

Cello Online

Welcome to the Nexus of the Next Step in Cello

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This issue's theme: Cello & Voice

Take a Bow to the Power of Song!

Not so many years ago, singer-songwriters who accompanied themselves on cello were all but unheard of. It's hard to imagine now, but at one time there were people who actually questioned whether such an endeavour were even possible! There is historical precedence for singing and playing simultaneously; hundreds of years ago troubadours were known to accompany themselves on viol-like instruments which were played more or less in the cello position.



However it wasn't until the very end of the 20th century that the practice became anything other than extreme fringe. The worldwide culture of singing cellists has now grown to the point that a young person just starting out can draw on a number of inspiring recording artists whose main expression is cello and voice.

In this issue of Cello City Online, we will explore the subject in some depth. Whether you're a seasoned cello-crooner, or someone who enjoys humming along with your classical repertoire, there's likely to be something of interest to you here. Enjoy!

"... voices are charmed to be accompanied by it, realizing that nothing makes them shine like the accompaniment of this sonorous instrument which articulates so well its tones and speaks so distinctly."

– Michel Corette (1707-1795)

Message from the Director

By Chris White

Some people feel that the reason why the cello is such a popular instrument is because of its human voice-like range and timbre. Maybe that's why it's no surprise that more and more cellists are singing while they play. After all, if you can't sing in tune you aren't going to be able to play the cello in tune... The voice is such a natural, easy to carry around instrument that's with us from birth until we take our last breath.

The New Directions Cello Festival has featured singing cellists since our inception in 1995, and this year's festival is no exception. I think it's great that this issue of our newsletter is focused on singing and playing! There have been countless amazing singing and playing moments in our past festivals. One that comes to mind was a few years back when Rushad Eggleston was a guest artist. He came to one of our Cello Big Band rehearsals to lead something. He proceeded to present the group with an extremely simple and also frighteningly catchy combination cello and vocal part. The lyric had the line "I force it down, force the bricky down..." which EVERYONE learned to sing and play in no time at all!

Three out of five of this year's guest artists at this, our 18th annual festival, will be singing as they play: Dave Eggar, Kelly Ellis and Ashia Grzesik. We will also feature several workshops at the festival involving singing and playing. So don't miss out!

Come to Ithaca College June 8 - 10 for this amazing edition of our inimitable gathering.

Each fest is unique and yet, there's a common thread and a great atmosphere that is regenerated each year.

Cellistically Yours,

– Chris



Chris White, Director

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NDCA Membership Renewal

Do you value New Directions?

We hope so! And it's time to show your appreciation by joining or renewing today!

A couple years ago we changed our membership policies so that all memberships expire on May 1st. As the world's only organization and festival dedicated exclusively to fostering growth in non-classical uses of the cello, the NDCA & F is run by cellists who believe that our instrument holds limitless potential!

Please send your renewal, membership or donation today! All contributions are tax deductible.

Here are some of the things you get for your membership contribution:

- 10% discount on the New Directions Cello Festival
- 10% discount on all products we sell at our store
- A great website and facebook group
- A deeply resonant, C-string feeling that you are helping our organization fulfill its mission!

Annual membership level guidelines:

- Student \$10
- Regular Membership \$25
- Friend \$50
- Supporting Member \$75
- Super-Improviser \$100 or more

Go to <http://www.newdirectionscello.org/join> to join now! Now you can renew or join using PayPal.

Thank you!!

New Directions Cello Festival!

Ithaca College, Ithaca NY, June 8 - 10, 2012

Join us for the 18th annual New Directions Cello Festival

Cellists gather from around the country and the world to learn and share about how the cello is being used in different styles of music.

Guest artists:



Matt Haimovitz and Uccello

World renowned cellist Matt Haimovitz is Professor of Cello at McGill University in Montreal where he founded his cello octet Uccello, which performs jazz classics in original arrangements by Rome Prize-winning composer David Sanford. In their recording "Meeting of Spirits" the cellos wail, slide, and swing in an all-new big band sound – joined by dazzling musical contributions from guitar legend John McLaughlin, percussionist Matt Wilson and Jan Jarczyck on keyboards – in works by Ornette Coleman, Charles Mingus, John McLaughlin (Mahavishnu), Miles Davis, Billy Strayhorn and other jazz greats.

<http://www.matthaimovitz.com>



Dave Eggar & "Deoro" Trio

Dave's mission to "not just cross over, but to cross through" multiple genres of music is apparent in all of his releases. Whether it's classical, reggae, bluegrass, jazz, pop, or world music, Eggar finds a common voice within his musical vocabulary and introduces it with his own unique imaginative vision.

<http://www.daveeggarmusic.com>



Kelly Ellis & "Ancient Device"

From NW Arkansas, this trio is comprised of brothers Kelly (cello and voice) and Riley (bass) Ellis plus drummer Adam Parker. They have worked with Victor Wooten who helped them record and produce their pop/rock album "Louder Than Words."

<http://www.ancientdevice.com>



Matt Turner

Matt Turner is regarded as one of the world's leading improvising cellists. Turner has shared the stage with Natalie MacMaster, Bobby McFerrin, Bill Carrothers, appears on over 100 recordings and has performed in Europe, Canada and Asia. He teaches improvisation at Lawrence University and the Renaissance School for the Arts. He currently performs and records with Bill Carrothers, Randy Sabien, and Janet Planet.

<http://www.improvcellist.com>

In addition to our guest artists and regular "staff instructors," there will be three new guest clinicians at NDCF 2012:

Jacob Szekely (Los Angeles) – Jazz/funk cello

Jacob is the artistic director of String Project Los Angeles (SPLA), America's first and only music school dedicated to creative string playing.

<http://www.stringprojectla.com/staff>

Marei Seuthe (Cologne, Germany)

Eclectic cellist, singer and composer.

<http://www.obst-music.com/artists/marei-seuthe.htm>

Krischa Weber (Hamburg, Germany)

Genre-bending improvising cellist.

<http://www.marieclairemusik.de>



Ashia and the Bison Rouge

Portland based cellist, singer and songwriter Ashia Grzesik creates songs with elements of cabaret, folk, pop, and dark Americana. Using the name "Ashia and the Bison Rouge" for her solo gigs, her songs and writing reflect longing for her Slavic roots with Chopinesque and gypsy musings and the blues, rock, and open harmonies of the New World, as well as classical infused Chamber Pop.

<http://www.ashiagrzesik.com>

The New Directions Cello Festival is a performance and educational forum for non-classical cello, featuring performances, workshops, and jam sessions led by guest artists (and their groups) who are pioneering new directions for cellists in a wide variety of styles.

Please check our website for more information:

<http://www.newdirectionscello.org> and also check out our [Facebook page](#) and, if you really can't get enough, our [MySpace page](#)!

NDCA 2012 Workshops

Intermediate/Beginning

Ashia Grzesik

Singing and Playing the Cello – The Easy Way

We'll be exploring how to sing simple songs over simple chords, just like a guitarist or pianist would. Then we'll take individual chord notes and harmonize/sing over them, as well as talk about how to keep practicing singing and playing the cello.

Abby Newton with Sera Smolen

Hand me doon da fiddle

Tunes, bowings, harmonies and rhythms of the Shetland Islands.

Chris White

Finding Your Voice in Improvisation – Part one

Listening to your inner improviser to develop a sensibility around creating improvisations that make sense to you; start with a note or a little motif and grow it into an improv that flows and works!

Corbin Keep

Rhythm based music creation

Blurring the lines between improvisation and composition.

David Eggar

Introduction to Cello Improvisation

A beginning experience in cello improvisation.

