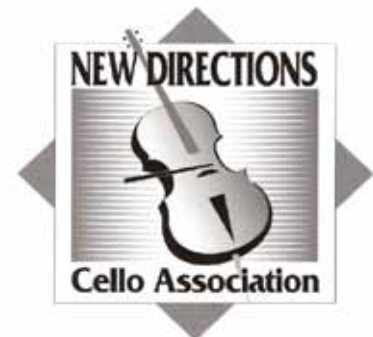
Inventive Cello!
Innovative Cello!
Imaginative Cello!
Individualistic Cello!
Illegitimate Cello!
Inquisitive Cello!
Idiosyncractic Cello!
Intercultural Cello!
Industrial strength Cello!

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Message from the Director
- New Directions Cello Festival 2011
- Interview - A chat with cellist/singer Kevin Fox
- Cellin' Out with Tom Culver - Ponticello feedback!
- Ask a New Directions Cellist! "What are you practicing these days?"
- CelliTubbies - New Directions Cellists on Youtube
- CD Review - Nathaniel Smith's "Arrhythmia"
- InCelligence Briefings
- Music In The Mail
- The Cellowdown - Final Words

DON'T FORGET TO VISIT:

- [Celli-Communications](#) - the NDCA Online Forum
- [Cello City Store](#) - CDs, sheet music and more!



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear New Directions Cellists and Friends,

A hearty Happy Autumn to All! There is a lot going on for the **New Directions Cello Association & Festival** (NDCA & F) these days.

The 17th Annual [New Directions Cello Festival](#) will take place at Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY, from June 10-12, 2011. Guest artists will be [Eugene Friesen](#), [Renata Bratt](#) and her **New Almaden Trio**, [Mike Block](#) and [Kevin Fox](#) and [Sera Smolen with Tom Mank](#). More news about the festival to be announced soon!

We have received a very generous donation of \$10,000 from cellist and cello teacher Einar Jeff Holm in memory of my late wife Susan Shalek White. Jeff was my teacher as well as Sera Smolen's. Jeff was touched by Susan's involvement in education and multiculturalism – which are both important aspects of our festival. We will use this amazing gift to start a fund called the **New Directions Cello Fund** which will help guarantee the longevity and growth of our special non-profit organization. The principle in this fund will remain untouched and the NDCA & F will use the dividends and interest that the fund generates for our festival and other ongoing programs. At 10K we won't be seeing great returns, but I'm hopeful that we can grow this fund up to 50K in the next year and then keep it growing. We will be sending more information about this soon.

We hope that this new fund will be the beginning of a new effort to; 1) get more people to pay their regular membership dues and 2) to encourage tax-deductible donations to the NDCA & F. **Please join, renew or donate today!** Memberships and contributions of any size really help us continue to thrive and improve our ability to help support the cello and its most innovative performers in the 21st century!

Ithaca College senior **Chelsea Crawford** (dual major – music and communications) will be doing an **internship** with the **NDCF** in the spring semester. Chelsea, who has attended a couple of our past festivals, will focus her internship mainly on marketing the festival – locally, regionally and internationally. Welcome to the fold, Chelsea!

As a non-profit organization, we rely on volunteer efforts to help make things work. If you have an interest in helping the NDCA & F in any way (large or small) please [let us know!](#)

Cellistically and Improvisationally Yours,

Chris

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NEW DIRECTIONS CELLO FESTIVAL 2011

New Directions 2010 was our most international festival ever! From June 11-13, 2010, once again at Ithaca College in Central New York, we gathered cellists and their groups from Argentina, Brazil, Europe, Minneapolis and Ithaca for our 16th annual festival. The most international of the groups was the **New Time Ensemble**, led by American cellist [Liz Davis Maxfield](#), which played Celtic-inspired music. In the quartet was also a fiddler from Scotland, a guitarist from France and an American flutist – all of whom met in Ireland at the University of Limerick! One of the biggest groups we've ever had was **No Ohlo da Rua** ("Out on the Street") from Rio di Janeiro, which was a quintet featuring cellist [Luciano Correa](#) with sax, piano, bass and drums. They brought the rhythm of the streets of Rio to Ithaca! Also from Brazil was [Marcelo Vieira](#), who sang and played cello on traditional and original Brazilian inspired tunes, with help from jazz violinist virtuoso **Christian Howes**. [Claudio Peña](#) came with his at once avant-garde and whimsical "Fin del Mundo Trio" ("End of the World Trio") from Buenos Aires, with cello, clarinet and drums. New Directions Festival founder and director **Chris White** played all originals with his jazz quartet, which also featured John White on piano, Nicholas Walker on bass and Steve Curry on drums. Rounding out the guest artists was the **Spaghetti Western String Co.** from Minneapolis/St. Paul. Their quartet, with cello, mandolin/voice, banjo/guitar plus clarinet, played all-original, wide ranging eclectic tunes.

