



cello city ONLINE

Newsletter of the New Directions Cello Association & Festival Inc.
Vol 18, No.4 Fall/Winter 2011

Welcome to the Nexus of the Next Step in Cello!

Combustible Cello!

Caffeinated Cello!

Certifiable Cello!

Challenging Cello!

Un-cautious Cello!

Cinematic Cello!

Chimerical Cello!

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DON'T FORGET TO VISIT:

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



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Sometimes I wonder why I continue working away throughout the year to keep New Directions going. Now working on planning our 18th annual festival, this New Directions thing has been a part of my life for so long that I also occasionally wonder what I would do without it! While it surely cuts down on my ability to put time in on my own musical career, I think it's the memory of all the rich experiences from past festivals and the wonderful connections I have made with the (almost) countless great guest artists that keep me going.

For more inspiration and reasons to come to the next festival, check out the photos and article about the 2011 festival and get ready for an exciting 18th annual festival, June 8-10th, 2012 at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York.

Hope to see you in June!

- Chris



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NEW DIRECTIONS CELLO FESTIVAL 2011

Reminiscing NDCF 2011, & a peek at the 2012 festival lineup!

If a picture is worth a thousand words, we have thousands of words here to attest to the great cello-istic times we had at the 17th annual New Directions Cello Festival at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York this past June 10th-12th.

Guest artists were Eugene Friesen (with Tim Ray on piano, vocalist Mili Bermejo & bassist Dan Greenspan), Mike Block, Kevin Fox, Renata Bratt and her New Almaden Trio, & Sera Smolen with Tom Mank & Susan Hoover.

One of the hallmarks of our festival is the wide variety of styles we present. From Cajun to Choro, Acid Jazz to Zydeco, Bebop to Western Swing, and many, many styles which defy categorization - it all happens on the cello, and it all happens at New Directions!

If you've ever been to one of these festivals you'll know what it's all about; amazing concerts, cool workshops, hanging out with kindred spirits, playing in the Cello Big Band (30-40+ cellos) and jamming into the night with cellists and others. What you might not find at the festival is time for much besides cello-mania. Sleep is something we save for after the rosin dust clears. Dinner at Moosewood Restaurant in downtown Ithaca? Or maybe a hike in one of the beautiful gorges and state parks in and around Ithaca? Well, some find a way to do these things, but usually it entails taking time away from cello-landia or coming early and/or staying on after the festival. There is, in fact, a group of dedicated NDCFers who come the day before and stay an extra night. These folks claim that the best jamming and hanging out happens on Thursday and Sunday nights...while the official festival happens Friday noon through Sunday afternoon. Maybe you'll want to join this select group at our 18th annual festival: New Directions 2012, June 8-10th!

The sponsors for the 2011 festival were: [Strings Magazine](#), [Super-Sensitive String Co](#), [NS Design](#), [David Gage String Instruments](#), [Electric Violin Shop](#), [D'Addario](#), Ithaca College, [Finger Lakes Environmental Film Festival](#) and the members of the NDCA.



New Directions Cello Festival 2012, June 8-10th, will again be taking place at Ithaca College. At the time of this writing, guest artists are still in the process of being invited, however there are already several confirmations:

**Kelly Ellis with [Ancient Device](#)
Dave Eggar with [Deoro Trio](#)
Matt Haimovitz with [Uccello](#)
Matt Turner!**



CELLIN' OUT!

WITH BRYAN WILSON

6 Easy Ways to Start Chordin'



Hey there cello friends! Let's put the bow down for a second and try playing some chords. Knowing how to play chords will help you tremendously because harmony is a fundamental building block in nearly all styles and genres of music. I'm going to outline 6 different types of chords using only one fingering for each. These fingerings will work in every key, so you'll have a go-to position to get you started.