Ithaca College Cello Majors

Free Play

Inspired by the acclaimed book by Stephen Nachmanovich, the Ithaca College Cello Majors will share some outstanding exercises in free improvisation.

Jacob Szekely

The Improviser's Guide to the Cello

Unlock the creative possibilities of the instrument. Style specific concepts. Master your fingerboard while minimizing thinking. Whole new approach to chord scale mastery.

Marei Seuthe and Krischa Weber

It's not only the strings that sound – Discovering new possibilities of playing the cello

We will make astonishing sounds with all parts of our instrument and find out how to make experimental and atmospheric music beyond classical cello techniques. Some means for preparing cellos and also our own voice will be integrated. In the end, there will be a buffet of delicious sound fingerfood for cellists, even nice-sounding forks and spoons won't be missing...

Matt Turner

Creating Soundscapes Through Conduction

After exploring our instruments we will enter the world of conduction using movement, hand signals, and card pieces to create group improvisations.

Stephen Katz

Flying Pizzicato Introduction

An introduction to contrapuntal strumming technique. Come out swinging, left and right, with practical tools for deepening grooves.

Note: at the time of this writing, workshops are still being finalized; some of the workshops may change by festival time.



NDCA 2012 Workshops

Intermediate/Advanced

Ashia Grzesik

Songwriting on the Cello: Self-accompaniment and Arranging

We'll be exploring songwriting with the cello and various ways to approach self-accompanying cello techniques. We'll talk about finding your own voice/writing style, text-coloring, setting the musical style/feel, and cover arranging. I encourage any cellist/singers to bring an original song or cover they would like to possibly work on in the workshop.

Chris White

Finding Your Voice in Improvisation – Part two

Listening to your inner improviser to develop a sensibility around creating improvisations that make sense to you; start with a note or a little motif and grow it into an improv that flows and works!

Corbin Keep

You can't really do that on a cello, can you?

Alternative techniques that won't hurt your cello, but your fingers may never be the same.

Dave Eggar

Extreme Crossover Cello

Exploring more complex issues of crossing the cello over into new fields.

Kelly Ellis

Writing: The instrument, The Cello, The Voice

The program will focus on the viewpoint of writing, then lead to the 'thumb and bow' technique.

Marei Seuthe and Krischa Weber

Musical scenes for cello ensembles – From free improvisation towards improvised compositions

We start with creating a piece of music out of a single note, learn how to communicate musically beyond musical patterns of rhythm and tonality, integrating all possible cello sounds and in the end, compose a suite of musical scenes. Themes of the parts of the suite might be a "baroque castle," a "fever waltz," fire or the wind making sounds on an Aeolian harp.

Matt Haimovitz and his band

Kashmir

Based on the Led Zeppelin Rock tune, we will work on various parts, then bring it together at end of the hour.

Matt Haimovitz and his band

Half Nelson

Based on the Miles Davis tune, arranged for 8 cellos, we will get everyone swinging. This song will be played by the cello big band on Sunday. This workshop will allow all of us to become more deeply familiar with this beautiful, complex arrangement.

Matt Turner

Cutting the Changes: Using Jazz Ballads to Better Improvise

Jazz ballads offer great ways to get inside the changes. We'll slow it down to focus on theory, ear training, and jazz stylings appropriate for ballad performance.

Stephen Katz

Flying Pizzicato Immersion

After a brief overview of Flying Pizz basics, we will co-create grooves and related arco parts. Emphasis will be on how to generate simple, elegant bass lines which leave plenty of room for interlocking percussive parts, melodic invention, and improvisation.

Trevor Exter

Cellosapiens

Singing & playing, charted tunes to learn and jam on together plus a peek inside how Trevor and his musical partner John Kimock integrate cello and drums.



NDCA 2012 Workshops

Jam Sessions

Chris White and Sera Smolen

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari

We will create an original, improvised soundtrack to this famous German avante garde silent film.

Ithaca College Cello Majors

Scale Meditation

Join the Ithaca College Cello Majors as they share with us the way they practice one scale 100 times in many different ways in one hour... first thing on Sunday morning.

Sera Smolen

Improvising String Quartets

Based on the book by Alice Kanack and Sera Smolen, we will create compositions in small groups, improvising in simultaneous parts.

Interview with Ashia Grzesik – By Sera Smolen

Vaudeville Dervish... Calling... and Dismissing Cellos

Harnessing her rousing vocals and whimsical, gutsy cello lines, Ashia Grzesik creates songs with elements of folk, indie, and cabaret in her solo project: "Ashia and the Bison Rouge." Her songs and writing reflect a longing for her Slavic roots, with Chopinesque and gypsy musings, the blues, rock, open harmonies of the new world, as well as classically-infused Chamber Ppop.

"She is a three-ring sylph, a vaudeville dervish, a woman after our own hearts... she ranges from parlor popular to European avante garde. Her siren voice calls and dismisses cellos, accordion, drums, string quartets, and trumpets at a whim, whirling your ears down into your heart and out into the aether. It is beautiful."

– Seattle Post Intelligencer, reviewing her recent release, the EP "Bison Rouge."

Grzesik currently resides in the raw and rainy city of Portland, OR, where she writes and performs solo cello works incorporating her talents as a vocalist, improvisation, and theatrics. After training in classical cello with John Michel, plus voice at Central Washington University, at the age of 21, she was invited to play cello and sing at Cirque du Soleil's production of "O" in Las Vegas. The experience with aerialists, dancers, physical actors, and circus performers infected her with a strong interest in theatrical and cabaret performance. Upon leaving "O," she recorded her CD "Pay to be Loved" and continued to perform.

Ashia has performed Internationally including Hong Kong and Europe, and in her birth city Wroclaw, Poland in the theatrical song festival Przeglad Piosenki Aktorskie. In 2010 she received a 'Drammy' for folk inspired cello incidental music for the production of The Gray Sisters, by award winning Third Rail Theater. Nationally, she has played a principal role in the sold out premier run of the Queen of Knives opera written by Vagabond Opera's Eric Stern. Ashia's performances vary from the theatrical cabaret, rowdy eastern euro bars, sit-down concert halls, to keen little dives intended for acoustic intimacy and subtlety. What else could become of a Polish immigrant with a whiskey lovin' blues singer father and a classical music ballet devoted mother – but a cello playing, score writing, burlesquing, indie misfit, a feet-on-the-floor mesh of cello and song?



Sera Smolen: How did you get inspired to use the cello so far beyond the classical training you started with?

Ashia Grzesik: Well, in high school I experimented with piano, guitar, and other instruments. I thought it would be really great to incorporate songwriting and music from the other instruments onto the cello. So, I started to create a song that I could play on the cello too. Then I added another "sung composition." Often, I first create a truly simple chord progression... then that chord progression becomes a road map for a sung composition to take place. Other times, the melodies come to me first and the cello part develops later. Sometimes I begin to take a cover, figure out the chords, then find the right key for my voice. I would take classical compositions and play the bass line, and make up my own song over that.

SS: How did your art change as a result of your work with Cirque du Soleil on "O?"

AG: In some ways my playing and singing was more spare on "O." I was collaborating with other musicians, of course, but I became really involved with the other kinds of people there. I began hanging out with artists, clowns and acrobats and it was great to have them as friends. We took improv classes together and they were not SERIOUS! Being imperfect became a beautiful thing. We created acts together for fun as well as for performance. My close friend, an aerialist, and I created an act together based on a song I wrote, which we traveled with and performed. I began to work more theatrically, like a cabaret, and one thing kept leading to another.

SS: What is it like to be part of the Portland Cello Project?