With over 30 activities to choose from over 3 days, no one goes home bored from a New Directions Cello Festival! Tired maybe, exhilarated quite possibly, and most often with a whole new set of great ideas to work on for the next year. We had sessions from **Brazilian and Irish styles, to Feldenkrais and flying pizzicato!** As always, **Joel Cohen** led the Cello Big Band in some adventurous cello choir charts, most of which had room for participants to improvise in here and there. Assistant director and Educational Coordinator **Sera Smolen** co-led another edition of the Musical Educators' Symposium with [Alice Kay Kanack](#) dealing with "improvising string quartets."

As always, there was plenty of before, during and after-hours jamming to be had in the dorm and in the music building. Ithaca College has a beautiful campus overlooking Cayuga Lake in the heart of



the Finger Lakes Region of Central New York. We're planning another great festival for the same 2nd weekend of June 2011 at Ithaca College. Come early and/or stay after to enjoy the jamming and the beautiful surroundings! Guest artists for the **17th annual New Directions Cello Festival, June 10-12**, will be [Eugene Friesen](#), [Renata Bratt](#), [Mike Block](#), [Kevin Fox](#) and [Sera Smolen with Tom Mank](#).

Don't miss it!

We give thanks to the following sponsors of New Directions Cello Festival 2010: [Strings Magazine](#), [Super-Sensitive Strings](#), [NS Design](#), [David Gage Strings](#), the [Electric Violin Shop](#), [D'Addario Strings](#), **Ithaca College & the members of the NDCA!**



CELLIN' OUT!

WITH TOM CULVER

A New Twist on an Old Technique

Greetings my 4-string warriors!

It's cello quiz time:

The definition of "ponticello" is:

- A.** *The Italian family down the street who make that amazing garlic stuffed olive pizza.*
- B.** *An experimental vehicle made by Pontiac, displayed at the 1967 World's Fair, which was a half car-half cello hybrid.*
- C.** *In string playing, an indication to bow very near to the bridge, producing a characteristic glassy sound, thereby emphasizing the higher harmonics at the expense of the fundamental.*
- D.** *I give up. Get to the point!*

Of course, the answer with the longest explanation and the fanciest words has to be the right one! Indeed, 'C' is the correct response, though 'B' would be pretty cool to own! The technique known as Sul Ponticello has been around for centuries, and has been used in many styles of music. In recent years, cellists have been working the sound tastefully into their playing, and expanding the boundaries of this once-rare special effect.

To achieve the 'classic' ponticello sound, we bow just before the bridge. Here is an example of a traditional use of ponticello:

[\(VIDEO EXCERPT A\)](#)

The popularity of the distorted guitar sound over the last 40+ years has likely left an imprint on generations of budding cellists, longing to recreate that sound on their own instruments. Besides using the bow close to bridge, a cellist can further manipulate this sound by changing the angle of the bow, changing the bow speed, the bow weight, etc, leading to a multitude of tones. Here is an example of working some of those tones into the 'head' or melody of a simple funk tune:

[\(VIDEO EXCERPT B\)](#)



We can further manipulate this sound, and imitate our cousin the electric guitar, by using some left hand techniques in conjunction with the ponticello sound. In this next example, the left hand releases weight and does a more extreme vibrato, ala a whammy (tremelo) bar. The lifted weight of the left hand also adds to the upper overtones, similar to the sound achieved by guitarists using an over-drive, or distorted sound.

[\(VIDEO EXCERPT C\)](#)

With all these variations of ponticello and left hand dampening/vibrato techniques, it's easy to find a few variations that you can whip up and use to color your melody or solo. Then the challenge will be, what to name your new sound? Corbin Keep jokingly suggested I name this technique the "Ponticello Feedback Distortion Effect" That might be a bit wordy, eh?

