

MATT HAIMOVITZ Biography

Cellist **Matt Haimovitz** is a musical pioneer. He has inspired classical music lovers and won over countless new listeners to the genre by bringing his artistry to concert halls and clubs, outdoor festivals and intimate coffee houses, any place where passionate music can be heard. Through his visionary approach – bringing a fresh ear to familiar repertoire and a warm, human presence to the traditional concert experience; championing new music and initiating groundbreaking collaborations within and beyond the classical domain; recording innovative projects on Oxingale Records and integrating all with a tireless touring schedule; as well as mentoring an award-winning studio of young cellists at McGill University's Schulich School of Music – Haimovitz is re-defining what it means to be an artist, for the 21st century.

Haimovitz made his debut in 1984 at the age of 13, as soloist with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic. At 17 he made his first recording, performing the Saint-Sans, Lalo, and Bruch concerti with James Levine and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, for Deutsche Grammophon (Universal Classics). Haimovitz has since gone on to perform on the world's most esteemed stages, with such orchestras and conductors as the Berlin Philharmonic with James Levine, the New York Philharmonic with Zubin Mehta, the English Chamber Orchestra with Daniel Barenboim, the Boston Symphony Orchestra with Leonard Slatkin, and the Cleveland Orchestra with Charles Dutoit.

While continuing to receive rave reviews for playing concerto favorites with orchestras worldwide, and for premiering multiple new concerti each season, Haimovitz is also expanding the concerto experience and repertoire with a series of innovative new commissions and recordings. For a concert series dubbed "Buck the Concerto," he has invited composers, both leading and up-and-coming, to pair solo cello with non-traditional ensembles, in works that can then live on in versions for the symphony orchestra.

Latest in the series is *Scherzo Grosso*, by composer David Sanford, winner of the Rome Prize. Written for Haimovitz and the Pittsburgh Collective, a 20-piece big band, *Scherzo Grosso* was recorded live at the Knitting Factory in NYC, and released on Oxingale Records in January 2007. The cello and orchestra arrangement of this classical-funk-jazz-bebop-hopping music will be premiered in spring 2007, with the Berkeley Symphony and Kent Nagano; the original version will return to NYC in fall 2007, when it will be presented by the Miller Theater.

Also in the "Buck the Concerto" series is Montréal composer Luna Pearl Woolf's *Aprs Moi, le Déluge*. Called "the first major work of classical music to commemorate the flooding of New Orleans" (*Arts Journal*), *Aprs Moi* is a lament on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and is scored for cello and a cappella choir. Haimovitz is currently touring this work extensively, in performances that include one "bringing hope to New Orleans" (Associated Press), in November 2006, and a NY premiere in March 2007. Of the Oxingale recording of the work, with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Concert Choir directed by Beverly Taylor, the *New York Times* wrote, "Mr. Haimovitz's playing of the virtuosic cello part is by turns blazingly ardent and softly haunting," and described him as a "stellar soloist."

The next installment of the "Buck the Concerto" series is MIT Media Lab composer Tod Machover's *Vinyl Cello*, for solo cello, DJ, and interactive audience. *Vinyl Cello* is to be premiered in spring 2007 in Berkeley, and then to receive its European premiere in fall 2007, at London's Royal Academy of Music. Other upcoming concerto recordings will feature works by three Quebec composers, as well as a tribute to the late Gyrgy Ligeti, who remains a major influence on Haimovitz.

Returning a sense of intimacy and spontaneity to the classical experience, the solo cello recital has become a Haimovitz trademark. By taking on the road, rock-'n'-roll style, such unlikely bedfellows as J. S. Bach, living composers, contemporary classics, and his own notorious classic rock arrangements, Haimovitz has paved the way for the next generation of classical musicians to break new ground, further expanding the audience for classical music, and infiltrating popular culture. About the cellist's unconventional solo touring, the *San Francisco Chronicle* writes, "Haimovitz has been busily reinventing the classical recital for the new millennium." In 2000, Haimovitz struck a nerve in the music world with his original interpretation of Bach's *Six Suites for Cello Solo*, recorded on Oxingale Records. Similarly, he made waves with his Bach "Listening-Room" Tour, for which, to great acclaim, Haimovitz took the beloved cello suites out of the concert hall and into clubs and coffeehouses across the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.

On September 11, 2003, Haimovitz commenced his *Anthem* tour, a celebration of living American composers, featuring his own arrangement of Jimi Hendrix's "Star-Spangled Banner." The tour brought him to listening-rooms and rock and jazz clubs in all 50 of the United States, as well as in Canada. The performances were universally praised, and the *Anthem* album, released on Oxingale Records, has since appeared on numerous top-ten lists, including the Best Classical Album of 2003, on Amazon.com. Haimovitz's listening-room tours have been profiled on NPR's "All Things Considered" and "Performance Today," and on PRI's "The World," as well as in the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Seattle Times*, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, to name but a few. Haimovitz was the first classical artist to play at New York's infamous CBGB club, in a performance that was filmed by ABC News, for its half-hour feature on "Nightline UpClose."

Twenty years earlier, Haimovitz made his Carnegie Hall debut, when he substituted for his teacher, the legendary Leonard Rose, in Schubert's String Quintet in C, alongside Isaac Stern, Shlomo Mintz, Pinchas Zukerman, and Mstislav Rostropovich. Shortly thereafter, he joined Isaac Stern, Cho-Liang Lin, Jaime Laredo, Michael Tree, and Yo-Yo Ma in performing both Brahms Sextets at the Tanglewood Music Festival and Carnegie Hall. Haimovitz has performed chamber music with Leon Fleisher, Rudolf Serkin, James Levine, and the St. Lawrence String Quartet, and has toured the complete Beethoven and Shostakovich Trio cycles with Shlomo Mintz and Itamar Golan, across Europe. His on-going collaboration with two McGill University colleagues, violinist Jonathan Crow and violist Douglas McNabney, on *Mozart the Mason* (Oxingale Records), was singled out in the press as a highpoint in Mozart's 250th anniversary year: the *New York Times* wrote, "The three young players navigate the extremes [of Mozart's Divertimento K. 563] thoughtfully and fluidly they bring the music's ample internal dialogues vividly to life, and they give the lines a lovely glow."

