

Bello Online

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Spring 2022

WELCOME TO THE NEXUS OF THE NEXT STEPS IN CELLO!

Newsletter of the New Directions Cello Association & Festival

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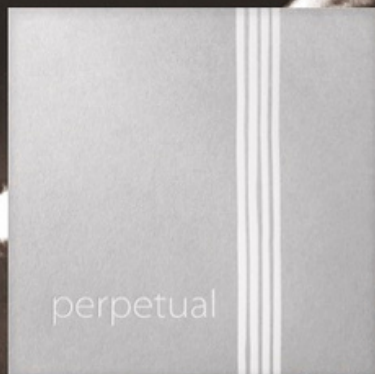


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27TH ANNUAL NEW DIRECTIONS CELLO FESTIVAL, JUNE 24-26

Marika Hughes



Andrew Yee



Kaitlyn Raitz



Dave Haughey



Zachary Brown



Jeremy Harman



Daily workshops

Nightly concert

Late night cello jams!

Taking place in Northampton, Massachusetts with a virtual option via Zoom

Our last in-person festival was 2019 in Boston, and we are coming back strong! This year will be hosted by Smith College and the BOMBYX Center for Arts & Equity in beautiful Northampton, Massachusetts. There is also a virtual component so you can participate from anywhere in the world. We hope you will consider joining us for this joyous community reunion!

2022 Workshops

Zachary Brown

"Chop Fundamentals" and "Advanced Chopping Techniques"

Jeremy Harman

"Navigating 2-5-1 Progressions" and "Rhythmic Development in Melodic Ideas"

Dave Haughey

"The Never-Ending Scale" and "Comping on Cello"

Marika Hughes

"Is it a Cello or a Bass?" and "A Collective Improvisation"

Kaitlyn Raitz

"Let's Learn a Tune" and "Writing for Cello Ensemble"

Andrew Yee

"Maximizing Resonance and Playing the Lower Octave with Empathy" and "Revamping your Programming"



*BOMBYX Center for Arts & Equality,
photo credit: Julian Parker Burns*

*Aerial shot of Smith College,
photo credit: Jeff Baker*

Long is the Walk

an interview with Jeremy Harman

by Sera Smolen

Boston-based cellist, guitarist, composer, and songwriter Jeremy Harman is the Director of the New Directions Cello Festival! Collaborating with Phaedre Sassano as Assistant Director, they created a fantastic virtual festival last year (2021). This year, the festival is ramping up to be amazing; a combination of in-person and virtual concerts and workshops.

Jeremy Harman takes ideas from guitar and cello with a continual desire to evolve as both an artist and a person. Going back and forth between cello and guitar, he creates new soundscapes which weave together styles, gestures, grooves, and journeys. His music helps us feel how we reach to hold cherished dreams alongside our inner purpose. Born in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, he grew up as the son of a jazz guitarist and a singer and went on to spend six years studying cello at conservatory at the University of Missouri, Kansas



City and at the Longy School of Music, Cambridge, MA. In this way, he learned from the beginning to integrate contrasting musical paradigms. As he has said: “The conservatory gave me a technical foundation in a centuries-old tradition”...“having a strong background in classical has been super valuable for me.” At the same time, Harman draws from a diverse pool of stylistic influences including modern jazz, folk, metal/hardcore, post-rock, downtempo electronic, and free improvisation. His musical path has taken him across the globe in venues ranging from concert halls and art galleries to carnivals, street corners, bars, clubs, and house concerts. I love listening to Jeremy’s masterful technique and musicianship. I hear influences from all those artistic quarters, for sure.

Jeremy’s solo project “Long is the Walk” includes evocative compositions with mesmerizing grooves. His most recent “Spirits + Ghosts” is a hauntingly hypnotic collection of songs and virtuoso instrumentals expressing how the naivete of youth fades and is replaced by an obsession with the finite nature of time and of life. Harman has stepped out as a songwriter and created a compelling sonic realm that is equal parts earthy and ethereal. Fleet-fingered acoustic guitar ostinatos pulsate throughout. Layers of cello spend as much time chugging viscerally as whispering ominously. Lush understated vocal harmonies result in a dream-like mixture where raw grit repeatedly gives way to atmospheric beauty.