Until next time, 'Cell Out'!!!

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFINGS

[Dimos Gouderoulis](#) (NDCF 2005) was recently in NYC for a concert with *Camerata Aberta* (the Sao Paulo State Contemporary Music Ensemble) playing a program of contemporary Brazilian music, from Villa Lobos to present day works.

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Italian jazz cellist [Lucio Amanti](#) has released an original composition for cello entitled "Jazz Suite". (sheet music: 16 pages, duration: 14", difficulty: intermediate to advanced) The piece is built around "the idea that music and improvisation know no barriers, and that different styles and ideas from different periods of time can be all expressed through the beautiful voice of the cello." The legendary [Janos Starker](#) had this to say about the work: "Lucio Amanti is a very fine cellist and imaginative composer. His "Jazz Suite" is an enjoyable mix of jazz and classicism. I much appreciate his work." Copies of the piece can be [ordered online](#) from the publisher, Schott Music.

Composer/cellist/trombonist [Dana Leong](#) has been commissioned to write a gravity-defying work for Project Bandaloop dance company. IdEgo for cello, trombone, guitar, and turntables will be performed by Dana while suspended in the air by a rope! Dana [recently blogged](#) about his compositional process at Video of a rehearsal of Dana and Project Bandaloop Artistic Director Amelia Rudolph can be found [here](#).

On May 23, 2010, people gathered in support of the mandated curriculum of Music and Arts Education in the New York City Public Schools, through the organization of a group called [El Sistema](#). El Sistema is a group of inspired individuals - all volunteers - who are dedicated to bringing José Antonio Abreu's music education system to New York City and beyond. Abreu (Venezuelan musician, educator, economist and former Minister of Culture) said, "Let us reveal to our children the beauty of music and music shall reveal to our children the beauty of life." El Sistema-NYC called for musicians, dancers, painters to 'bring your instruments,' 'raise your voices,' 'toot your horns,' 'draw your bows,' 'beat your drums,' 'sketch on paper,' 'dance.' Cellist [Akua Dixon](#) (NDCF '98, '01, '08) composed the music that they played called "Motion." Kutasha Silva (participant, NDCF 2008) gave her graduate recital on the same day (May 23, 2010) from the Conservatory of Music, Miramar, Puerto Rico.



INTERVIEWS

Corbin Keep Chats with Cellist/ Singer/Composer Kevin Fox

CK: "How did you first start singing while playing your cello?"

KF: "As a sideman, playing cello. I started singing backup vocals on other people's material. It wasn't until later that I began composing my own material for cello and voice. I had a vision, since the time I was a teenager, of a particular sound and feeling for a concept album. I recorded it for guitar with an orchestral background, and was happy with it, but somehow the fact my cello was not with me performing the material - somehow that felt unnatural. It was after that that I began to write songs to sing with my cello."

CK: "Can you speak about your approach to writing for cello and voice?"

KF: "I tend to stick with what's comfortable. To me, the emotion and the feel of the music is what's most important. I do not consider myself a super technical type cello player, I'm more of a feel player. Sometimes I think about stopping gigging and spending six months in Banff, practicing like crazy and getting better. At times in the past I have chided myself, thinking that I "should" be a more "accomplished" cellist, however these days I rarely feel that way. I am comfortable with where I'm at."

CK: "I have heard your recordings and seen some videos of you live, and I thought you sounded great - and quite accomplished! One thing I in particular I was struck by with your record, "Songs for Cello & Voice", was the degree to which you constantly change things up on the cello while singing - no small feat."

What were some of your important musical influences when you were young?"

KF: "One of the most important influences was my teacher, who was with me from grade four all the way through high school. I had an opportunity to see him again recently, which was extremely moving for me. I feel that teachers are often under-rated, even slugged in our society, and not recognized for how important they truly are. In terms of other musical influences, music that consists of strong songwriting is huge for me - the Beatles, Elton John

