

Kathy McTavish cellist/composer

Artist Statement

I trained as a classical cellist and studied composition and music theory. Eight years ago I made a shift in direction and began to explore non-classical genres. I immersed myself into collaborative work with folk, blues, rock, rap, punk, metal, ambient, techno, jazz, and free improvisation musicians. An in-the-moment, deep-listening, improvisational style emerged from my experience playing, recording, and composing with other musicians, spoken word performers, dancers, filmmakers and visual artists. My current work as a composer/free-style /improvisational musician is also heavily influenced by studies of 12-tone music, chance, minimalism, polyphonic forms, free jazz and old blues. I am deeply inspired by the rhythms of human speech, beat poets such as Alan Ginsberg and abstract expressionist art.

I have used this immersion experience outside the classical music world to hone a distinctive solo voice. Broadening the range of texture and tonality that is traditionally expressed through the cello, I perform and record original works. I often blend my acoustic sound with the occasional warped echo or found sound to create multidimensional sound spaces. Although experimental, this solo work has been well received by a diverse listening community.

I use the following continuums/arcs to create musical worlds:

- *Tonality*: the "infinite between" of continuous, bendable pitch available on a fretless instrument through discrete, sparse tonal palettes and the harmonic continuum from dissonance to consonance
- *Space*: spare, minimalist canvases through dense, orchestral spaces
- *Form*: chance collage to organic, generative, emergent forms
- *Emotional landscapes*: grief/longing through ecstatic joy
- *Organization*: disintegration/incoherence/confusion/lostness/searching through integration/coherence/transcendence/flight
- *Texture*: raw, frayed, cries/growls and whispered textures through a clear, warm, classical tone
- *Alone/Together*: I like to explore polyphonic/multi-threadedness and how independent threads side-by-side or loosely integrated can culminate in an intense togetherness, a cathartic fusion

I have performed extensively across a wide range of venues regionally and have actively recorded my work, producing 14 solo cello albums/"journals", 7 Cosmic Pit Orchestra albums, and 2 cello / poetry albums. I maintain an extensive web presence. All of these recorded works are released online through a creative commons license, and I have an active online listening community.

My live performance fluidly weaves the continuums of sound (listed above). This has resulted in a personal musical language that works well to communicate broader human emotional/narrative concepts to listeners. I want to more effectively incorporate this visceral and dynamic improvisational range into my recorded work. Although it is so rooted in improvisational/sound-art, I would also like to explore alternative ways to "score" my work. I have prolifically documented my original music through recorded albums/journals but I would like to explore other ways of communicating this work to, for example, potential collaborators with less comfort in "mapless" improvisation.

I want to expand my performance base geographically. I seek to increase formal recognition for my work by creating a professionally-produced, cd-length, recorded, performance-ready arc representative of my full range that I can use as a platform to elicit reviews, formally introduce myself as a composer/cellist back into the classical community, increase my teaching potential, and broaden my listening base. I haven't yet received formal recognition as a composer. This commission would be my first and would be an important step forward in this journey. It would provide time and resources to complete the creative work, to professionally release a recording, and to formally introduce myself as a composer through its premier.