Let's start out with the basic major and minor chord fingerings. To play any major chord, put your 1st finger on the root note, then bar your 1st finger directly across the next string, and place your 3rd finger on the last string. To play any minor chord, do the same exact thing, but instead of placing your 3rd finger on the final string, use your 2nd second finger on the note a half step lower. Here are all of the major and minor chords using these fingerings:

[Video](#)

Now let's try some seventh chords. To play a dominant 7th chord that will work in any key, put your 1st finger on the root note of the chord, your 4th finger on the next string, and your 3rd finger on the final string. To play a major 7th chord, you will have to use an extension. Place your 1st finger on the root note, place your 4th finger in an extension position on the next string, and finally place your 2nd finger in the extended position on the final string. Here are all of the dominant 7th and major 7th chords using these fingerings:

[Video](#)

For our final chords, let's try some augmented and diminished. To play an augmented chord, put your 1st finger on the root note, your 2nd finger on the next string, and your 3rd finger on the final string. To play a diminished chord, put your 2nd finger on the root note, your 1st finger on the next string, and your 3rd finger on the final string. Here are all of the augmented and diminished chords using these fingerings:

[Video](#)

There you go! You're off to a great start playing chords on your cello. If you want to explore more types of chords and tons of cool ways to play them, check out my book, *Cello Chords*, which can be [purchased on my site](#). Have fun guys! (editor's note: there is a review of Bryan's book in this issue of Cello City Online)

DOMINANT 7th (use 1 4 3)
C⁷ F⁷ B^b7 E^b7 A⁷ D⁷ F⁷ B^b7 E^b7 A⁷ D⁷ G⁷
use same fingering for all

MAJOR 7th (use 1 4 2)
C⁷ F⁷ B^b7 E^b7 A⁷ D⁷ F⁷ B^b7 E^b7 A⁷ D⁷ G⁷
use same fingering for all

AUGMENTED (use 1 2 3)
C⁺ F⁺ B^b7 E^b7 A⁷ D⁷ F⁷ B^b7 E^b7 A⁷ D⁷ G⁺
use same fingering for all

DIMINISHED (use 2 1 3)
C^o F^o B^b7 E^b7 A^o D^o F^o B^b7 E^b7 A^o D^o G^o
use same fingering for all

MAJOR (use 1 1 3)
C F B^b D^b A^b D^b F^b B^b E^b A^b D^b G^b
use same fingering for all

MINOR (use 1 1 2)
C F^b B^b E^b A^b D^b F^b B^b A^b D^b G^b
use same fingering for all

INCELLIGENCE BRIEFINGS

Cycling Cellists! No, we're not referring to those tired souls who get paid a pittance to slog it out every summer playing [Wagner's Ring](#) - these cyclists are the real deal. A big thanks to [Joey Chang](#) for the heads-up about this wonderful way in which Cello Love is being spread by pedal power. Recently, Joey toured in Europe for 6 months on his bike, hauling not only his cello, but also a human-powered PA.

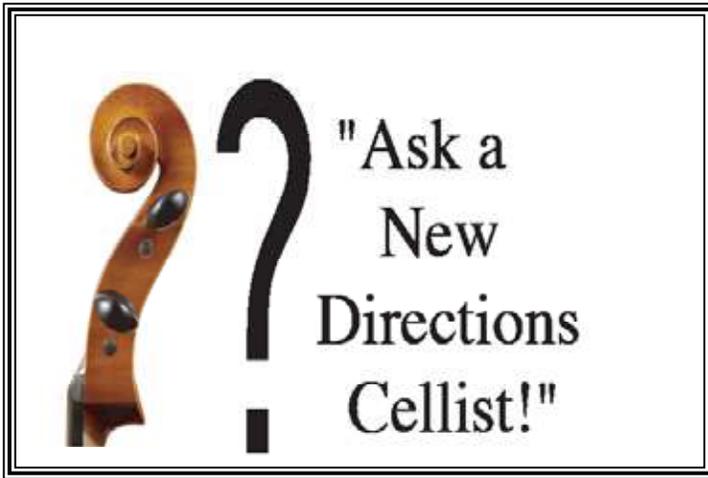
Some other Cycling Cellists of note: [Kristin Rule](#) & [Ben Sollee](#)

Jelena Mihailovic, a young Serbian rock cellist, has been hired to write the [score for the next James Bond film](#).

