DID SHE CHANGE?
Exploring Cello in Documentary Songwriting and Expanding the Role of a Classical Cellist

by

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A THESIS

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Professor Steven Pologe

This thesis explores one potential solution to the problem plaguing all classical music students today: how to find a job and shape a career. Through my exploration of documentary songwriting, I have investigated the benefits that classical training can bring to other genres. In the process, I have also experienced the benefits that exploring documentary songwriting brings to a classical musician. This exploration attempts to push the boundaries of a highly specialized skill – classical cello performance – and to use the cello in a different way. Using this fusion of genres, I hope to design a career that brings me fulfillment as a cellist.

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Introduction: The Challenge Facing a Classical Musician

In a speech given to students of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire in 2014, cellist Julian Lloyd Webber said, "To succeed today, aspiring musicians need to find out what they have to offer that is different to [*sic*] everybody else. They need to answer the question 'Why should anyone be interested in you?' In other words – as well as being necessarily brilliant at what they do – they will need to think laterally."[1]

I began studying classical violin at age three, and when I was ten, I switched to the cello so that I could play chamber music with my peers. This year, I am planning to graduate in June with a bachelor's degree in music performance, and I am in the process of applying to graduate performance programs. For many years I have been warned of the difficulties in creating a classical music career, and few warnings have been even half as optimistic as Webber's quote cited above. Today, classical music is appreciated less than it has been historically, and musicians graduating from top conservatories perform at a higher level than did previous generations. Highly competitive auditions for professional orchestras leave even the best musicians without jobs.[2]

Professional classical musicians undergo decades of specialized training including technique, musicality, theory, history, and ear training. I believe this will always be valuable, but I agree with Webber that it may not be enough. I began to have an interest in playing other genres of music a few years ago, but I didn't know how to begin. When I was asked to record a cello part for a song called "Push Farther" in my

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1 Julian Lloyd Webber, "Classical music students – the future's bright, just use your imagination," The Guardian, 27 Aug 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/aug/27/julian-lloyd-webber-advice-to-classical-music-students-the-future-is-bright (accessed 21 Dec 2017).

2 Steven Franklin, "Living the Dream – Making it as a Classical Musician," College of DuPage, Essai 11, no. 14 (2013) http://dc.cod.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1445&context=essai (accessed 21 Dec 2017).

native state of Maine, I jumped at the opportunity. As one song led to another, however, I worried about how my explorations would be received by my community of classical musicians. Fortunately, I have received support and understanding from individuals and organizations both in Oregon and in Maine. At the University of Oregon, Professor Steven Pologe has helped me navigate my interest in non-classical music and has encouraged my endeavors. Professor Helen Southworth showed her support during the beginning stages of my thesis process and made many astute suggestions about potential directions I could take. In Maine, Bay Chamber Concerts has provided support by hosting concerts in which I have presented both classical and folk genres in the same program. And finally, Malcolm Brooks, director of Beauchamp Point Music, has given me mentorship and support since the very first phases of this project.

The first real test of combining classical training with another genre came in a recording session for the song "Push Farther." I was given a melody to play, but I was also given freedom to experiment with what I thought could work in addition to the melody. I had never improvised, and I had no idea where to even begin. After many false starts, I realized that maybe I could learn how to create without using sheet music, and I wanted to explore the process further. Under the mentorship of Malcolm Brooks, I began working with Alex Wilder and Will Foote, and together we created the Push Farther Project, a progressive-folk trio that utilizes a method of songwriting called *documentary songwriting*. To date, we have written more than 20 songs utilizing this method, completed over 30 performing engagements, recorded and released three albums, sold CDs, and completed our first tour in Europe. In this paper I will refer to

Alex and Will as such to convey the intimacy and camaraderie that developed among the three of us as I experimented – not always successfully – with different cello ideas.

In the Push Farther Project, I am more than a cellist. I am also a songwriter, singer, administrator, manager, and friend. Working with this group has expanded my abilities and has changed my relationship with music. As I prepare for graduate auditions, one of my goals is to find a place where I can pursue both my classical studies and my work with the Push Farther Project. In a world where making a living as a performer of classical music is exceedingly difficult (if not impossible), this band is not only a passion, but hopefully part of my career.

For this thesis, I will focus on the process of recording The Push Farther Project's album *Did She Change*, our first release. The finished album will serve as my product-based thesis. In this document, I will explain how we created the album *Did She Change,* and I will explain the documentary songwriting method and show examples of its power. Finally, I will use a comparison of two songs that I wrote to illustrate the current role, and potential future role of cello in documentary songwriting.

