

## Cellist With a Feel for the Contemporary:

### Jay Campbell Plays a New Jonathan Dawe Work

By ZACHARY WOOLFE    MAY 9, 2014

The cellist [Jay Campbell](#) is part of a generation of young musicians with a fresh center of gravity in its repertory. At this point in Mr. Campbell's career — he is a master's student at the Juilliard School — he should, by all traditional rights, be focusing on Beethoven, Brahms and the like, with perhaps a polite nod here and there to modern and contemporary music.

There are still rising artists along these lines, some without even the polite nods. But thankfully, they're growing rarer. None of the works Mr. Campbell played in a concert at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall [in March](#) or another at the [Italian Academy](#) at Columbia University on Wednesday were written before 1900. Debussy and Stravinsky were ancient history at Weill.

Even a 1981 monodrama for voice, piano and cello by Salvatore Sciarrino, played at Columbia, was old music. A majority of Mr. Campbell's choices were from our century.

Any Beethoven on Wednesday was heard in fractured form in [Jonathan Dawe's](#) new Cello Sonata. Played with the sensitive pianist Stephen Gosling, the work's single movement quotes and deconstructs strands of the master's Cello Sonata in A, with flashes of idiosyncrasy: frenetic bursts and then passages of pristine calm.

It was a proper vehicle for Mr. Campbell, who plays even new music with Romantic flair and an instinct for the sweeping gesture. This served him well in [Jason Eckardt's](#) "Flux" (1994), a fast-moving, fluttering duet for cello and alto flute, here played with agility and buttery tone by [Eric Lamb](#). They matched perfectly in torrents of notes, swiftly, quietly passing like leaves in a sudden gust of wind.

Most impressive, though, was a rare performance of [Mr. Sciarrino's](#) "Vanitas," a long, hypnotic reflection on nature and dissolution. The characteristic vocal gesture is an eerily pure note that eventually collapses into ululation. (The soprano Sharon Harms was extraordinarily precise and expressive.)

The lines of text — a patchwork of passages in Latin, Italian, English, French and German — tend to be repeated again and again, like an incantation. The instrumental score, played by Mr. Campbell and Mr. Gosling, is spare: calm, gentle chords in the piano, with soft shivers in the cello providing an underweave of anxiety. Appropriately for a cello recital, Mr. Campbell had the last word: a slow slide down the instrument in both pitch and volume, vanishing to nothing.