[The New Directions facebook page](#) is hopping! Cellists from all over the world are posting interesting new stuff on an almost daily basis.

[This article](#) may be a bit dated, but hey, news is news, right?





In each issue of Cello City Online, we publish answers to questions posed to the New Directions Cello Community (professional and semi-professional cellists). If you have a question you'd like presented here, please send an email to the editor: corbin-keep@telus.net Note: questions and responses may be edited for clarity.

Our question:

"There are very few instruction books or established methods for learning to play non-classical styles on the cello. New Directions cellists, as a rule, need to be inventive and forge their own way. Outside of the scope of regular classical study, what are some of the things you have worked on in order learn to do what you do?"

•

[Gideon Freudmann \(USA\)](#)

A few things that helped me find a way into playing non-classical music were:

- Figuring out cello lines in Beatles songs like Piggy, Strawberry Fields, I am the Walrus...
- Jamming with recordings, especially simple forms like 12 bar blues or predictable folk tunes
- Improvising with friends

•

[Zeno Gabaglio \(IT\)](#)

There were two things which took me beyond the classical idea of cello playing/thinking.

The first came from contemporary classical music. Some pieces, such as those by composers Karlheinz Stockhausen and Vinko Globokar, are written in "open form". Interpreting this music requires inventing what to play in the "free" sections of

these pieces. For me, that was the first experience of going out of the bounds of normal written music; of thinking myself as a creator, and not only as a player.

The second experience which changed the way I approach cello playing was during an international competition in Aosta, Italy (2002) for presenting live music on silent movies. To instantly create a live musical score for a 25 minute movie was for me, unthinkable with only a "normal" cello. The only solution I found was to enhance my cello electronically, via amplification, effects and looping. Multi-layer playing is a completely different mode of expression on our instrument!

•

[Stephanie Winters \(USA\)](#)

Standing up can be a great way to work on phrasing and groove. Playing while standing also helped me with my breathing when I was working on my singing and playing. I usually rest my left foot on a equipment case* - about 12 inches tall - to raise my knee, in order to secure the cello. I also use an extra long endpin.** However, an easy way to get started is by resting the cello on a padded keyboard bench and standing with both feet flat. If you don't have the right bench, you can kneel on the floor on something padded like a rolled towel. As the hips are straight when you kneel - you get many of the same benefits as standing. I no longer perform standing, but I still use it as a practice technique - even with Bach.

Editor's notes: *If you don't have an equipment case, or it's not the right size, I've found that a wooden yoga block can work well for this purpose, and travels well. **Commercially manufactured, extra-long endpins can be difficult to come by. An extremely inexpensive workaround is to purchase steel tubing which is the exact same diameter as your cello's existing endpin. If you take your cello to a shop which sells steel tubing, you can obtain an endpin that literally will be as long as your cello is deep; just push an extra long piece into the receptacle at the bottom of your instrument, mark it, then have someone at the shop cut it for you. I paid about \$20 for my extra long endpin. (The name of the store - no kidding! - was "[Metal Mart](#)" in Langley, British Columbia) The issue of the point on the end can be solved by having a pointed metal tip welded on (more expensive) or using one of [Sean Grissom's Stoppins](#) (very cheap). I must confess

that I've never bothered with either; something about the angle of the endpin when standing up makes it less prone to slippage for some reason. (If you're playing on a rug, of course there's no issue with slippage at all.)

[Here is a video](#), from NDCF '97, of Stephanie utilizing her raised foot standing technique.

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[Beth Welch Snellings \(USA\)](#)

"The most important thing for me is to get away from constant note-reading...replacing the note-reading with listening to music and trying to imitate what I hear. Reading chord symbols is also an important cognitive skill to develop - I can play like a guitarist, except with a cello in my hands."

-

[Mark Dudrow \(USA\)](#)

1) Playing other instruments: electric bass, mandolin, guitar, and taking things I learn about groove back to the cello.