Background: What is Documentary Songwriting, and Why Does it Matter?

Documentary songwriting (also sometimes called the story-to-song method) is a method of songwriting pioneered by Malcolm Brooks.[3] While working on a song with a friend, Brooks created lyrics for the song directly from a spoken story. This process was an experiment at the time, but through a dissertation entitled "Autoethnography of a Composer with a New Composing Method" and now seven years of use, this idea has become a method used internationally in small groups of people, in workshops, and recently in the first documentary songwriting conference.[4]

Benefits of Documentary Songwriting: Diversity, Ease of Use, and Authenticity

The majority of popular music is written about a few common themes, while documentary songwriting yields a wide variety of topics and messages.[5] Alex Wilder, also of the Push Farther Project, wrote his capstone work for Oberlin College on this aspect of documentary songwriting. Wilder quotes Elvis Costello, who says, "There are five things to write songs about: I'm leaving you. You're leaving me. I want you. You don't want me. I believe in something."[6] Through his own research Wilder then concludes that 72.4% of top 40 songs are about some form of romantic or sexual

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[3] Malcolm Philip Brooks, "Autoethnography of a Composer with a New Composing Method," Prescott College, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing (2013): 9

[4] Malcolm Philip Brooks, "Documentary Songwriter – Bearing Witness Through Music," docsong.org (accessed 30 September 2017).

[5] "The Push Farther Project, http://pushfarther.com, (accessed 30 Sept 2017).

[6] Tom Junod, "Elvis Costello: What I've Learned," Esquire Magazine, 29 Jan 2007. http://www.esquire.com/entertainment/interviews/a461/esq1103-nov-wil/ (accessed 22 Dec 2017).

relationship.[7] Documentary songwriting, on the other hand, creates songs with a broad range of topics. Here are some examples:

1. a daughter's deciding whether she takes after her mom or her dad
2. seeking independence in a Chinese family after falling in love with an American
3. regretting an act of cruelty in middle school
4. trying to love someone without controlling them
5. redefining a friendship after one person confesses that he is gay
6. finding courage as a prisoner of war in World War II
7. finding patience with a bureaucracy when obtaining a driver's license,
8. cherishing short , seemingly trivial conversations that reduce loneliness
9. loving travel so much that there's a desire to be everywhere at once
10. liking old cars even if you're a teenage girl
11. surviving as a small farmer and sharing medical supplies with your community
12. falling in love while hiding from the police in Mongolia

This list inspires me, not only because the songs are so varied, but also because they are authentic – they arise from actual experiences.

Another benefit of documentary songwriting is that it demystifies the songwriting process. It breaks up the process into simple steps, so that someone with no experience writing songs can create a structured work of art that conveys deep emotion. Brooks synthesizes the process into six steps in his dissertation:

[7] Alex Wilder, "Responsible Songwriting: Problems of Ethics and Negotiation in Collaborative Autoethnographic Composition," Oberlin College May 2017, http://docsong.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Capstone-FINAL-DRAFT-%E2%80%93-Alex-Wilder-2.pages-1.pdf (accessed 29 Dec 2017).

1. I sit down with a person, listen to her tell of an experience, and type it verbatim into a laptop computer.

2. Then I ask her to review the words on the screen and instruct me where to break up the sentences, so as to transform her spoken prose into free verse.

3. I then ask her to read this free verse aloud as I record it on an Apple iPhone.

4. Next, I ask her to sing the free verse through, even though no melody yet exists. I record this seemingly random singing of free verse onto the iPhone.

5. Then we listen to the recording, and I help her detect the melodic and rhythmic patterns in her spoken and spontaneously sung words.

6. Together, we expand these patterns into a complete, original song.[8]

A third benefit of documentary songwriting can be seen in the list above: the method promotes collaboration by requiring at least two people to participate. The person providing the story is known as the "story source," and the person helping write the song is known as the "musical sherpa." Brooks says, "The success of the method relies on mutual trust, faith in intuition, and musical experience in expanding short motifs into finished works."[9] Before I began working with the Push Farther Project I tried writing my own songs without the documentary songwriting method. I tried to make every other line rhyme, and the end result was a calcified song that didn't have much emotional content. Brooks's idea of mutual trust propagates the honesty that creates documentary songs. Through direct, honest communication, true emotions are captured in music. The songs may not rhyme, but they capture something real and meaningful.