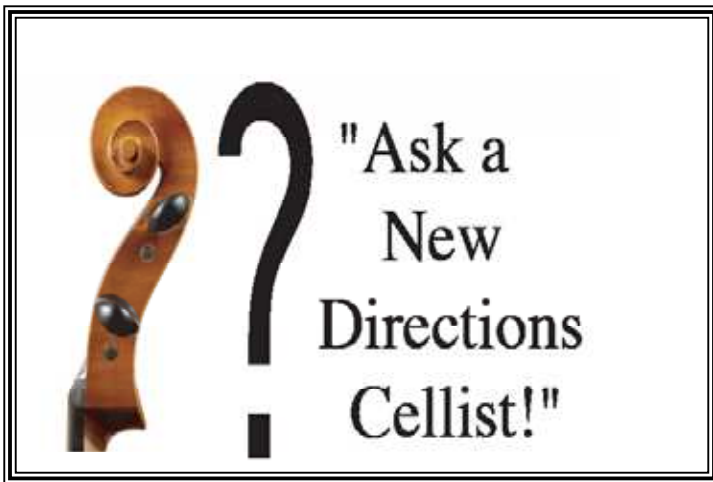
come to mind; I've always been drawn to well-crafted songs. Classical music was also very important for me, early on especially. I believe that much of what has influenced me as a musician has come in an indirect way - through osmosis. A roommate might have played an album - something that I would not have sought out - or I would just happen to hear something that affected me. To this day, I don't go out of my way to listen to a lot of music for the sake of it. When I'm not working on music, I usually prefer silence. That is how I get recharged and have energy and creativity to keep making music."

CK: "What inspires your songwriting these days?"

KF: "I feel that I'm in a time of change right now. I have a 2 year old son - a very big life change of course - and have begun to notice lately that some of the things I've tended to write about, namely my search for solace and beauty, are shifting for me. I suppose I am searching for those things less, and living them more now, so there is a corresponding change in my lyrics. I am not nearly as prolific a songwriter these days, as a lot of my compositional creativity goes into my arranging work. (Kevin is an accomplished orchestral arranger) My current way of working on writing songs is to jot down little ideas as they come, then when I have a bit of time, to work with them and then run with the ones that I feel energy with. I have a spring deadline for my next solo cd to be complete, which is currently helping to spur me into getting some writing done."

CK: "You mentioned earlier that for much of your career, you haven't bothered with an endpin. Has that affected your playing?"

KF: "Perhaps not in a direct compositional sense, however the freedom to be able to turn around and make eye contact with the drummer, for example, can really help things along onstage. It's definitely a more free way to play. With the cello completely in my grasp - the contact it makes with my body is more total. I think of it as being two adjacent vibrating cavities - the hollow body of the cello and my chest cavity, resonating together. It's a very powerful feeling, which I believe gets transmitted, in turn, out to the audience. For me, music is about the expression of peace and beauty, and the cello is so perfect for that - I'm not what you would call an "edgy" type of player."



In each issue of Cello City Online, we pose a different question to professional and semi-professional cellists.

This issue's question:

"WHAT ARE YOU PRACTICING THESE DAYS?"

Kristen Miller (Massachusetts)

"Ha! I'm up to my eyeballs in practicing! A performance art piece that I recently performed with a dancer at the Arizona Dance Festival, a live film score that I just premiered, and now original holiday music that I am recording for concerts in December. All very different, and really fun!"

Kristen is a cellist, singer and teacher who loves to push the boundaries of music and multi-media.

Gideon Freudmann (Portland, Oregon)

"I am re-working my score for the classic silent film, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, in preparation for a performance. I'm also polishing up a few new original tunes in preparation for recording my next CD."

*Gideon has had two of his tunes used in a recent episode of the TV show, *Weeds*, and will soon have another tune appear in a new documentary about the real horse whisperer (the character portrayed by Robert Redford in the movie of the same name)*

Jill Naisuler (San Francisco Bay Area)

"I'm practicing a story I made up called *"The Cello Garden,"* which I'll be performing in November. The music in the story includes excerpts from famous cello pieces and etudes (Saint-Saens Concerto, Fin-

gals Cave, Duport & Piatti etudes, etc), a song from the movie *"The Last of the Mohicans"*, as well as some parts that are improvised. I am also practicing a chant written by Parmahansa Yoganada called *"When My Dream's Dream is Done,"* which I plan to incorporate into my next story."

Jill is a genre crossing cellist who divides her time between unique cello projects and teaching private lessons to a large gaggle of dedicated students.