Jeremy is the cellist for the NYC-based Sirius Quartet. Since their debut concert at the original Knitting Factory in New York City, Sirius has played some of the most important venues in the world, including Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall, the Beijing Music Festival, the Cologne Music

Triennale, Stuttgart Jazz, Musique Actuelle in Canada, the Taichung Jazz Fest – Taiwan's biggest jazz event – and many others. Having premiered works by living composers, Sirius continues their long-running commitment to musical innovation with bold, original works by its own members, pushing beyond conventional vocabulary of string instruments by incorporating popular song forms, extended techniques, gripping improvisations, and undeniable, contemporary grooves. Sirius's recordings include "Paths Become Lines" (Autentico Music/Naxos 2016), and the critically acclaimed "Colors of the East" (Autentico Music/Naxos 2015). "New World" ((Zoho, 2019), the latest album from Sirius, is both a passionate reaction to recent political events, and a celebration of hope and spirit. It features nine new compositions and arrangements from members of the quartet. This politically charged and topical album explores themes of immigration, discrimination, and being an agent of change.

"For nearly two hours, the group dazzled the packed house with virtuosic, rock-inflected, jazz-grounded, classical-minded polyglot music that was by turns lilting and churning, diaphanous and crushing, placid and rhythmic, soothing and fiery... always compelling and always exhilarating."

— *Imperfect Fifths*



Cai Vail's cover art for "Spirits + Ghosts"

Sera Smolen: *Who has inspired you on your journey? What things helped you find your way?*

Jeremy Harman: There are myriad ways of working as a musician, particularly if one is self-motivated and has a bit of an entrepreneurial spirit. I feel fortunate that I was always surrounded by friends and colleagues who were great musicians. I was inspired by those who were formally trained conservatory types like myself-- but just as much by musicians who didn't have that training but were extremely creative and played at an equally high level.

SS: *How do you take in a new genre, a new kind of music-making?*

JH: For me I don't think it happens consciously. If I hear something that is compelling, then I always want to immerse myself in it, listen to it obsessively, and try to really understand it. Maybe I transcribe bits and pieces of it. I always love when I get blindsided by some amazing song or artist who I've never heard before. I try to always stay curious and open.

SS: *Your "Day in the Grid" for solo cello includes double stops, chopping, and modulating. It has a bass groove and melody. Marvelous! You say it is Informed by guitar playing. Perhaps each of your solo cello compositions reveals a different approach? How did you compose "Day in the Grid" for solo cello?*

JH: I think the guitar influence will always be there in my solo cello music and probably all of my music in general. It's not a conscious decision where I'm like "ok, this is gonna be the 'guitar' part," but chordal playing and experimentation has always been a big part of how I write music and how I explore.

SS: *Is the beautiful cover of "Long is the Walk" painted by your wife?*

JH: We have several of her paintings hanging in our house and they are amazing. Cai (my wife) did do the cover and album layout for the "Long is the Walk" album, and she did such a beautiful job. It's kind of dark, but also ethereal and serene.

SS: *In the group called Cordis, how do you work together? What does this group draw out of you?*

JH: The band leader plays the cimbalom, the Hungarian dulcimer instrument that is common to their folk music. This one has been modified to be electric and is run through a bunch of effects pedals and into a guitar amp and it has a really amazing, unique sound, almost like a mix between a piano and an overdriven electric guitar. I actually play a 5-string electric cello in that group, also running it through my electric guitar rig, drenched in reverb and delay, so I love having the opportunity to stretch out sonically in that group.

SS: *Did you learn guitar from your dad?*

JH: My dad bought me my first guitar and got me started by teaching me some chords and the blues scale. I wanted to rock! I never took regular lessons with him which I now regret. I would consider myself a mostly self-taught guitarist. While I wish I could have taken advantage of my dad's knowledge, one positive outcome is that I just followed my own curiosity. There was no structure or requirements. Because of that I could do my own thing and progress according to my own tastes and inclinations, which was very motivating for me.