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[8] Malcolm Brooks, "Autoethnography of a Composer with a New Composing Method," 9

[9] Ibid.

The Push Farther Project has provided an extensive testing ground for documentary songwriting. Using this method, we have written songs from our own experiences, as well as songs from the experiences of people we have interviewed. Published on the Push Farther Project website is the band's belief: “We believe that music can transport people out of normal existence for a minute, show beauty, and bring inspiration. To us, music brings a sense of well-being, optimism, and comfort. We are so appreciative of these experiences, and we want to offer the best that we can make to the world.”[10] The mission statement reads, “To collaborate and create with others and to increase the number of beautiful songs on the planet. Our goal is to craft documentary songs from people’s experiences and spoken words.”[11]

[10] “The Push Farther Project,” pushfarther.com, http://pushfarther.com (accessed 30 September 2017).
[11] Ibid.

Did She Change – How I Applied Classical Cello to Recording and Releasing an Album of Documentary Songs

The album *Did She Change* was recorded in August 2016 after two years of writing, performing, fundraising, and recording. After the original recording session for the song "Push Farther," I began exploring how the cello could sound in other documentary songs. This was new territory for me. I knew how to play the cello quite well, but I had no idea to how to utilize the cello's unique versatility in a part I had written. In my opinion, the cello's versatility is unmatched by any other musical instrument, and I am always seeking new ways to showcase its potential.

A common question that I asked while arranging these cello parts was, "what constitutes a *good* part?" As a classical musician, I am trained to interpret a composer's music. In documentary songwriting, the parallel is that I am creating a part to interpret the emotional message given by the story source. Simply put, if the emotional message is sad, I may play a part on the cello that is also sad (in a minor key, notes in descending patterns, slow tempos). Obviously, this is specific to each song, but the idea is that nothing is created in a vacuum. While in some popular music, instrumental parts may or may not relate to the lyrics, in documentary songwriting, everything is inspired from the words of the story source. Everything that I play on the cello has a direct emotional connection to the original spoken words.

My classical training helps with interpreting the story source's message. Because of my training, I can play something recognizable as "sad" quite easily. For example, it could be in a minor key, have many descending passages or chromatic step-wise motion. However, normally in classical music, I have a piece in front of me, and

although there are many different ways of interpreting it, there is a spectrum of "normal," and I am given helpful feedback about my decisions by professors and colleagues. However, when I took on the role of a cellist interpreting a story source's message, I was not only a creator, but my own critic and evaluator as well. I needed to create a part, understand the emotional intention, and then evaluate what came out and objectively assess whether it was the best interpretation possible at that time. Gaining the knowledge and the courage to fulfill all of these roles challenged me. Suddenly I needed to have my own coherent opinion about everything that was happening. Without that, the arrangement process would not work.

In addition to knowing what was a "good" idea in the sense that it conveyed the intended message of the story source, I also needed to learn how to create a good musical idea. This ability is not frequently developed through normal classical training, and I experienced trepidation when I was asked to generate creative musical ideas on the spot. However, the band provided a safe environment where I could experiment, and, if I didn't come up with a cello part, there wouldn't be one. I didn't have a stand partner or a section covering for me – I had to create something.

From my classical training I knew how to play the notes in any chord. As a band we determined the chords for our songs by first assigning a basic I-IV-V chord pattern and then experimenting with other options if we felt the lyrics called for something special. My theory training helped with this process. Then, I simply played the main note in the chords of whatever song we were working on. Then, I played the scales that corresponded to those chords. Finally I began mixing the chords and scales to create a preliminary cello part for the song. Once I could play this basic part, I could receive

comments and suggestions like, “try that idea higher” or “slower.” Because I used my technical skills to create a preliminary part, I had created a direction that could easily be built upon.

Through years of classical training, I have developed a sense of how a passage should naturally sound: where the loudest part should be, which part has the most tension, and where it naturally breathes. This is called *phrasing* and can be determined through melodic analysis as well. While the two genres of classical and progressive folk may be very different, the idea of a melody is the same. My knowledge of classical phrasing was applicable here because I could play documentary song melodies in a very musical way.

Long Distance Composing: Challenges We Faced and Solutions We Found

While we were composing and arranging the songs for the album *Did She Change,* we were on opposite sides of the country. However, with the help of technology, we were able to work together quite efficiently. During the summer and on holidays we could work in the same room, and while we were at school we would work through Google Docs and iPhone recordings.