AG: People in the music community recognize the quality and the reputation of this group, which is like a cello fraternity. We're all potentially "hybrid" cellists in Portland. People have contacted us like a "911" call for cellos-to-the-rescue! At the same time, here is a serious core of cellists who tour, including some great classical players.

SS: How did you become so wonderfully committed to the interdisciplinary work of combining theater, cabaret, and film, with costumes, props, etc?

AG: When I use the cello theatrically, I get the opportunity to project and express intriguing and unique things... I like to draw people in through the story telling side. The theater and the story become intrinsic to the song, and have forced me to become more creative within the songs that I write. Now the intro, or the interludes have become "acts" within the songs. Now I am drawn into the potential story in each new song. Of course, all cellists now are invited to play Jazz, rock, etc., so the cello playing aspect of this is not really a big leap... but maybe someday there will be more "theatrically bent cellists" ... I would LOVE to be an intriguing, exhilarating character that incorporates the cello in an ongoing show.

SS: How do you practice, combining your beautiful cello technique and your beautiful singing?

AG: I often start by figuring out the chords, which become the map for this melody. At first I might have a melody I have created, or just the chorus or the verse. I find out which key it's in. I start forming the underlying cello part, usually using a repetitive pizzicato pattern using three or four chords. The cello part will develop out of this skeletal chord progression. Next I begin arranging the song. I might give it lyrical lines, or something to reflect the words. Arpeggios, pressing forward was needed in "Broken Crowns." Broken thirds, etc, give it a sense of continuous forward motion, reflecting the downturn of the economic market. On a Polish song, "Prosto do Nieba" I wanted it to have really simple lyric lines and sparse accompaniment to bring out the vocal lines. This way, I do take apart each piece of a song, then put it all back together. Also, forgot to mention, I practice singing remotely from the cello too.

SS: Tell us about your ongoing bohemian cabaret band, the "Vagabond Opera."

AG: The Vagabond opera is a performance troupe. It is music based, with virtuosic solos sprinkled throughout the show. The writing is based on Jazz from the 1920-40s, along with Klezmer, Balkan music, and opera. We have belly dancers, fire dancers, burlesque dancers as guests to the songs, and I create characters, acts, and props. It is very fun, especially when there is a packed crazy crowd. Ivan Ivana is one of my characters who has become an extension of myself. (He's not on Facebook yet though) I am not Ashia Grzesik then, so I get to be this man, or transgender man, who might make more than one audience member confused, and is an entire act which is intended for cabaret. The cello becomes a prop for the moment. He is humorous, like a long lost brother who was taught to play cello by Siberians. He was captured, so I'm a bearded lady playing songs, looking for this other part of myself. I also play other different characters, like the tall, innocent doll who turns into the femme fatale. It is interesting when a character transforms in the course of a song. The theatrical element and character archetypes have become a springboard for writing the music as well.

SS: How has your artistry evolved from your first CD, "Pay to be Loved" and your more recent recording, "Bison Rouge?"

AG: "Pay to be Loved" was based on doing things on my own, both personally and artistically. I wanted to challenge myself to record cello and vocal LIVE, and I was basically alone in the process, apart from the engineer. I felt more isolated making this CD, until I invited friends to come in for an overdubbing reprint/remaster.

The "Bison Rouge" EP is more folk, indie, and world music oriented. Due to being a part of the Portland Cello Project, I have included some all-cello writing. There were different, new musical elements influencing me since leaving "O" and moving to Portland so the range of things wanted to do was expanding fast. Also, even

though, I perform all the songs playing and singing live, I chose not to in the recording process. Recording in a studio is an art form in itself and I wanted to make sure it was a bit different than performance.

SS: What are some upcoming projects you are looking forward to?

AG: I will tour in Poland and Czech republic soon, where I will record two songs. I am now also working with a looping pedal. I like my new Boss looper RC-30, and have found a really fun way to loop. It allows me to add more color to certain songs in my set.

SS: How can more cellists enter the wonderful artistic worlds of theater and cabaret?

AG: While playing Bach and concertos can be a passion unto itself, its good to explore other artistic mediums. The mentality or the mind set for theater is so important to what I do. The free, artistic spirit is very important, and the passion for this is at the center of everything. Now all of us need to be able to collaborate with rockers and jazzers and theatrical projects. Make sure that what you do is very important to you. Let go of your fears and create worlds that extend beyond just figuring out and executing the notes on the page.

SS: Where do you get the inspiration for your songwriting?

AG: When you hear blues you might feel like you're in Chicago or Mississippi... and for Americana songs, you might visualize the wild west. I am a Polish-American artist... so I draw from playing blues and eastern European styles and Pop. I feel like an immigrant, so I like to write in Polish. How would Chopin make a song for voice and cello? We get inspired by so many things, and they show me how to create more music: I remember driving in the wide open spaces of the desert, and draw from that... eventually I can find the character of a song while being on stage... it ebbs and flows and a cello song takes life.

Interview with Matt Haimovitz

By Sera Smolen

"My relationship with the classical tradition... it's not about easy listening, or music that you can relax to. The tradition going back is one that engages the senses the intellect and the heart. It really provokes reaction and stimulates and inspires us in that way. So I see it as groundbreaking."

– Matt Haimovitz

Cellist Matt Haimovitz has established himself as one of classical music's most adventurous artists, equally at ease playing the masterworks for his instrument in solo, chamber, and concerto performances as he is bringing many styles of music to new listeners in surprising new venues.

Born in Israel, Haimovitz began to study the cello at the age of seven with Irene Sharp, then with Gábor Rejtő. His family moved to New York so he could study with Leonard Rose at the Juilliard School. Rose described Haimovitz as "probably the greatest talent I have ever taught," praising his "ravishingly beautiful tone" and "unusual sense of style and musical sensitivity."



Haimovitz plays a 1710 Matteo Goffriller cello, and was the youngest musician to be awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant for exceptional musical achievement. Haimovitz is married to composer Luna Pearl Woolf. They have two daughters. He has appeared with many of the major orchestras of North America, Europe and Asia, working with the most distinguished conductors in the world. Haimovitz has been honored with the the Grand Prix du Disque (1991) and Diapason d'Or (1991), the Harvard's Louis Sudler Prize (1996) and is the first cellist to receive the prestigious Premio Internazionale "Academia Musicale Chigiana" (1999). He has been featured in numerous publications, including Newsweek, The New Yorker, Gramophone, Strings and Strad magazines, and has been the subject of televised features on CBS' "Sunday Morning" Germany's ZDF, and "Nova." Additionally, several of his recordings of standard and non-standard repertoire have won international awards.

After graduating from Harvard in 1996, Haimovitz became dissatisfied with the traditional career path of a modern classical musician. He began exploring non-standard classical and non-classical repertoire more intensively, with a program of concerts in unusual venues. His acclaimed "Listening-Room" tour took Bach's beloved cello suites out of concert halls and into intimate venues like night clubs, restaurants and other untraditional venues including New York's infamous CBGB club. This was followed in 2003 by the "Anthem Tour," in which he brought a variety of American compositions, including his rendition of Jimi Hendrix's famous "Star-Spangled Banner" to a great variety of listeners around the US, Canada and the UK.

From 1999 to 2004, Haimovitz was a faculty member at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Since 2004, he has taught at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University in Montreal as well as the Domaine Forgetacademy for the arts in rural Quebec.

Sera Smolen: We loved the "Listening room series" and "Anthem series," where you brought your beautiful music into listening spaces in the US. They were not concert halls, but many were pizza joints with plastic table cloths and soda machines. This project started a process which allowed you to explore and question how and why people engage with music. What did you learn from these tours?