SS: *How do you do your composing on guitar? Play and play using your way of playing? Then do you play into a writing software? Do you start with harmonies, or the groove with such interesting compound rhythms? How does guitar inform the cello music, and cello inform the guitar music?*

JH: With pretty much all of my music, it comes from improvising: just playing around on guitar or cello, or (very occasionally) piano. I'm not the type of person who hears melodies in my head. For me, it comes from giving myself some uninterrupted time with my instrument to explore and be creative. Yes, I almost always start with a groove, rhythmic pattern (and



Sirius Quartet

*Fung Chern Hwei & Gregor Huebner, violins
Ron Lawrence, viola
Jeremy Harman, cello*

you've picked up on my love for odd meters and polyrhythmic grooves), or chord progressions (or some combination). I build most compositions from the bottom up. Very rarely have I started with a melody and ended up with a finished song. I do enjoy the challenge of trying to intentionally alter my writing/creative process because it can yield new ways of thinking and creating.

SS: *What kind of training do you want to see young people receiving so they can be more like you?*

JH: I was really fortunate to have both an amazing orchestra teacher and cello teacher in high school. My training always felt compartmentalized, with all my creative work really happening outside of school, lessons, etc. I would love to see a more integrated approach to music education so young people can become well-rounded creative musicians. I want to see young musicians trained to play at a high level, and also possess a versatile skill set so they are able to work in a wide variety of contexts. This is something I've tried to prioritize with my own students, regardless of whether they are planning on pursuing music as a career or not.

"Internationally acclaimed veterans of contemporary music, Sirius Quartet combines exhilarating repertoire with unequalled improvisational fire. This conservatory-trained performer-composers shine with precision, soul, and a raw energy rarely witnessed on stage, championing a forward-thinking, genre-defying approach that makes labels like 'New Music' sound tame."

- SiriusQuartet.com

SS: How did you recognize each other to form Sirius? How do you compose as a quartet?

JH: Sirius Quartet formed in the early 90s as an extension of the NYC-based Soldier String Quartet. The group performed frequently in the original Knitting Factory at that time and was deeply embedded in the "downtown" experimental music scene. The group has gone through several line-up changes over the years, but the current line-up has been playing together for the last 12 years and our focus is primarily on writing and arranging our own music, which makes heavy use of both individual and collective improvisation as it merges in various ways with the through-composed material.

SS: In your workshops, how do you break down the walls of what chamber music can be?

JH: Although we do primarily focus on our own music, we really enjoy working with composers, particularly at the conservatory level. Our workshops often consist of us reading and rehearsing their pieces and giving our input as to how they can best realize their ideas for string quartet and give them a bit of "real world" feedback and experience.

SS: Do you have different ways of rehearsing improvised sections? "More Than We Are" is such a beautiful composition!! How do you integrate composition and improvisation as a quartet? Are there Improvisation sections with instructions, timings, or parameters? Were your quartet members trained in different ways? Does that generate a chemistry within your group?

JH: It all really depends on the piece. There are some pieces which contain vamps or chord changes in which one or more members solo over the changes as you might in a jazz tune, and others where there might be more free collective improvisation happening, with or without a tonality or time feel/rhythmic structure. One of Gregor's pieces features a violin and cello duo that has no parameters or instructions, so this is a particularly fun one to play live, as it always develops in dramatically different ways.



Jeremy and Phaedra's festivals offer something for everyone: recording artists come to the festivals along with young people. Public school music teachers attend the festival as comfortably as passionate behind-the-scenes cello lovers. Seasoned improvisers and touring soloists attend along with college music majors. [Register here](#) so you can be a part of it!

Connect with Jeremy
www.jeremyharman.net
Instagram: [@Cellohang](https://www.instagram.com/Cellohang)
www.siriusquartet.com

New cello educational resources

I have had a lot - and I mean a LOT - of conversations with cellists who teach about the importance of widening the educational repertoire. Improvisation, a wide variety of musical genres and cultures, non-traditional ways to utilize cello, singing and playing...basically everything we love at New Directions. You have probably had these conversations too, and we all know that recently even the household name music schools have as well. Our ND community has been a big part of the team leading the charge of alternative cello for decades, and we are committed to opening these doors for players of any age and level. I hope to highlight some new resources in every issue, and I would love to hear from you if you have any suggestions!