We used Google Docs to write documentary songs. Two of us would talk and videoconference using Google Hangouts and then we would write the songs on a shared Google Doc. This process of joint editing documents worked so well, that sometimes we continue to use it even when we are not working remotely. A documentary song goes through many phases, so we would copy and paste our work into a new Google Doc for each phase. As a result, each song had a string of Google Docs that documented

its history. We can now easily go back and see the process that we followed for each song.

In addition to Google Hangouts and Google Docs, we used the iPhone Voice Memo app to send recordings back and forth to each other. Using this method, we were able to remotely create preliminary arrangements for every song on the album. One person would begin by singing and playing a basic rhythm track into the iPhone. Then that person would send the recording to the next person who would play it through a set of speakers and re-record the track adding another part. The process repeated itself for the last person, and by the end we had a very low-grade recording and a basic arrangement. The jump from these iPhone arrangements to actual arrangements when we were working together in the same room was quite easy. Because we were so familiar with the songs by the time we actually played together live, any arrangement problems sorted themselves out quickly. One downside to this method is that the first person recording has a disproportionate influence in shaping the song, and in that sense our collaboration is not equal. However, normally the one who records the first iphone track is the person who has served as either the musical guide or the story source, so their opinion and ideas are a good starting place.

Financing Our Own Way

During the 2015-16 school year, we began an online Kickstarter campaign to help fund our album. Writing the necessary material for the kickstarter campaign forced us to organize our ideas and goals, and also made us beholden to a group of people. With a successfully funded kickstarter campaign, we really did have to record an album.

While we raised some of the album money through the funded kickstarter, the majority of our work was funded through concerts in Maine during the summer of 2016. We played at a local pub, at a tire store, at a farm, and on a rooftop. Through many generous donations and a lot of work performing, we were able to raise the necessary funds. At the end of the summer we were also invited to play for the opening of the Bay Chamber Concerts Screen Door Festival. We performed alongside a professional group that had toured all over the world. Having the backing of a successful organization such as Bay Chamber Concerts helped bring in additional donations.

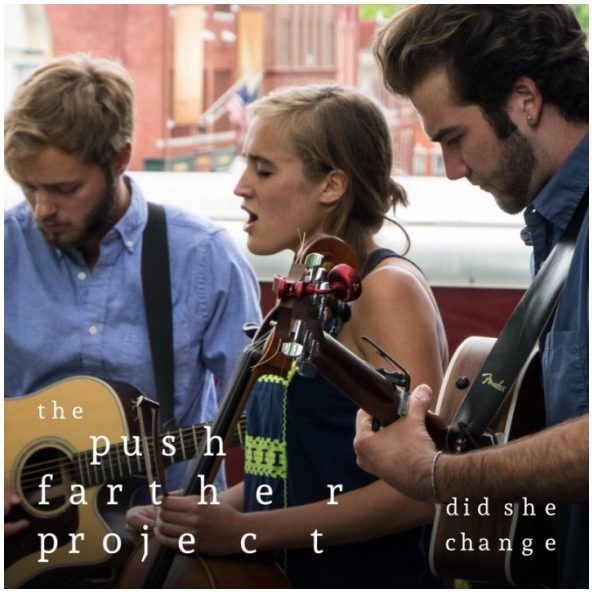
At the end of the summer, we were able to book five days of studio time. Because we had performed so much, in five days we were able to record an LP (full length album known as "long play") titled *Did She Change*, as well as an EP (collection of 4-5 songs known as "extended play") titled *Push Farther.* All three of us recorded in the same room, so the album is "live" recorded as opposed to "studio" recorded (where we would each record separately with a metronome's click track running in the background). While this approach reduced the amount of editing that could be done after the recording, it allowed us to capture the energy of a live performance.

We faced many challenges during this five-day period in addition to not having the luxury of post-editing. Because we were all in the same room and we didn't have a click track, our tempos had to be very consistent. The only reason that we were able to successfully record in this way was because we had performed so much during the summer. The tempos for our songs were internalized as we had played them repeatedly. Another challenge that we faced was exhaustion. We were in the studio for at least eight hours a day and our voices and our bodies became tired. Brooks was with us during this

process and consistently asked for higher energy levels and more expression. Our recording engineer Jud Caswell echoed these requests, and again, due to our extensive performing during the summer we were able to constantly add more energy. The finished product, we felt, did indeed capture the spirit of a live performance.