As in his concerto and solo work, Haimovitz's approach to chamber music ventures beyond the traditional. In May 2007, he joins clarinetist David Krakauer, Geoff Nuttall, DJ Socalled, and colleagues in a residency at the Banff Centre; they explore the relationship between Messaien's *Quartet for the End of Time* and klezmer music, from the perspective of the *Quartet's* original clarinetist, Henri Akoka. On his recent tour and Oxingale recording, *Goulash!*, Haimovitz delved into Béla Bartók's influence on the next generation of Transylvanian composers, Gyrgy Ligeti and Adrian Pop, and improvised with such diverse artists as the legendary guitarist John McLaughlin, DJ Olive, and Constantinople, a five-member Middle Eastern ensemble. *Goulash!* also introduces Haimovitz's new cello ensemble, Uccello, comprised of his top students from McGill University. Haimovitz tours with Uccello frequently, performing in venues ranging from Boston's Sanders Theater, where the ensemble is presented by the Celebrity Series, to Seattle's Tractor Tavern. Of Uccello's West Coast tour, the *San Jose Mercury News* wrote:

"But the glorious cap to the evening was Led Zeppelin's Kashmir.' The cellos singing' the soaring vocal lines and burning through the guitar solos (it's only fair since Jimmy Page often took a violin bow to his guitar) of the Middle Eastern melody. Underneath, the young cellists slap the bodies of their instruments and clack bows against strings below the bridge to lay down the driving rhythms. As one Bachophile said, Led Zeppelin never sounded so good.' A standing ovation and handshakes from the appreciative crowd, and the cello warriors drove off into the night."

Always striving to come closer to the compositional process, Haimovitz has explored the contemporary cello repertoire through collaborations with some of the greatest composers of our time, including Luciano Berio, George Crumb, Sebastien Currier, Mario Davidovsky, Henri Dutilleux, Osvaldo Golijov, John Harbison, Hans Werner Henze, Aaron Jay Kernis, Tod Machover, Steven Mackey, Paul Moravec, George Perle, Lewis Spratlan, Robert Stern, Augusta Read Thomas, and Toby Twining. In the 1990s, Haimovitz made the first recording of Ligeti's *Sonata for Solo Cello*, along with other important contemporary solo works, in a series of four albums for Deutsche Grammophon. Since 2000, he has commissioned, premiered, and recorded dozens of new works for Oxingale Records, and countless more in concert. In 2006, Haimovitz received the Concert Music Award from ASCAP, for his advocacy of living composers, innovative programming, and pioneering spirit, and in 2004, the American Music Center awarded Haimovitz one of its highest distinctions, the Trailblazer Award, for his far-reaching contributions to American music.

Haimovitz has recorded extensively, for ten years as an exclusive artist with Deutsche Grammophon, and, since 2000, on Oxingale Records, the label he co-founded with composer Luna Pearl Woolf. Oxingale Records was

singled out by the *New York Times* as one of classical music's "adventurous smaller companies [where] the real action has moved to," and has become the model for a growing legion of independent classical labels. In addition to *Goulash!*, *Mozart the Mason*, *Anthem*, *Bach 6 Suites*, *Aprs Moi, le Déluge*, and *Live at the Knitting Factory*, Haimovitz's award-winning recordings for Oxingale Records include *The Rose Album* with pianist Itamar Golan, Tod Machover's *Hyperstring Trilogy*, *Lemons Descending* with soprano Eileen Clark, and *Epilogue* with the Méro Quartet. Other recording projects of note include two improvisations with Rob Wasserman and Joan Jeanrenaud of the Kronos Quartet, on *Trios* (GRP Records), and solos on John McLaughlin's album, *Thieves and Poets* (Verve Records).

Born in Israel, Haimovitz has been honored with the Avery Fisher Career Grant (1986), the *Grand Prix du Disque* (1991), the *Diapason d'Or* (1991), and Harvard's Louis Sudler Prize (1996), and he is the first cellist ever to receive the prestigious *Premio Internazionale "Accademia Musicale Chigiana"* (1999). He has been featured in numerous publications, including *Newsweek*, the *New Yorker*, *People*, *Connoisseur*, *Gramophone*, *Strings*, and *Strad* magazines; he has been the subject of full-length televised features, on CBS's Sunday Morning with Charles Kuralt and ZDF (Germany's national public television station); and has appeared on PBS's *Salute to the Arts* and *Nova*.

Alongside his performing and recording activities, Matt Haimovitz is Professor of Cello at the Schulich School of Music at McGill University in Montréal, Quebec. He has established an award-winning cello studio, with students taking first prize in Canada's prestigious Eckhardt-Gramatté Competition and the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition, among others. Prior to joining McGill University, he spent five years as head of the cello program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Haimovitz himself studied at the Collegiate School in New York and at the Juilliard School, in the final class of Leonard Rose, after which he continued his cello studies with Ronald Leonard and Yo-Yo Ma. In 1996, he received a B.A. *magna cum laude* with highest honors from Harvard University. Haimovitz plays a Venetian cello, made in 1710 by Matteo Gofriller. He lives in Montréal, Quebec with his wife, composer Luna Pearl Woolf, their daughter, and their Tibetan spaniel, Shoko.