2) Playing music outside the classical repertoire on the cello, i.e. traditional folk music learned by ear, fiddle tunes etc.

3) Jamming with all different kinds of music; trying to emulate the sounds of other instruments.

4) I sometimes work on specific technical skills which are not often found in classical music (but with the same kind of practice mentality) i.e., blues scales, slides, harmonic effects.

-

[Chris White \(USA\)](#)

I think the most important non-classical learning I did in the past came from what I did on the guitar, which was playing by ear (learning songs/tunes from recordings and from others) as well as making up my own stuff and jamming with other people. I did this all while I was studying the cello classically with classical teachers. For many years I never thought the two "worlds" would come together, but then, at about age 18, I started experimenting with jamming and "fooling around" on the cello. I think I got the "feel" of non-classical music from all the time I had worked on my guitar playing - all of the instincts and theoretical knowledge that I had acquired as a guitarist - and then transferred that to the cello. Much later, I actively studied jazz theory (chords and scales) on the cello and worked with Jamie Aebersold's play-along books & CDs.

In my teaching now, what I mostly use with my students for their non-classical development are my

own "Jazz Cello" book & CD method, Sera Smolen's "Fiddling Tunes for Cello & Guitar" and some of the Aebersold material. I also like to help them with other books they might find and bring in, like Beatles tunes, or other pop/rock stuff.

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[Trevor Exter \(USA\)](#)

1) Rhythm! Google Bembe Wheel and do that stuff.
2) For knowing where the notes are and what they really should sound like, the big book "Harmonic Experience" is invaluable - especially for us non-fretted players.

-

[Kristen Miller \(USA\)](#)

I practice against drones all the time for intonation, and playing against loops helps me work rhythm. Mostly though, practicing for gigs is about repetition - the same as for classical music. Can't get away from it!

-

[Priscilla Hawkins \(USA\)](#)

I am classically trained. About 10 years ago, I took some lessons from Marika Hughes, who was also originally a classical player, but crossed over. She used me as a guinea pig. I started listening more to familiar songs and tried playing along, which was much easier than I thought. Also, I listened to jazz, then recorded myself playing, to hear what I needed to change to sound more like a jazz player. Memorizing all kinds of music has also made a big difference for me.



CELLITUBBIES: NEW DIRECTIONS CELLISTS ON YOUTUBE

Our theme for tonight's edition of Cellitubbies: cello humour! Some might say that the oft-somber, if not downright morose sound of the cello does not lend itself to being funny. Often, this is true. The Brahms E Minor, for example, is not apt to evoke even a chuckle. Much of the time the humour in cello humour is when the cellist is not trying to be funny!

To wit:

[Video](#)

Let's set a soundpost! Oops:

[Video](#)

I'm not sure if the famous cellist in this scene from this 1969 film was trying to be funny or not. He certainly looks serious:

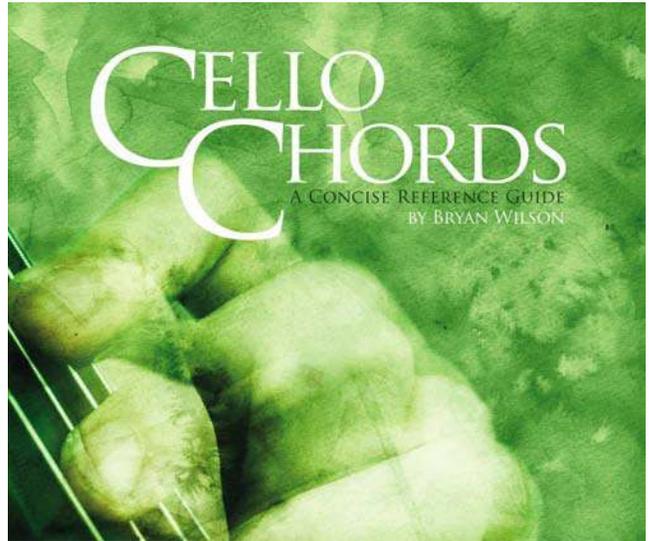
[Video](#)

Nice to know that in a pinch, your cello can be used as a toboggan:

[Video](#)



BOOK REVIEW: *Cello Chords* by Bryan Wilson



[Cello Chords](#) is, according to the author, "the only book on the market to focus solely on the cello's massive chord potential." If you are a cellist just beginning to delve into the world of 'comping' on your axe, Wilson's book could be an eye opener for you. For more seasoned, already chord-savvy cellists, you will doubtless find some fresh voicings, and new approaches which may not have occurred to you before.