Song List:

13. Leaving This Place
14. Did She Change
15. The Beauty in Everyday Things
16. Little Exchanges
17. Girl Situation
18. Nature
19. Mellow
20. Meet me Halfway
21. Milk Carton
22. That Was the Past



Cello Study in Spain: An Unexpected Opportunity for International Documentary Songwriting and Cross-Genre Exploration

I studied abroad in Barcelona during the 2016-17 academic year, and through a grant from Oberlin College, the Push Farther Project was able to write documentary songs and tour in Barcelona during the winter. One of the songs that we wrote in Barcelona – *Soy yo y el silencio (It's me and the silence)* **–** arose from the story of Fabiola Ferrero, a photojournalist from Venezuela. When I met her, she was taking a break from her professional life in Venezuela to find some peace of mind. In Venezuela, Ferrero's daily existence had been emotionally draining, and while she was in Barcelona, she searched for self-acceptance so that she could return to her passion as a healthier and stronger person.

The documentary songwriting process offered Ferrero a chance to recount her experiences and express the emotions associated with them. When we interviewed her, she told us stories from her work as a photojournalist in Venezuela as well as stories from her time in Barcelona. While she was in Spain, Ferrero was also working on a photo book called *Oblivion* about her process of searching for self-acceptance in her world full of violence and chaos.

In documentary songwriting, normally one person types the story while the "story source" is speaking, but as our typing skills in Spanish weren't as polished, Alex and I spent a day transcribing the interview. We invited Ferrero back to work, and with her we broke the story up into lines so it read like a free-verse poem (step "2" from the list referenced above). The next step was to identify the key message of the story as well as any striking images. This step is not essential in all documentary songs, but

Ferrero's interviews covered so many topics that we had to narrow our focus. As Ferrero's story stemmed from the stark contrast of the chaos of Venezuela to the silence of her room in Barcelona, we decided to focus the story on that, and find images to support that idea.

The documentary songwriting method suggests that, in general, after the story-source and the music sherpa have generated a document that reads like a free-verse poem, the story-source reads through their work and if they feel comfortable enough, they sing through it (step "3" from referenced list above). As we had limited time with Ferrero, we only got as far as a read-through with her. But through the singing quality of her voice, we were able to extrapolate and form a melody based on her ideas. Alex, Will, and I then spent a few days editing and synthesizing our ideas further. It was difficult to decide what was essential because there was so much amazing material from this story. Ferrero was leaving to go back to Venezuela and we provided her with an iPhone recording of our work while she was at the airport.

Since then, we have worked on the arrangement of this song, created a studio recording, and played it at four different engagements this summer. Ferrero's work as a photojournalist is receiving accolades all over the world now, but this song offers another way of reaching people who otherwise would not know about her work. This project was completed after both of our albums were released and serves an example of the work that I would like to do in the future.

Exploring Cello in Documentary Songwriting, two examples: Little Exchanges and Soy yo y silencio

As was mentioned earlier, the cello is an extremely versatile instrument and I feel I have only just begun to scratch the surface of its potential in our arranging process. In this section I will compare and contrast two documentary songs in their use of the cello: "Little Exchanges" – from the album Did She Change – and "Soy yo y el silencio" –the song we wrote with Fabiola Ferrero in Barcelona).

With Brooks as musical guide and myself as story-source, I wrote the song "Little Exchanges" about my experiences while I was preparing for my junior cello recital at the University of Oregon. I would get up very early in the morning to go to school and practice before my first class. I would get up so early that I crossed paths with the cleaning crews who were still working from the night before. When I said "good morning" to them, they corrected me and say that it was their "good night." These "little exchanges" made my early mornings so much nicer – I knew I wasn't the only one up at that hour.

"Little Exchanges" begins with a cello rhythm.[12] It begins with a cello and a rhythmic phrase because we always search for a memorable way to introduce a story. The beginning of a song is important because it is the first thing a listener hears, and it needs to be captivating enough to make them keep listening. The sound of a cello is not something heard frequently in popular music, so it adds intrigue if featured in an

[12] Eleanora Willauer et al., "Little Exchanges," Did She Change, Push Farther Project, Beauchamp Point Music, 2016 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77RvCaLwivs (accessed December 21, 2017).

introduction. Once the cello finishes its opening phrase, it serves as the rhythm section and the bass.