- Patricia Santos, editor

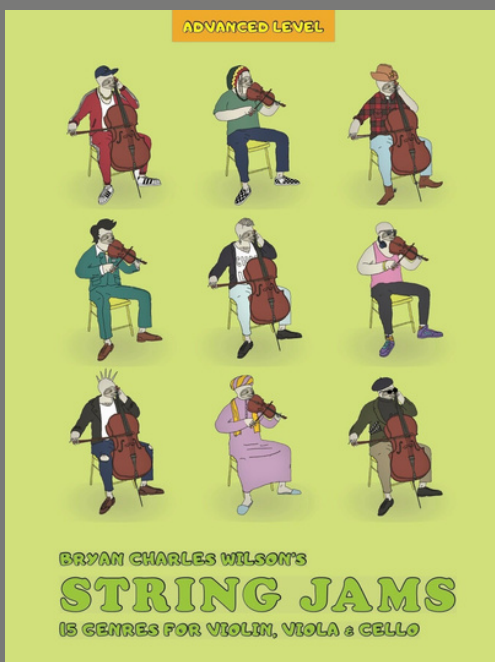
Cello Teaching Repertoire Consortium

Only in its second year, the Cello Teaching Repertoire Consortium is co-directed by Daniel Ketter and Lisa Caravan. According to the website, "the mission of CTRC is to expand cello student repertoire with commissioning of new pedagogical concert works and etudes for cello solo, cello with teacher accompaniment, and cello with piano, representing diverse musical styles and cultural backgrounds." This year's composer is former NDCF guest artist **Malcolm Parson**. He is being commissioned to write one 5-7 minute concert etude for cello and piano at an intermediate level, targeting Suzuki Books 5-6, or ASTACAP level 5. The 2021 composers were Andrea Casarrubios and Curtis Stewart. You can get involved as a co-commissioner to help the creation of this new cello rep. Please visit their site to learn more.



<https://www.celloteachingrep.com/>

String Jams by Bryan Charles Wilson



You may have his cello chord book - or have taken a chord workshop with Bryan at a previous NDCF - and now he is offering a multi-genre play-along collection that includes improv sections!

String Jams comes as a download that includes rehearsal and performance tempo tracks as well as sheet music for violin, viola, and cello. Each tune is in a different style (Pop Rock, Hip Hop, Chiptune, Latin, etc.) and guides you on scales and chords to use for the solo sections. There are both Beginner and Advanced versions available for purchase.

<https://www.bryanwilsoncello.com/stringjams>

**Note of transparency: I helped proofread and test the cello version of this book and so appear in the acknowledgments, but I do not benefit financially from the sales. - PS*

Recently released!

Click on image for link

"Things That Happened at Sea"

Eimear Reidy

Cork, Ireland



"Breaking the Thermometer"

Leyla McCalla

New Orleans, USA

"Shadows"

Melih Selen


Aydın, Turkey



Many festival-goers will recognize Abby Newton from her numerous appearances over the years! Abby runs her own fiddling cello camp in the beautiful Hudson Valley of New York.








Abby Newton

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"Off the Page"

Elizabeth Alexander and Sera Smolen

A collection of 9 songs that allow players to read and improvise in different styles and genres from Blues to Funk, the Japanese Hirajoshi scale, and more. This collection also invites improvisers to modulate keys, step-by-step from C major up to 3 # and 3 b. "Off the Page" includes:

- Sheet music for your instrument, with bowings, fingerings, and breath-marks from master teachers.
- Practice strategies for each song, For example: "what to listen for" and "what you will see on the page."
- Listening tracks for each song are played by master musicians specializing in each style.
- Practicing tracks so you can play each song, putting yourself inside the band.

For more info, great reviews, and links to purchase, see
<https://serasmolen.com/off-the-page>

NEW DIRECTIONS CELLO FESTIVAL

We thank our sponsors for their support of this year's festival!



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Regular Membership \$25

- **Donate online** or send a check

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(see address below)

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