Claude Lamothe (Montreal)

"Sunday (Nov 14) I will play three short pieces for vlc. & piano (arranged for cello & little chamber ensemble) by French woman composer Nadia Boulanger. (if you don't know the piece, Youtube *"Nadia Boulanger three pieces"*, then go to *"Maestrogorsky"*, then listen to the third one - it's at 5'11"). Do I still have to tell you what I am practicing now??"

Virtuoso Claude Lamothe (NDCF 2009) is comfortable in both worlds - as a classical concert cellist - and creator of amazing solo flights of non-classical fancy.

Beth Welch (San Francisco Bay area)

"My practice routine includes playing through the circle of 4ths (C, F, Bb, etc) on a variety of scales in different feels, rhythms and bowings. Also, I play through various fakebooks and charts in order to stay fresh with walking bass lines and comping over the changes (3rds and 7ths)"

Beth's performing experience spans such musically diverse contexts as symphony orchestras, musical theatre, television, chamber music ensembles, jazz combos and new music groups.

Crispin Campbell (Michigan)

"Currently, I'm practicing the Mendelssohn D Major Sonata, and the Rachmaninoff Sonata. I've been missing playing some classical music lately, so I decided to a very traditional program this fall: Mendelssohn, Rachmaninoff and a Haydn String Quartet (Op. 76 #4). BUT, as soon as that's over, I'm getting back to:

Choro music -Brazilian tunes by Jacob de Bandolim. Mandolin based, but very cello-friendly tunes, lots of syncopation. *"Doce de Coco"* is my current favorite. Also some music by Egberto Gismonti, with Portuguese titles I can't spell. Jazz tunes from the Real

Book, 5th Edition: "Wildflower" by Wayne Shorter. And always - Bach Suites, lots of scales, Sevcik bow exercises, and Starker double stops."

Crispin teaches at Interlochen Arts Academy in northern Michigan. His playing ranges from the standard classical repertoire to a wide variety of Latin American styles (tango, choro, samba, bossa nova); jazz standards, blues, gypsy jazz, and fiddle tunes. He performs with the Michigan-based Neptune Quartet and many other musicians. Check out the Neptune Quartet on Google, or the Interlochen.org website. He is also involved with the Fundacion Batuta in Colombia, a national music program for young people.

Andrea Case (Calgary, AB)

"At the moment, I'm practicing whatever I can that is comfortable considering I'm 37 weeks pregnant :) This includes scales, studies, the Prokofiev Cello Sonata and most importantly, Bach Suites. This stuff keeps my fingers moving and my baby happy!"

Andrea, who holds a masters degree in cello performance, was a teacher at the 2010 Wetaskiwin Jazz Camp, and plays with the Lily String Quartet (to name but a few of her projects).

Mario Giroux (Montreal)

"I'm practicing a blend of Arabic-Québécois music with oud player Hassan El Hadi + other friends, singers, harmonica, darbouka etc. It's called Maroc'n'reel, as the cd we launched last year (which I co-mixed)."

Trevor Exter (New York, NY)

"I'm practicing tone, time and intonation like always. I work with a drone, I work with a metronome. It's all a groove. The metronome is for the beats per minute groove, the drone is for the cycles per second groove. Same approach: settle into it and try not to spazz out of it. Breathe, and don't forget to dance."

Alfia Nakipbekova (UK)

"These days I practice: scales/arpeggios patterns in various bowings/rhythms combinations Paganini Caprices (my own arrangements) the guitar solo from Eric Clapton's While my Guitar Gently Weeps live album."

James Hoskins (Boulder, CO)

"I recently received a tip from an amazing bass-playing friend: Play the modes of major scales (start on each degree of the scale) - all 12 keys. I've found it amazingly clarifying and freeing! Same finger patterns for analogous modes - if you leave out notes that would make you shift. Eg. - Key of D Maj. - for E dorian (start with first finger on 'E' on C-string): 134, 134, 124, 124. Same finger pattern for ANY key. Helps me hear and play the relationships, and leaving out notes actually keeps me from just going on auto-play. Then when comfortable, I start playing with musical phrases keeping those finger assignments active. Leads to fast riffs without losing my place! I've also been exploring David Baker's book: "Bass Clef Expressions" - for jazz cello!"

James Hoskins is a world music cellist/multi instrumentalist. He plays in the Buzz Band, Akemi Iwase's Tokyo Tribe, County Road X, and the Balkan/Middle-Eastern musical groups, New Land Balkan Band and Sherefé.