Because our group does not have bass or drums, the cello provides both rhythmic stability and grounding low tones. In "Little Exchanges," I provide rhythmic stability with a pattern of cello chop in eighth notes. A chop is percussive stroke that is commonly used with many instruments in bluegrass music and other similar genres.[13] Chopping came to string instruments (violin and cello) in 1966 with fiddle player Richard Greene.[14] As the story goes, Greene played in a fiddle group and was frequently called out for rushing. As an antidote, he was asked to only play rhythm. He had only seen fiddlers play rhythm by tapping the tip of their bow near the bridge to create a percussive sound, so he tried that but his arm got tired. He began playing the rhythmic notes near the frog – where one grips the bow – and thus figured out the chop.[15] The chop has evolved since this point, with many players, both fiddlers and cellists, adding enhancements to it. A chop is a powerful tool because it allows an instrument normally reserved for melodic playing to accompany anyone rhythmically.

Singing While Playing: Rhythmic Challenges

Throughout most of the song "Little Exchanges," I use a basic chop pattern that replaces the third and seventh eighth notes of a four beat measure with a percussive

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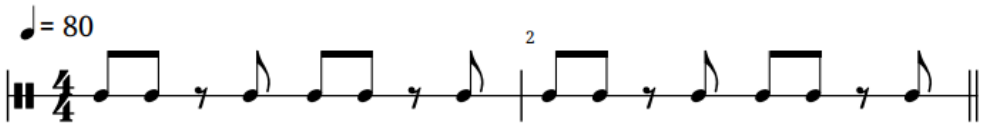
[13] Laura Risk, "What is 'chopping'?" McGill University, 2011, http://www.richardgreene.net/Richard%20Greene%20'Chop'-Laura%20Risk.pdf, (accessed 21 Dec 2017).

[14] Risk, "What is 'chopping?'" (accessed 21 Dec 2017).

[15] Ibid.

chop. This pattern can be notated with rests, as is shown in the diagram below, if the artist inserts the percussive beat where the eighth note rest falls.[16]



The chop provides technical challenges for the classical player because it involves bow techniques that are not normally taught. To chop effectively, the player straightens all four fingers of the right hand, and scrubs the bow vertically down the string quickly. In "Little Exchanges" I sing as well, so while I execute this chop pattern I am also singing the lead vocal. Since we do not have a drummer in our group, the chop becomes the reliable, rhythmic motor for this song. A tendency to rush is something that most musicians deal with, so I practiced with a metronome to learn to sing and chop simultaneously without rushing.

As classical musicians, we are taught to count rhythm silently in our feet or in our head. While this is a great skill for an intellectual understanding of what is happening, it does nothing to prevent rushing. Through my work with The Push Farther Project I learned to feel rhythm physically instead of think it conceptually.[17] I learned to feel rhythm through a slight motion in my hips and lower back while I play. This motion is what keeps the rhythm steady – it is much harder to rush a constant physical motion than it is to rush mental counting.

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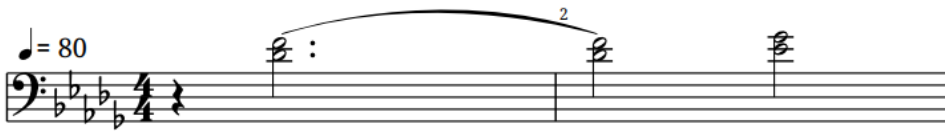
[16] Willauer, "Little Exchanges" (accessed 21 Dec 2017).

[17] Maria Witek, "Filling In: Syncopation, Pleasure and Distributed Embodiment in Groove," Music Analysis 36, no. 1 (2016). http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/musa.12082/full, (accessed on 4 October 2017).

In addition to learning how to sing while I was acting as the bass and drums for our group, I had to learn how to sing while playing a melody that required shifting up or down the fingerboard. At the end of Little Exchanges, the cello acts as the third voice in a three-part harmony with Will and Alex. I sing a response to their vocal line at the same time as I execute a shift from the fifth position on my cello back to first position. While challenging, executing this series of events was actually relatively easy for me to master thanks to years of shifting practice in my classical studies.