Matt Haimovitz: My upbringing with the Bach Suites made me want to always "polish the diamond," as it were. It was as if there was a "platonic ideal" that Bach always was infallible and larger than life. However, trying to connect with real people on tours every night, the Bach took on new meaning for me in each space. The "platonic ideal" of the perfection of the Bach suites is a false one. What I should be embracing is the humanity of the music, and put a human face onto Bach. Now I am more interested in showing my vulnerability than having to strive for inhuman perfection. While standards and discipline don't go out the window, now I try to look for authenticity in the right places. I used to be extremely shy, and now I try to genuinely connect with the audience in the right way. So all these discoveries became discoveries about myself.

I used to plan tours three years in advance with orchestras. On these tours, I changed the set list night after night. Now I'm playing with Christopher Rily in a project called "Shuffle.play.Listen." Since there is no printed program like there is in a classical concert, we can change the set list night by night. Challenging myself in this way has brought out a more human aspect of myself. I have been re-connecting with the reason why I wanted to play the cello since I was 8 years old.

SS: Your “Meeting of the Spirits” project features Big Band jazz music arranged for 8 cellists who are your students. What does this music have to offer cellists at the college level?

MH: In my studio at McGill University, we have the traditional canon of repertoire: you are expected to work on your Popper, your concerto, Beethoven Sonata, and the Bach cello suites... To augment this, I throw music by living composers at my students. We don't have time to deconstruct the instrument so it sounds like drums or saxophone, like they do at the Berklee school in Boston, nor do we have time to study improvisation or other genres like jazz. This will change, of course, even though it is already changing slowly. A student of today must be much more versatile than ever before in order to make their living.

On a typical day, a professional musician will typically be subbing, recording, creating a sound track, and playing in a blue grass and/or an indie rock band. “Meeting of the Spirits” was our way of throwing ourselves into all this using the genre of big band with a rhythm section. We started by organizing a residency in Quebec for a week. It was very hard at first for us to count, and to play in tune on the challenging parts.

Each tune presented different challenges. We all watched youtube. By the end of the year, on tour, we got much tighter. Then we recorded it. This process broke down the relationship with teacher and student. The seed for this was actually planted when some of my teachers invited me to perform with them. I learned so much from that when I was much younger that I chose to do this project with my own students at McGill.

SS: Do you improvise? Teach improvisation? Why?

MH: In more and more of my teaching, I encourage students to improvise to solve technical problems. For this, we will invent an exercise. I don't feel comfortable teaching structured improvisation. I still find myself a student of it. I'm comfortable teaching the fundamentals

of the instrument, chamber music, and repertoire. I love teaching totally new repertoire. I love to show students the process of trying to understand a new piece. Our next project at McGill might be an improvisation project with my students.

SS: You took your cello to Occupy Wall Street, and Pablo Casals took his cello to the United Nations. What vision do you have for artists as we continue to make the world a better place?

MH: Throughout history, music has been a powerful force. Composers have been aware of the policies of their time. The Rite of spring by Stravinsky made a riot on opening night. The Eroica symphony's title page was torn out when Beethoven disagreed with Napoleon. Throughout the Baroque, Renaissance, and Classical periods, music was meant to elicit an emotional reaction. It was not meant for easy listening. Haydn string quartets were supposed to blow everyone away by the innovations.

I am a citizen, not a politician... but the day I took the cello to Occupy Wall Street, it felt so natural and so right. It felt like a celebration. I asked for a plastic bucket to sit on, then I played Bach, then Hendrix. Everyone was spread out in a large area, so they communicated up and down in a long line. People around me could hear the cello. The message came from this long line of communication: Could I please play more Bach? That request for me was the spirit of the day.

If my music can bring people together, then great. If I can provoke someone to open their ears to the world in a new way, fine. The stakes are just so high at this moment. There is so much turmoil in the world, both man-made and natural, that we need music now more than ever. Leonard Bernstein said: “This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.”

Cellin' Out!

By guest columnist Trevor Exter

How to sing and play at once, on a cello



I'm sitting here listening to an NPR podcast of Tom Waits being interviewed on Fresh Air. Apparently he gargles with rusty nails. He also says that as a kid he "couldn't wait to be an old man," and would scream into a pillow in order to get that weathered, old sound. So don't listen to me, listen to that guy.

Seriously, if you want to sing with the cello, one of the first things you'll need to do is jettison any attachment to classical training. Get comfortable, stop trying to be Yo Yo Ma for a minute and look at what you're doing. Nobody is begging to see you sing with a cello, but it sure can be fun! Here are a couple of pointers to help you get a vibe together for yourself:

Step one, learn to sing. This is easy enough, you probably know how to do it already. If you don't feel like you're good enough, then try one of these three things: get singing lessons, teach yourself to sing or, better yet, stop caring and sing anyway. Sing with records, or find a church and go sing there with everyone else. Singing is fun!

Step two, learn to play the cello. First learn to sit with it comfortably. Cradle it with your knees to keep it from sliding off you, not too tight. You'll need to sit mostly straight in order to sing, but first just start thwacking on it to see what kind of sounds it makes. The weirder the better, keep exploring but make sure you like what you hear.

(This 'liking what you hear' can be achieved either by working very hard for a very long time or by just deciding in advance to like whatever sound comes out. Or some mix of the two. This should also be fun, like singing).

Step three: Sing and play at the same time! Singing is a full-body activity and so is playing the cello. Doing both at once means you'll need to become something of a ninja, but also not judge yourself. You won't be pulling any big Slava moves while singing, nor will you belt like Tom Jones from behind a cello. Start simple, start small. Vocal warm ups are a good icebreaker. Maybe someone ran you through a vocal warmup from a piano once? Well hey, do it with the cello now. Little musical theater scale exercises come in handy.

I just do some basic scales, going up and down by half-steps. There are lots of them so just pick a few: Lip-rolls (like blowing bubbles), Ah's, EE's, OO's. Make up your own routine. I'll show you a bunch in a [video I made](#) – with all the class and subtlety I could muster in a brief hour off the road :-). It takes a little while to get your bearings, but if you do a little bit each day you'll find yourself getting more comfortable. Singing with a cello is silly to begin with so don't take it too seriously. Once you're warmed up, take that voice and put some words on it, lay a groove down on the cello and see what comes out! I like to learn pop songs. You'll see my take on a few of those at the end of the [video](#).

Have Fun!

– xtr

Ask a New Directions Cellist!

What/how do you practice singing and playing?

“How did you first become inspired to sing while accompanying yourself on your cello? What/how do you practice singing and playing?”

Jody Redage (USA)

“As soon as I started composing around age 19, I was mainly interested in writing songs rather than instrumental pieces. At first, I wrote for other singers, but found that in the rehearsals, I was always singing along with the vocalist to help her learn the part, meanwhile playing the cello, too. It eventually dawned on me that although I’m not the greatest singer in the world, I’m decent, and it would be more practical and easier to put together live performances of my music if I was doing both parts. Thus began my so-far eight year odyssey into becoming a competent singing cellist. At first, I starting singing and playing several lines of Bach chorales at the same time, to work on my intonation (playing arco while singing presents greater challenges than playing pizz!). I moved on to attempt greater rhythmic complexity in the opposing parts, and gradually, over several years, my mind became more comfortable to doing two things at once.

One of the biggest challenges to singing and playing cello at the same time is intonation, especially when playing arco rather than pizzicato. To work on intonation, I do two short exercises at the beginning of each practice session. First, I play an open D or G string drone, and sing slow modal scales at the same time on top. I really take my time and focus on getting the overtones of the voice and the overtones of the open string to align for each interval. Then, I play a slow two octave scale on the cello, in a simple key such as G major, and I sing in thirds above. I play the scale without vibrato, use straight tone in my voice, and go slow for overtone alignment. These two exercises really help me fine tune my brain & ear, fingers, and vocal chords, and get me warmed up to work on more challenging music.