Gunther Tiedemann (Cologne, Germany)

"What has helped me a lot lately is to hear as much as possible in my head just before I play it. For this I need a direct "line" from my imagination of the music (I want to play) to my fingers (and to my bowing/plucking for the sound I imagine). I try to have an imagination of the melodic lines as well as the harmonic context. This becomes of course more subconscious the longer I do it." (note: Gunther went on to give a fairly lengthy description of some practice ideas, which went a bit beyond the scope of this column. They are great ideas, to check them out, click here.)

Gunther (NDCF 2008) is a freelance jazz cellist who plays with guitarist David Plate in the Tiedemann-Plate Duo (cello & guitar) as well as other ensembles and situations. His newest album is called "Live" (which includes a bonus track from NDCF 08).

Thanks to all the cellists who contributed to this issue's column! If any of you Cello City Online readers have an "Ask a New Directions Cellist" question you would like to see posed here, please email: corbinkeep@telus.net

CELLITUBBIES: NEW DIRECTIONS CELLISTS ON YOUTUBE

The term "go for what you know", as it is known in the context of rock guitar soloing, means that when you're in the heat of the improvisational moment (performing) it's best to play what comes naturally and easily for you - and steer clear of the hot licks that you only started learning last week! Another way the phrase can be interpreted is to use (or re-cycle) what you've got.

LA based cellist [Tina Guo](#) provides a wonderful example of this.

[Here](#) she is playing Rimsy Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee* with the State of Mexico National Symphony.

Now, check out [this](#) version.

Talk about using what you already know to a cool effect!

Continuing in the spirit of comparison videos, next up is another California based cellist, [Rebecca Roudman](#).

This [first clip](#) is her "America' Got Talent" audition, playing Satriani.

The [second one](#) is the same tune, but now, as she puts it, "what it was supposed to sound like" the first time. Great stuff!

CD REVIEW: NATHANIEL SMITH'S "ARRHYTHMIA"

Great album! On a number of occasions while listening to it, I have become aware of a huge grin on my face. Recommended cure for winter blahs!

Arrhythmia is 100% overdubbed cellos, chock full of infectious, happy, "southern-celtic" compositions, all written and arranged by Nat Smith. Smith's tunes themselves, for the most part, are quite good, however where this cellist really shines is in his improvised solos. On some tracks, they may only last a tasteful 8 or 16 bars, but in those oft-white hot moments, there's some real magic afoot.

Smith is clearly a musician who breathes, eats, sleeps his art. His phrasing, approach to rhythm and sheer chops are truly extraordinary. It's often said that great musicians seem to be one with their instrument; in this case, that would be an understatement.

I set out to write this review without bringing up the issue of this cellist's age. However when this thought occurred to me, I couldn't resist: somewhere around the middle of the next US president's term, Nat will be old enough to drink.

Thank heavens there are no laws preventing "underage" cellists from producing cds!!

<http://www.nathanielsmithcello.com/>

MUSIC IN THE MAIL

Sometimes cello cds arrive, unbidden, in our mailbox. They are always a welcome surprise. Here are the latest offerings:

* **The Just Desserts - La Valentina.** (2010) Michael Shay, cello, voice, vibraphone, guitar & tenor banjo. Lisa Shawley, accordion, flute & voice, plus lots of collaborators. World folk/pop. <http://www.thejustdesserts.com>

* **Isaac Tayrien - Let Go** (2010) Songs for cello & voice with several other accompanying instruments adding colour. Folk/pop/unclassifiable/fun. <http://www.myspace.com/acacello>

* **Renata Bratt - A Slice of Summer** (2010) With Darol Anger, violin; John Burr, piano, plus many other collaborating musicians. Jazz, swing, fiddling and more. Two trad. tunes; all others by Renata. <http://www.renatabratt.com>

THE CELLOWDOWN: LAST WORDS

If there is anything you, the cello devoted reader, would like to contribute to Cello City Online, or have something you would like to see included here, please email: corbinkeep@telus.net!

If you are a member of the New Directions Cello Association and have not paid your yearly membership dues, please visit: <http://www.newdirectionscello.com/join>. If you're not a member, you can sign up on the same page. (Online Paypal payments coming soon)

Welcome aboard, this Cellocomotive has left the station, is on the journey of a lifetime, and has many more stops along the way!

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to anyone you know who you think may enjoy it!