One thing I notice about the book is that it definitely leans toward Wilson's own idiosyncrasies as a cellist. For example, for chords where all of the voices cannot be played simultaneously, he has devised a system which utilizes hammer-ons, pull-offs and using the same finger twice. For much of this, it's not something that I would personally find useful all that often. In fact, in many of the cases, I found that by using my own fingerings, I was able to play the chords in one go without using his techniques. Clearly, the techniques are something that work for Wilson, and he probably does wonderful, unique things with them. However to what degree this knowledge might benefit other cellists remains to be seen. (for more about this style of chord execution, please refer to [Bryan's video on this subject](#))

Cello Chords is set up so that the chords are presented going up in the circle of 5ths as you make your way through the book; that is, C chords first, followed by G, then D, etc. They also progress in complexity - C, Cm, C7, Cm7 etc. The format is standard bass clef notation with suggested fingerings - no guitar style diagrams here!

Examples are given of certain chords where MANY possible permutations are shown. A voicing of "C" will be written C-G-E-C, then, next to that, the same chord, but with one note missing; showing only the C-G-E with no C on top. I am of two minds with regard to this approach. Mind one: given the "massive" potential for chords on the instrument, is it not a bit redundant to trot out voicings that are nearly identical, with only a note or two added or subtracted? Mind two: it's possible that a cellist might not explore all of the possibilities, and hence

would fail to discover the joy of some chords, because the exact notes were not laid out for them.

Some of the chords I find unplayable (like, hopeless, not gonna happen). Others are playable and make theoretical sense, but don't sound very good, or feel very good to play - at least to me. Perhaps it's just as well that they are included, one never knows, but there are other chords which I love and play all the time which are strangely absent from the book. For example, where are the six chords? (to be fair, a few six chords do make an appearance in the bonus section at the end of the book, along, strangely, with some voicings of five chords. I say strangely, because five chords are a staple in so many genres, one would think that they might occupy a more prominent spot in the book, with more fingering possibilities).

Cellists don't tend to approach chords the way guitarists (especially jazzers) do; that is, learn a huge bunch of chords so they can grab lots of different voicings at will. But Wilson's book can help to open up this possibility for cellists. How many cellists can look at a jazz chart that goes from a F#7#9, to a BbMaj7#11/D, to a G+add9/D# and instantly know several nice sounding voicings? Not very many of us, I'm guessing. Yet, I personally know several jazz guitarists who could look at those chords and whip off multiple versions - not to mention cool passing tones between them - in their sleep. Wouldn't that be great to be able to have those chops on cello? Of course it would!

Cello Chords will get you on your way.