Further Cello Explorations: Soy yo y el silencio

Leaving "Little Exchanges" for a moment, I will now return to "Soy yo y el silencio" to talk about the role of cello playing in that song. As in Little Exchanges, the song needed a memorable melody to set the mood and give the song a signature sound. To achieve this, "Soy yo y el silencio" begins with the cello playing two dyads (two pitches expressing part of a chord) as a solo:[18]



This opening came about because, when composing our songs, we try to have a beginning that has an easily recognizable nugget of sound. In this case, the cello doesn't begin on the downbeat but comes in on the second beat as can be seen in the image above. This rhythmic delay contributes to creating intrigue, as do the dyads built off

[18] Fabiola Ferrero et al., "Soy yo y el silencio," Push Farther Project, Documentary Songwriter (2017), http://docsong.org/blog/2017/08/21/fabiola-ferrero/ (accessed December 21, 2017).

scale degrees one and two. These two dyads seem to ask a question that the song then answers. This is an example of how a musical part in a documentary song can serve to reflect the meaning that the story source expresses with their words. In Ferrero's case, her song expresses her desire to find self-acceptance amid chaos. However, first she had to ask the question, "Who am I, really?" While working in Venezuela, Ferrero identified with her profession. After her time in Barcelona, she was able to bring a better sense of self to her work, which allowed her to create emotional space from her daily existence. The two dyads of the cello solo symbolize this original question and set a contemplative mood.

After the opening motif, the cello drops out of the arrangement for an entire verse and chorus pattern. When it comes back in, it is with the same motif, this time introducing the second verse. The question remains unanswered. For the second verse, the cello again drops out until it comes in with a V-I motif (traditional way to create a cadence or ending -- the chords move from A flat to D flat, bringing the listener back to the home key) that introduces the chorus. In contrast to the opening motif, this V-I chord pattern is a cadence: it sets up the tonic chord in the beginning of the second chorus, making that chorus feel like more of an arrival. The cello marks progress through the story and adds momentum. In the second chorus the cello serves as the bass, playing the roots of the chords in a very low register.

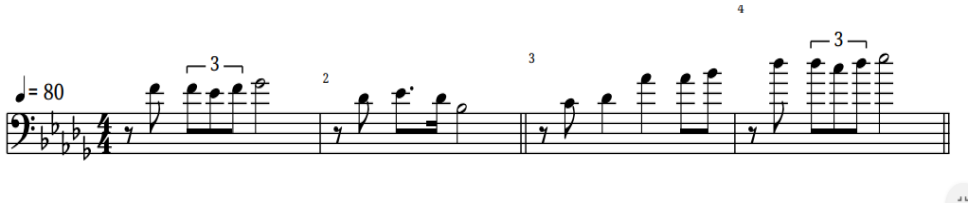
In the bridge section – a section of the song typically after the second chorus with new melodic material – the cello provides a pulsating, almost crying part, in stark contrast to the melody of the singers. After the bridge comes the cello solo, in which I get to play a soaring melody. In this song, we wrote the melody by experiment. I was

given four measures for my solo and, while we were arranging this song, I improvised something different every play-through. Recording time was approaching and I still did not have a fixed part.

Making a Melodic Decision: Trying it with Words

To come up with the melody that I play now, the band came up with words that described the feeling that we were trying to evoke. We used the rhythm of the words for the rhythm of the cello solo. The words are: "Once I was alone, so far away...I looked, what did I see? The angels were there." The last bit is therefore angelic and sweet, as if the angels were speaking. Setting words to melodies has been a useful tool for creating the most musical phrases. The words may not precisely relate to the meaning of the song, but they provide a way to create a melody that feels true to the song's emotional message.

Another part of composing a melody is attempting to create an *arc.* In other words, if the melody were split into four equal parts, the first three parts would be increasing in tension, and the last part would be decreasing.



The above example is the cello solo from "Soy yo y el silencio." In this example, the melodic arc is not obvious, but it is there in the pitch structure within the phrases and the dynamic structure of the performance. The arc is created by alternating between steps and leaps and between the dynamics of loud and soft. The first two

measures contain primarily step-wise motion, while the third measure has a leap of a fifth. The fourth measure returns to step-wise motion. If we go back to the words associated with this melody, the words for the last measure are “the angels were there.” I play this final phrase very softly, which also helps create the arc-like shape for the melody. It may go up in pitch but it is going down in volume. The first two measures are soft but gradually increasing in volume. The third measure is the loudest, and the fourth measure back to a soft dynamic.

In “Soy yo y el silencio,” the cello fills numerous roles. It creates a mood and asks a question with its opening solo, it provides structure with its introductions to the first two verses, it serves as a bass, it serves a rhythmic center in the bridge, and provides the focal point of the song for the cello solo after the bridge. The cello part overall also creates a structure by when it is playing and when it is not. For example, if we imagine that the entire song is split up into four sections because the cello doesn’t enter immediately, its slow progression into an essential role creates an arc-like superstructure that directs the listener’s attention to the cello solo three quarters of the way through the piece. The quiet last measure of the cello solo also seems to hand the spotlight back to the vocalist, who softly finishes the last verse.