One of the best ways to work on singing & playing is to set aside a bit of time everyday to just improvise, using both of your voices. If I spend time doing it every day, my mental capacity grows, and both abilities grow stronger. I know this is an obvious one, but never underestimate the value of recording yourself and checking out what’s really going on: either with an “audio recorder, or even better yet, video yourself. (I just use the voice memo function on my iPhone – and I record almost every improv!)

I’m always reflecting how long it takes to develop one’s abilities as an artist. Whereas I feel somewhat developed as a cellist, as a singer, I’m still a baby. Experts say it takes 10,000 hours of practice to achieve mastery. My definition of mastery is the freedom to do anything your musical imagination conceives during live performance, facilitating spontaneity, expressivity & connection with an audience. I still have many years of work before I feel that sort of freedom expressive capability with my voice. But I’ll keep plodding on! Good luck! It’s a fun journey.”

<http://www.jodyredhage.com>

Ashia Grzesik (USA)

“It was in early high school. I was singing songs and playing on piano and guitar and thought: why not the cello? And it was something I fell in love with doing from the start. By writing songs with the cello, each song poses a new set of ideas that evolve with the songs. If they are really challenging, I keep practicing. I also arrange covers, and every once in a while attempt classical pieces for my own amusement.”

<http://www.ashiagrzesik.com/music>

Marcelo Vieira (Brazil/USA)

"I first got inspired by guitar players who accompany themselves, specifically a great friend of mine who is such a great guitar player and singer/songwriter. I was a cellist in his trio and I started figuring out how to use the cello harmonically in the group. That was the next step that got me going on accompanying my voice. Besides admiring him and other great artists who do that to such a astonishing extent, such as Joao Bosco, and John Mayer (why not!), my study of more advanced cello repertoire (Piaatti caprices, Popper Studies and the Bible – the 6 suites) gave me a pretty obvious clue that I could do much more than just play a melodic line. Picking songs that I really like singing was crucial to get comfortable and feel natural singing and playing.

I practice singing the top of the chord, so for example if I'm playing the root and the 7th, I sing the 10th (3rd), and then expand to more extended chords. I also practice parts separately, one line with voice and another on the cello, until they're automatic enough for me to start doing them together and start to refine the sounds and sync. Another good practice I enjoy is to get a rhythmic groove going, then sing a melodic line on top of it. There's no reason not to sing if you already "sing" on your instrument!"

<http://www.cellomartinez.com>

Eugene Friesen (USA)

"I started singing with my cello in order to better project my lines over the piano, bass and drums. The surprising plus for me was seeing that connecting my voice to my improvising resulted in richer, more imaginative melodies, better use of rests, phrasing, and a cello/voice blend that people seemed to enjoy. The voice really helps connect my ear to my hand."

<http://www.eugenefriesenmusic.com>

Kristen Miller (USA)

"I had been playing guitar and singing for a long time, and I really wanted to transfer that skill to cello. But I was having trouble coordinating the intonation. At the New Directions Cello Festival many years ago, I told the very awesome Corbin Keep about my problem and he said, "You can totally play and sing. Practice scales on the cello while you sing the third above." And from that day, I could do it. I do a lot of improvising with cello and voice to practice coordinating the two."

<http://www.cellobrew.com>

Laura Moody (UK)

"I always wrote songs but didn't quite know what to do with them. A few years ago I was working a lot with a beatboxer and was excited by the intensity and drama that could be achieved by just one performer, a mic and no other technology. I was also really interested in how he constructed beats using different parts of his mouth. I attempted a similar thing building a beat with a fast succession of sounds on the cello and then tried singing over it. That experiment became, "Oh Mother," my first solo cello/vox song.

I practice everything very slowly and deliberately to program every physical and vocal movement into my muscle memory. I also practice hearing the voice and cello as one complete sound and then practice switching my focus between the two while keeping the performance going. Then in performance I take all the breaks off and see what happens..."

<http://www.lauramoodymusic.com>

Mark Dudrow (USA)

"The desire to sing while playing cello has been coming to me naturally – I just want to do it! I find it very difficult however, compared to singing while playing mandolin or guitar. I think cello and singing use the same part of my brain. Often I have to either stop playing to sing lyrics, or play the same melody I am singing (this seems to happen quite easily!). Otherwise, I find singing one part and playing a different part on the cello is very hard and requires concentrated practice... This might be different if I had the same kind of training and background in singing as cello! One reason this seems to be more difficult is that I find I use different breathing patterns when playing the cello than when singing..."

<http://www.markdudrow.com>

Anne Davison (Canada)

"I first started singing in my solo cello-dance work in order to add another instrument to the soundtrack. I would sing long tones on an open vowel (sounded quite cello-like actually!), but I eventually found that I was wanting words to express myself more literally and in a more personal way. Now that I am finding myself deeper in my songwriting project, singing while playing has become a musical staple and an aesthetic that I really like. My practise these days is almost completely repertoire-driven. When practising a given piece, I usually start with the vocal first because that is at the heart of the meaning of the music. Nailing down a solid interpretation of the words can help inform me about how to build the cello part/arrangement. Once I have the arrangement, I will practise just the vocal, then just the cello, then put them together. Once together, I often practise the trickiest little parts slowly for intonation and across the phrases to find the longer lines of the song and where I need to breath or change bow."

<http://www.annedavison.net>

Pawel Walerowski (USA)

"My first thought of singing and playing cello happened when I was accompanying another singer. I can even remember the song we covered – it was Manha de Carnaval (also known as Black Orpheus). It was funny that later, when the singer was gone, I found myself so captivated by the song, I would constantly want to practice and play it, think of how to better arrange it, and come up with better cello lines. At the same time, I would hum the melody. Then I wanted to "investigate" the lyrics. Once I had the cello part completely down, I would try out the vocals separately. It was an interesting discovery – I had a voice! – and clearly, it was another instrument. There was a time in the past, when I did not how to play the cello, but with proper training I was able accomplish a certain level of proficiency on it. Why would it be any different with a voice? After all, I carry it with me at all times :). A huge inspiration has been to listen and see other cello players who sing as well. Trevor Exter and Lindsay Mac were definitely up there."

Generally when I listen to great vocalists and great cellists, it becomes clear that trying to do both is not an easy thing, but the challenge is what keeps me coming back for more. One thing that helps me to do it better is the ability to play piano. Figuring out certain chords on piano gives me a better idea on how eventually I want them to sound when transferred to cello playing."

<http://www.vibosimfani.com>



Serena Jost (USA)

"I first became inspired to sing and play cello at the same time while playing trios and quartets with my family. Sometimes we'd play things over and over again (not everyone was, er, so very talented) – I would get bored with my bass like parts. I'd look out the living room picture window, and start making up another part by singing a vocal line. It was a fun little challenge and kept me entertained. Later I was in bands where everyone was singing with their guitars, so I wanted to use more voices, too.

When I start practicing, I often sing and play notes that intertwine as a way of "tuning" myself to the moment, the sound in the air, and to open up a sense of possibility. After this intuitive beginning, I might practice a cello part first, then practice a vocal line, and then see where they meet/depart/blend/contrast. I might learn each "part" both ways, ie, learn to play the sung part and vice versa. That balances things and makes me understand the relationship from the inside better. I feel as though I am both singing and playing from my sternum, and find doing this to be very gratifying."