BOOK REVIEW: *Dead Cello*

by Aaron Minsky, Latham Music, 2011

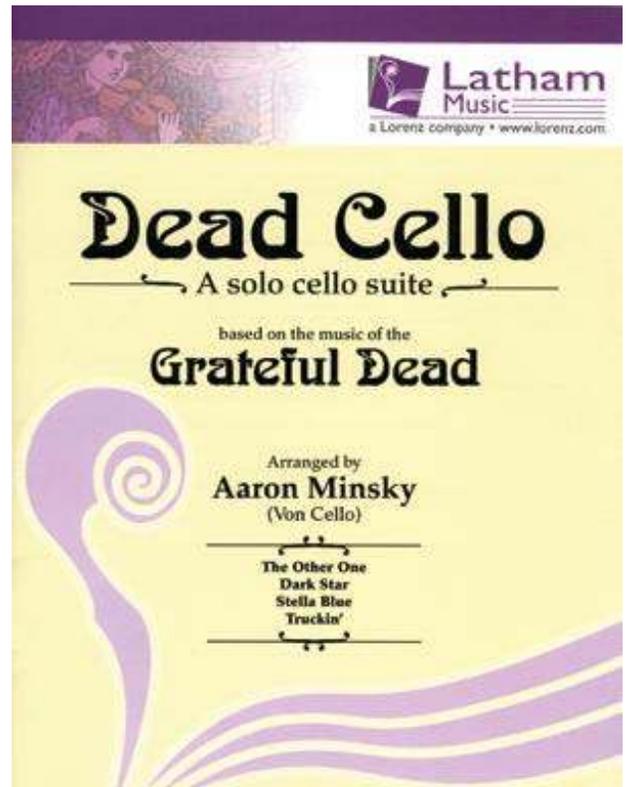
If you've ever wondered if legendary band The Grateful Dead was a one hit wonder (or close to it) Aaron Minsky, aka Von Cello, has created a book which helps to prove it.

Dead Cello is comprised of four Grateful Dead songs, transcribed for solo cello. Problem is that The Dead, unlike most other famous sixties bands, were really more of an onstage jam phenomenon than anything else. Consequently, they are not a group whose songs people walk around humming 40 years+ later. 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. Compared to the memorable classics by many of the Dead's contemporaries, the pickins' are pretty slim indeed. Well-known material tends to the staple of most rock and pop cello transcriptions, however in this case, the arranger has precious little of that to draw from.

Given this dearth of hum-able fodder, Minsky actually does quite well with creating playable cello arrangements. The music is concise, easy to read, and thankfully devoid of too many markings, which can sometimes plague transcriptions of rock songs to notation. The obligatory Truckin' is of course represented here; as for the other three songs, which are more obscure, you may enjoy them just 'cause they're fun to play. However if you're a Deadhead (pretty much a dying breed at this late date) you'll probably be in, um, heaven. The cello arrangements you've been waiting over 40 years for are finally here!

(On a slightly more serious note, as etudes/solo cello performance works - whether you know the original versions or not - these pieces have definite value. If you're a teacher, try sliding one of these arrangements in next to those photocopies from the Schroeder 170 Foundation Studies for your student's practice this week - you'll have them eating out of your hand by Thanksgiving!)

[Order info is here;](#) [Aaron Minsky's website here.](#)



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 latest gems.

Will Martina - *The Dam Levels* (CD, 2011) Will Martina, cello, Jason Lindner, piano & Richie Barshay, drums. All originals by Will Martina except last track, "God Bless the Child." Expansive, open-ended jazz-inspired compositions. Acoustic cello w/ piano and drums.

Rebecca Hartka - *Folkfire* (CD, 2010) While technically not 'New Directions', the featured pieces are all masterworks for cello which were inspired by non-classical folk styles. Works by De Falla, Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams and more, are all beautifully played by Hartka.

Eugene Friesen - *Colorful Transitions* (CD, 2011) with Tim Ray, piano. Originals, Brazilian, Richard Rogers and more. Also from Eugene, *Steering by the Stars* (CD, 2010) with his group, Trio Globo, featuring Howard Levy, piano, harmonica, ocarina & Glenn Velez, percussion.

Stephen Katz - *Flying Pizzicato* (CD 2011) Eight tracks of original "...pulse-driven, multi-voice cello music..." Pizzicato never steknew what hit it.

Wytold - *When Fulvio Finds Celeste* (CD, 2011) Wytold plays six-string electric cello and trad acoustic with a loop pedal.

Sean Grissom - *Cello Finger-Pickings: 2011*. (Sheet music series, 2011) Endpin Music Publishing Unlocking the Guitar in your Cello!, Thumbs Up Jump, Jive and Boogie & Viva Espan. Available in the [Cello City Store](#).

THE CELLOWDOWN: FINAL WORDS

Until next time, may your celloopportunitites abound, cellooptimism 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

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

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