Recognizing an Unpayable Debt: Cello Pioneers Who Continue to Inspire Me

In bluegrass and folk music the cello is mainly used as a rhythm instrument, whereas in classical music the cello is mostly used as a melodic instrument. For me, the blend of genres is interesting because when these two types of playing are combined, the cello's potential becomes endless. The cello is also the only instrument that can blend genres so easily. It is a well-known instrument in the classical world and it can also fit into almost any other genre. With its five-octave range, it spans almost every register.

In the opening quote of this paper, cellist Julian Lloyd Webber says that "musicians need to find out what they have to offer that is different to [sic] everybody else."[19] While the cello has unlimited potential, there are many musicians who have explored its wonders, and learning about how these musicians developed has been helpful in my search for new ways to play. Additionally, this search for new ways to play, particularly through documentary songwriting, has helped me grow as a performing musician, one who is comfortable on stage. For example, after of summer of gigs with the Push Farther Project, in which I improvised in both music and in conversation with audiences, I found myself surprisingly relaxed when I flew to Oregon and performed as a soloist with the Eugene Symphony Orchestra. I was even interviewed on stage and responded without nervousness. I owe this sort of growth to

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[19] Julian Lloyd Webber, "Classical music students – the future's bright, just use your imagination." The Guardian, 27 Aug 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/aug/27/julian-lloyd-webber-advice-to-classical-music-students-the-future-is-bright, (accessed 21 Dec 2017).

many people who opened doors for me, but especially to cellists who opened my mind to new possibilities.

My first non-classical cello inspiration was Natalie Haas. Seven years ago I went to a concert where she performed with Alistair Fraser, a Celtic fiddler. In addition to playing the melody on some of the fiddle tunes, Haas played a rhythm part using cello chops. This was the first time I had ever heard a cellist use this technique and I was fascinated. I bought her CD and I still listen to it often. Haas first pursued a degree in classical music from the Juilliard School, and has now toured all over the world and appeared on more than 50 albums as a guest artist.[20] Focusing on Celtic music, Haas plays both fiddle tunes and rhythmic accompaniment on her cello.

Yo-Yo Ma is a famous cellist that has played many genres. He says, "As musicians, we transcend technique in order to seek out the truths in our world in a way that gives meaning and sustenance to individuals and communities. That's art for life's sake."[21] Ma has recorded most of the classical cello repertoire over his prolific career. He has also collaborated on an album called the "Goat Rodeo Sessions," and is the pioneer of a nonprofit organization known as Silkroad. Silkroad reaches across cultural barriers and brings together musicians and composers from all over the world.[22] This is only one example of Yo-Yo Ma's prolific work in almost every possible musical genre.

Rushad Eggleston explores the cello in a different way, and has made a name for himself in non-traditional cello with his band Tornado Riders. A founding member of

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[20] "Natalie Haas," nataliehaas.com, http://nataliehaas.com, (accessed 4 October 2017).
[21] "YoYo Ma: Official Website," yo-yoma.com, http://yo-yoma.com (accessed 30 September 2017).
[22] Ibid.

the band Crooked Still as well, Eggleston has "changed the way cello is played."[23] During an interview at the Mike Block string camp, Eggleston talks about cello chopping. He demonstrates "triple chop," (a variation on the chop where the percussion note is actually three notes), and he also talks about the bow as the opposite of a pick. Eggleston says one should never play cello like you would play with a pick, because there are so many possible variations with the bow.[24]

These musicians have changed the way that I view cello and have shown what is possible. Their explorations have nurtured my own. Their work, plus my own experiences in composing, arranging, and recording with the Push Farther Project reminds me that the cello is an incredible instrument that has almost unlimited untapped potential. It can serve as a bass and drums in a folk band, can play melodies using phrasing inspired from the traditions of classical music, and can sound eerily like the human voice. And I get to play it. Every day.

[23] "Rushad Eggleston," rushad.net, http://rushad.net (accessed 4 October 2017).

[24] Rushad Eggleston, "Rushad Eggleston's informal History of the Chop at Mike Block String Camp," Youtube video, 15:32, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5z1YkyEw1KM (accessed 21 Dec 2017).

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