<http://www.myspace.com/serenajost>



Abi Wade (UK)

"I used to write songs on the guitar and sing, and when I went to university, I realised that that was what everyone was doing. I was studying music and visual art and being encouraged to always think out of the box. A friend and I decided to start up a group with her singing and me on cello. Within the first practice I could not help but sing along, and so I would sing harmonies and sometimes lead with her. Later she moved away and I became a solo artist adding in percussion too. I practice in my living room usually with a cup of tea that tends to go cold before I finish it. I have my cajon attached to a foot pedal on my right foot and my tambourine/block, also with a pedal on my left, and various sticks and beaters scattered around me. I write and practice by singing and beating and strumming and bowing all at the same time. It seems very natural to me and I seem to get the most fluid creativity this way."

<http://www.abiwade.com>



CelliTubbies

New Directions Cellists on YouTube!

Whoops!! I had a GREAT nine minute long cello youtube cued up for this issue – just that one clip was going to take care of this whole column. But just before we went to press, I discovered that the video had been taken down – oh no! So it was scramble time! Since the theme of this issue is cello and voice, I figured that a shout-out to one of the pioneers of the art was in order.

– Corbin

Arthur Russell was doing things in the 1970s and 80s with cello and voice that were quite revolutionary for the time.

Here's a charming song called Eli:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDKppSNgzl8>

Another version of Eli, live:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detail-page&v=oobdokRYRZk#t=118s (starts at 2:00)

How many cellists have we heard in the last decade who sing to their amplified cello processed through an echo effect? Lots, right? It was much less common in 1985:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQANfUDWyz4>

Last up, an even weirder track along a similar line:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h90Ap8JTsO8>

If you still can't get enough of Arthur Russell, there was a documentary about his life created in 2008, called Wild Combination: A Portrait of Arthur Russell.

YouTube excerpt here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5tM1coZr4k>



Concert Review

By Chris White

Exter vs Kimock at Felicia's Atomic Lounge in Ithaca, NY, Jan 13, 2012

Exter vs Kimock is a duo comprised of Trevor Exter on cello & vocals and John Kimock on drums. But the word "duo" doesn't really do this group justice. At times, with your eyes closed, you might think you are hearing a trio or a quartet or more. This is mainly due to the fact that Trevor Exter has a great voice and he does an amazing job of accompanying himself on cello while he's singing. Sometimes (I'd say less than 1/2 the time) he uses a looper to create layers of cello, but often he sets up great grooves with pizzicato, strumming or tapping /slapping the strings down near where the bow usually would play.

Occasionally they will do an all-instrumental tune which provides a nice change of pace to the vocal numbers; and Trevor uses the bow very beautifully in these situations. John Kimock is a very sensitive and versatile drummer who's playing blends beautifully and complementarily with Trevor's playing and singing.

Trevor grew up here in Ithaca NY (where I live) and I had the privilege of working with him on improvisation back when he was in high school. Since then (now many years ago) he has lived in Brazil, Wisconsin, New York City and now resides in Pennsylvania (for those few days a month that XVSK is not on the road).

The group played recently at a great little "corner bar" here in Ithaca – Felicia's Atomic Lounge. My wife and I went down to hear the music and have a drink. The place was packed! It was a Friday night and there was not a seat in the house when we arrived before they started playing – well maybe we got the last 2 seats at the bar. People kept coming in and blocking our view, but it didn't really matter so much because the music was so good and so strong that not being able to see actually helped me hear it better – like when you close your eyes... The music is a refreshing blend of funk, pop, blues and jazz with lots of variety.

[Here's a video from this very gig.](#) The official XVSK site can be found [here](#).

(Editor's note: Trevor is guest columnist for Cellin' Out in this issue of Cello City Online and will be leading workshops on singing and playing at NDCF 2012.)

CD Review

Will Martina's "The Dam Levels"

Upon hearing this cello-driven jazz trio, I realized how hungry I've been lately for some truly fresh, alive, vibrant new music. The Dam Levels is the real deal; it sports the sort of magic you often need to go digging through old recordings to find.

Cellist-composer Will Martina is accompanied by band-mates Jason Lindner on piano and Richie Barshay on drums. These three guys pump out grooves that are so happily infectious, I doubt that very few people in their audiences can manage to sit still. This band is having fun, and as a listener, I find that I've no choice but to have fun too. It's jazz, for sure, but it's spacious & inclusive, as opposed to wanking & self indulgent. People who think they don't like jazz will likely enjoy Will Martina. The music embraces simplicity, often using harmonically static, repeated polyrhythms as a starting point, then allowing more complex structures to evolve naturally from there.

Some of the hooks are so strong that I have found myself in "driveway moments" – where the music is playing in the car and I've arrived home, but can't quite bring myself to stop listening and get out – at least until the tune is done!

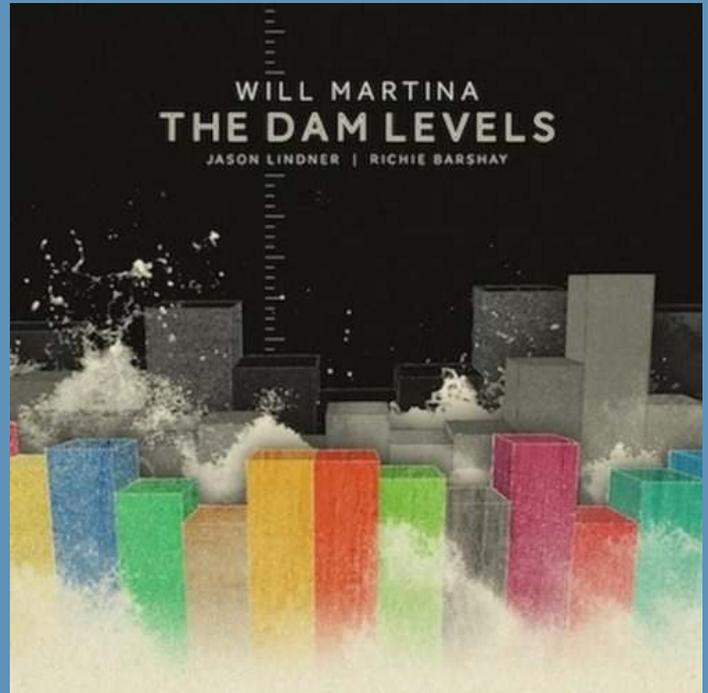
A lovely solo cello arrangement of God Bless the Child wraps things up nicely.

Buy/download the CD:

<http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/willmartina>

Will Martina's website:

<http://www.willmartinamusic.com>



Sheet Music Review – Revisited

By Aaron Minsky

“Dead Cello” rises again! An uncooked Western omelette on the editor’s face! (me) The sunny side of all this is that many of us are learning lots about the Grateful Dead!

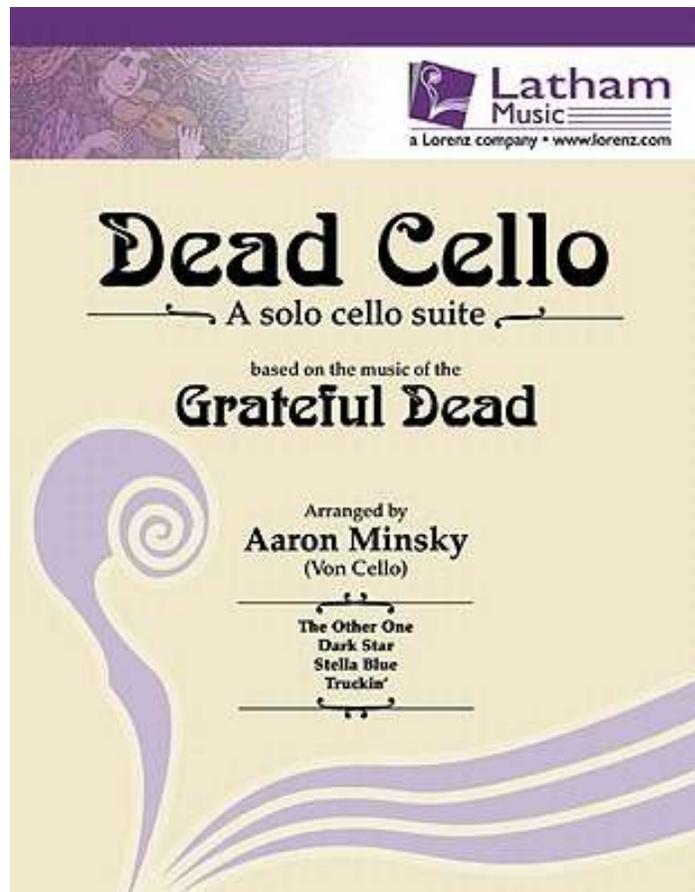
In the last issue of Cello City Online, I wrote a review of Aaron Minsky’s *Dead Cello*. On rare occasions over the years, when I have said critical things in a review, I have heard back from the author/artist. Usually, if they have taken issue what I wrote, it’s been a matter of differing opinion, as opposed to indisputable fact. We can agree to disagree. However, with Aaron Minsky’s response to my review of *Dead Cello*, he was so completely right and I was so completely wrong, that to set things straight, I have decided to include the entirety of what he wrote in this issue! *Dead Cello* lives! Well worth the read.

Re: the review of “Dead Cello” in the Winter 2011 issue of Cello City Online:

I was happy that the reviewer liked the arrangements but I was surprised about his lack of knowledge of the Grateful Dead. In the spirit of education I would like to bring forth some facts which will provide some balance to his negative appraisal of the band.

The review begins:

“If you’ve ever wondered if legendary band The Grateful Dead was a one hit wonder (or close to it) Aaron Minsky, aka Von Cello, has created a book which helps to prove it.” Helping to prove this point was not my intention, and the point itself is misleading. Ironically, the only Top 100 hit the Dead had was “Touch of Grey,” which the author didn’t mention. Rather he continues, “In fact, of the songs which could be considered their hits, only a few of them, notably Truckin’ & Casey Jones, might still be heard on oldies radio.” But what he is inadvertently proving is that the Dead has had more than one “hit.” Improperly describing classic rock radio stations as “oldies radio,” he acknowledges that Truckin’ and Casey Jones are both heard on these stations but he leaves out that Touch of Grey, Uncle John’s Band, Friend of the Devil, Ripple, Sugar Magnolia and others are also heard on these stations.



More important: *getting “hits” was not the focus of the Grateful Dead!* The Dead were a quintessential American musical institution. Rather than go for the quick buck by following the latest trend, they looked into all types of musical traditions: blues, country, bluegrass, Tex-Mex, rock n’ roll, gospel, jazz, prog-rock, even modern classical.

Let's look at some facts:

1. The Grateful Dead were one of the highest grossing touring acts in America for over a decade and one of a handful that reached the number one spot on two different years.
2. Overall, the Grateful Dead were one of the most profitable musical acts in history.
3. Rolling Stone included the Grateful Dead in their list of the 100 Greatest Artists of All Time.
4. The Grateful Dead were one of the longest running musical groups in American history, touring pretty much non stop from the mid 1960's until 1995 when their lead guitarist, Jerry Garcia, died, yet continuing to play in various formations since then.
5. The Grateful Dead were able to reach people in all walks of life and all age groups. Look up the glowing comments about Jerry Garcia upon his death, by Senator Patrick Leahy and President Bill Clinton.
6. If one were to call the Dead a "one hit wonder" because they only had one song in the US Top 40, we must add to that list: Jimi Hendrix, Garth Brooks, Rush, Janis Joplin and many other artists who are widely considered among the greatest of our time.
7. The term "one hit wonder" is usually reserved for artists that come and go in a flash and only have one song that becomes known to the public such as: "Disco Duck," "Bird is a Word," "They're Coming to Take Me Away," and "Macarena."

The reviewer also failed to mention that "Dead Cello" is a *solo cello suite*. In fact, it is entitled, "Dead Cello – A Solo Cello Suite." *It is written in the tradition of the Bach cello suites*. The pieces were picked because they fit well together. They are all in the key of E and are in a tempo order of fast, moderate, slow, and fast. The music of one leads to the other and they all blend to create a complete musical statement. (My many years of composing original cello suites helped me conceive and construct this suite.)

The songs were also chosen because they represent some of the most musically challenging in the rock archives. "The Other One" is written in a driving 6/8 with many interesting syncopations. "Dark Star" includes meter changes and three against four rhythms. "Stella Blue" features a mix of pizz and arco as well as arpeggios strummed and bowed. "Truckin" is a romp in a 6/8 blues feel featuring all kinds of double stops and chords.

True, these songs are not, as the reviewer pointed out, "songs people walk around humming 40 years+ later," but they were not intended to be! In fact, these are some of the most esoteric of the Dead's output, with lyrics that hint at psychedelic experiences as well as deep spiritual insights such as:

*"It all rolls into one and nothing comes for free,
There's nothing you can hold, for very long.
And when you hear that song come crying like the wind,
It seems like all this life was just a dream."*

The review said, "Well-known material tends to be the staple of most rock and pop cello transcriptions, however in this case, the arranger has precious little of that to draw from." *However, "Dead Cello" is not a rock and pop cello transcription*. It is a solo cello suite that uses important songs from the repertoire of one of America's most enduring musical ensembles to create a contemporary addition to the cherished art form created by J.S. Bach.

The New Directions Cello Association is an organization dedicated to the growth of the cello in all forms of contemporary music. Unfettered by conventional tastes and corporate biases the NDCA reaches out to every genre and preaches constant creation through improvisation and alternative forms of promotion. The Grateful Dead were pioneers who early on bucked the trends dictated by the corporations. From jug band tunes to almost classical creations like Terrapin Station, they synthesized virtually every type of music, constantly improvising on whatever they created. They also sparked the "indie" revolution with their direct outreach to fans, long concerts, the allowing of taping of their shows and the encouragement of fans to trade recordings. We in the NDCA actually owe a great debt to the Grateful Dead.

I still have the greatest respect for the NDCA. I'm just sorry this reviewer didn't understand how "Dead Cello" fits into its mission. It would have been nice if he mentioned the fact that this publication represents the first time in history that the Dead's music has been published in a classical arrangement for a single instrument! As Alan Trist (the President of Ice Nine, the Dead's publisher) said, "There is more to come in this field, and you have paved the way."

Jeffrey Solow, well known concert cellist, has performed "Dead Cello" extensively, including in Alaska and China. This is how the Birmingham News reviewed his performance in Alabama:

"A succession of four Grateful Dead tunes arranged for solo cello, Aaron Minsky's "Dead Cello" was the centerpiece of a concert by Solow and pianist Elise Auerbach, both faculty members at Temple University in Philadelphia. "Dead Cello" came after Beethoven, and before Schumann and Chopin, but somehow fit nicely into the 19th century landscape.

Except for the subtle glissandos, "The Other One" could well have been composed originally for cello. "Dark Star" was driven by repetitive rhythms and underlined with open textured double stops, "Stella Blue" given introspective warmth. "Truckin" was the bluesy, upbeat finale, Solow dashing off triple and quadruple-stop chords with ease.

"Dead Cello" succeeds as much for the memorable tunes as the freshness of their interpretation. Minsky's command for writing for the cello and Solow's eloquent execution made this engaging listening. More important, it represents a growing body of boundary-crossing scores that are opening minds and strengthening repertoire."

I recently heard from New Directions cellist, Martha Colby, who reported that "Dead Cello" received a great response at the Yellowstone Inn, in Yellowstone Park where she has performs it nightly. I wish the same enjoyment and audience response to all who will choose to help "Dead Cello" live!

I must say I am thankful that the reviewer's negativity was focussed on the Dead's music rather than on my arrangements, but I feel his opinion of their music stems from a lack of knowledge of the history of the band and its place in American music. If the NDCA would be interested, I would be thrilled to perform "Dead Cello" at a future festival. Then our members could experience the suite for themselves and decide whether or not to add it to their own repertoires!

In keeping with the idea of “catching you up” on the Grateful Dead, I thought you might enjoy hearing some of the original versions of the songs that I arranged in Dead Cello. These are some good versions I found on YouTube. I know its a lot to take in so feel free to check these out as time allows.

The Other One (from Anthem of the Sun)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_75fDL-XXgg

This has a long intro that is another song that becomes a medley on this album. The song The Other One begins around 2:00. This was the original “Magical Mystery Tour” song about the bus that the Pranksters took across the country in the mid 60’s spreading the gospel of LSD when it was still legal. (The Beatles borrowed this concept for their album.) At 4:00 that song ends and they go into a coda of the first song and into a very cool “modern classical” prepared piano section at around 5:40.

You can hear my cello rock band version on this page: http://www.voncello.com/recordings_auditions.html It’s similar to my arrangement but goes off into a long intense jam with 2 cello lines. The drummer was in the bands of Tim Buckley and Duncan Sheik. The bass player played on Broadway with River Dance.

Dark Star (Live Album version)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0aTWEHTU99Q>

This is the most famous version of this anthem to the psychedelic experience. You’ll notice that the jam goes on for quite some time before they get to the part in my arrangement. The creativity in this live performance always struck me as some kind of pinnacle. The guitar sings like a cello and keeps changing tone as if he is using a bow. And the band follows as one no matter where Garcia goes. At 5:16 he plays a line that forms the middle section of my arrangement (copied out exactly as he does it). At 6:18 they finally sing the first part of the melody. The come back to it later after another amazing jam.

Stella Blue (Studio Version)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvBd8bXHngE>

Check out the almost classical perfection of the playing and the recording. I suggest ignoring the video and shutting your eyes and really listening. One of their members died just before they made this album and you can hear their deep sorrow in the music. This is an example of where they really crossed beyond being a “rock band” into being just a great musical group.

Truckin’ (the back story)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2IDtMy-ca8>

No sense in sending you the studio version since you’ve heard it on the radio. Here is a live version cut with interviews with the band about the history of the song and what it meant to them.

Here’s the interview with Bill Clinton on Jerry Garcia:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXjHwAnHepM>

Here Garcia gives a little insight into his thinking about music:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BU30HpQIV94>

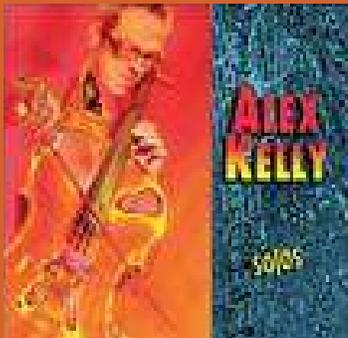
BTW, in case you think I’m a Dead Head, I’m not. Of course there was a teenaged year or two when I was totally into them but since then they have been one of many musical things I’ve studied and enjoyed. But I knew that I had an especially deep understanding of them because I could play all of their songs on guitar before I took a cello lesson, and I knew I could be the one to bring their music into a form that could be played by all cellists, hence, Dead Cello.

– Aaron Minsky

<http://www.voncello.com>

Music in the Mail

Every so often a package lands on the NDCA's doorstep. It is usually unexpected, and may come from near or far. Many thanks to those who have sent these gems. Here are the CDs and sheet music that have arrived since our last issue.



"Solos" Alex Kelly 2012

A multi-genre, multi-track cello album. In his debut album, Dr. Alex Kelly takes you and his cello on a trip through many styles. Thirteen original tracks, plus Bach and Django.

<http://www.alexkelly.com>



"Walk" Kristen Miller 2010

Eight out of ten tunes are originals of Kristen who plays the cello and sings (and spoken word), plus Tom Eaton, percussion, Steve Bankuti, drums. Bluesy, singer-song-writery with great cello playing.

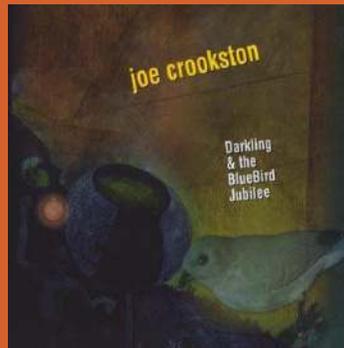
<http://www.cellobrew.com>



"Meeting of the Spirits" Matt Haimovitz 2010

Grammy nominated cellist Matt Haimovitz put eight cellos together to sound like the coolest big band ever with guests John McLaughlin and Matt Wilson & Jan Jarczyk.

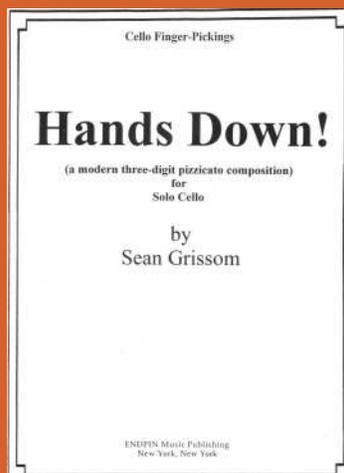
<http://www.oxingalerecords.com/matt-haimovitz>



"Darkling & the BlueBird Jubilee" Joe Crookston 2011

Joe, guitar, vocals and songwriter, Chris White, cello, Peter Glanville, tenor guitar, Pat Wictor, dobro, Jason, Rafalak, bass and more. Cello on most tunes in supportive role. Good songs and arrangements.

<http://www.joecrookston.com>



Endpin Publishing
Available through the
[Cello City Store](#)

Sean Grissom – Four new sheet music offerings:

Thumbs Up! A modern two-digit pizzicato composition for solo cello.

Hands Down! A modern three-digit pizzicato composition for solo cello.

Jump, Jive & Boogie. Three rock 'n' roll etudes for solo cello.

Viva España. An Iberian excursion – four compositions; including the classic "Cello Fandango" from 1992.

InCelligence Briefings

Now *this* is news: what cellists have been lusting after for years! A playable LEGO cello!



Next up, your chance to ~~really waste time~~ be a Cello Hero!



The CelLowdown

Final Words

What is meant by the term "Transclassical Cello?" The definition as I see it: in "trans," the term *transcended* or *transcendent* is implied. The difference between classical cello being "transcended" vs "abandoned" is quite acute. With transcendence, everything that came before is *included*, so classical cello, rather than being dismissed and excluded, is instead acknowledged as the fertile ground in which many other styles we now play on cello originally grew – and continue to grow. We might identify ourselves as country cellists, celtic cellists or metal cellists, and yet still be as passionate about playing Bach and Bocherinni as the staunchest "classical only" players. Personally, I favour "transclassical" over the perhaps clearer, but more negative "non-classical" and hope it enters into the cellnacular!

Until next time, may your celloopportunitites abound, celloptimism flourish, endless celloptions present themselves, as cellists everywhere move towards Worldwide Cellomnipotence!

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

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



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