

# Montage

Art, books, diverse creations



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the four-day recording session ended. "He can start changing everything and you have to re-practice it."

Growing up, Haimovitz rarely faced this danger. When he enrolled at Princeton at 17—after studying at Juilliard for years, performing at Carnegie Hall, and signing a long-term record deal with Deutsche Grammophon—

**Matt Haimovitz is as comfortable in rock clubs as he is in symphony halls.**

he had yet to play a note by a living composer. All that changed when

electric guitarist Steven Mackey, a professor of composition at Princeton, invited Haimovitz to join him for a little free-form improv. Haimovitz credits those sessions for changing his approach to music. "All of a sudden I'm trying to find sounds that work with electric guitar," he recalls. "All of a sudden [I'm] doing things the wrong way to get the right sound." He dropped out of Princeton to tour (transferring to Harvard three years later), but his experiences there redirected his career to an exploration of the outer limits of his instrument. ("Matt mastered so much of the traditional repertoire at such a young age,"



Visit [harvard-mag.com/extras](http://harvard-mag.com/extras) to hear clips from Matt Haimovitz's "Odd Couple."

## The Maximalist

*Matt Haimovitz takes the cello to new places.*

by PAUL GLEASON

EVERYONE in the recording booth agreed the cello wasn't coming through. Matt Haimovitz '96 huddled over the sound controls with his wife, producer Luna Pearl Woolf '95, and the music's composer, David Sanford, to listen to the playback. Sanford suggested that Haimovitz raise his part an octave, just for a few

measures, to help it cut through the deep thicket of piano accompaniment. Jazz and opera singers, Sanford pointed out, do it all the time. Haimovitz joked that the next 50 cellists who played the piece would think he was doing it wrong, but agreed to give it a try.

"That's the danger of having the composer there!" Haimovitz explained after

O P E N B O O K

# Stinging the Dinosaurs

dobler and Edward O. Wilson, Pellegrino University Professor emeritus, in *The Superorganism: The Beauty, Elegance, and Strangeness of Insect Societies* (W.W. Norton, \$65). The social insects merit further study today, the authors say, for many reasons.

**T**he ants, bees, wasps, and termites are among the most socially advanced nonhuman organisms of which we have knowledge. In biomass and impact on ecosystems, their colonies have been dominant ele-



shed light on how neurons of the brain might interact in the creation of mind. ...The study of ants, President Lowell, of Harvard University, said when he bestowed an honorary degree on the great myrmecologist William Morton Wheeler in the 1920s, has demonstrated that these insects, "like human beings, can create civilizations without the use of reason."

The superorganisms are the clearest window through which scientists can witness the emergence of one level of biological organization from another. This is important, because almost all of modern biology consists of a process of reduction of complex systems followed by synthe-

Weaver ants (*Oecophylla smaragdina*) cooperate as they construct their leaf-tent nests.

sis. During reductive research, the system is broken down into its constituent parts and processes. When they are well enough

known, the parts and processes can be pieced back together and their newly understood properties used to explain the emergent properties of the complex system. Synthesis is in most cases far harder than reduction....[Biologists are] still a long way from understanding fully how molecules and organelles are assembled, arranged, and activated to create a complete living cell...[and] from mastering the many complex ways in which species interact to create the higher-level patterns.

Social insects, in contrast, offer a far more accessible connection between two levels of biological organization....Both of these levels, organism and colony, can be easily viewed and experimentally manipulated. As we will show...it is now possible to press far ahead in this fundamental enterprise of biology.

David Sanford says, that now "he has an appetite and a curiosity and a fire for new stuff.")

Cello and piano may seem a natural pairing, but Haimovitz has titled his new album *Odd Couple*. Because the piano belongs to the percussion family and the cello to the strings, he claims, their sound qualities, or timbres, don't match. Pianos also have fixed tunings, whereas a cellist can slide or vibrate notes to produce a more expressive intonation. But the biggest problem is that the piano's massive sound can easily overwhelm the cello. This wasn't as much a challenge for Bach and Beethoven—earlier keyboard instruments were softer—but in the recording studio in Montreal (where Haimovitz teaches cello at McGill University), he and Woolf (herself a composer) had to tinker constantly with the sound controls to pick up the right balance.

All four pieces on *Odd Couple* are by contemporary composers and take different approaches to combining the two instruments. In *Cantos for Slava*, by Augusta Read Thomas, BF '91, JF '94, Haimovitz and his pianist, Geoffrey Burleson, both plucked their strings, Haimovitz on the cello and Burleson inside the piano. Achieving balance in Sanford's *22 Part 1*, which Haimovitz likened to a "rock 'n' roll boxing ring," required furious bowing on the cello and digital amplification. The Cello Sonata, op. 6, by Samuel Barber, D.Mus. '59, and the Sonata for Cello and Piano, by Elliott Carter '30, D.Mus. '70, complete the disc; Haimovitz calls the Carter "one of the most successful works in the genre, in the richness of each individual part and how the two come together" after each instrument begins in "its own metric world." The music on *Odd Couple*, he says, is "maximalist"—dense and energetic, as opposed to the current trend among composers toward more minimalist scores.

Sharing new music is as important to Haimovitz as recording it. While recording for Deutsche Grammophon, he felt disconnected from the people buying his albums. "My work was *in* the session, and then essentially I would turn my back," he says. Running his own independent label, Oxingale ([www.oxingale.com](http://www.oxingale.com)), and selling CDs at his concerts has changed that. He tours from Thursday to Sunday nearly every week, and took his album *Anthem* (a celebration of American composers that begins with a version of Jimi Hendrix's

FROM THE BOOK

ments of most of the land habitats for at least 50 million years. Social insect species existed for more than an equivalent span of time previously, but were relatively much less common. Some of the ants, in particular, were similar to those living today. It gives pleasure to think that they stung or sprayed formic acid on many a dinosaur that carelessly trampled their nests.

The modern insect societies have a vast amount to teach us today. They show how it is possible to "speak" in complex messages with pheromones. And they illustrate...how the division of labor can be crafted with flexible behavior programs to achieve an optimal efficiency of a working group. Their networks of cooperating individuals have suggested new designs in computers and





Haimovitz plays a cello made by the famous Venetian craftsman Matteo Goffriller in the eighteenth century.

“Star-Spangled Banner”) to all 50 states. “What keeps me going at this stage is communicating with audiences,” he says. “And the fact that—as many composers as I’ve already played, as many of these genres as I’ve infiltrated—I’m just continuously amazed by how little I know.”

Although he never lacked for critical praise during his youth, Haimovitz has also won honors for his more innovative work. The American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers gave him the Concert Music Award for “taking his brilliant and passionate performances to audiences wherever they assemble,” including the late, legendary New York

City punk-rock club CBGB. When the American Music Center (a New York City organization founded by Aaron Copland, D.Mus. ’61, among others) honored him as a “Trailblazer,” Haimovitz took out his cello and played “Star-Spangled Banner” during his acceptance speech. “Freedom of speech and freedom of expression are responsible for the breadth and quality of music and art we make here in the U.S.,” he says. “Jimi Hendrix understood this better than most politicians of his time. He also had the talent to communicate this and connect with a generation. I was just trying to channel a little piece of that.”

In September, when *Odd Couple* came out (the octave change stayed in), the cellist and his pianist toured with a disc jockey to perform composer Tod Machover’s *VinylCello* concerto, in which electronic sounds and turntables accompany Haimovitz. His goal in placing Sanford and Machover next to each other on a program is to say, “Wow! It’s just as unusual for me to be playing with a D.J. as it is for me to be playing with piano.”

## Photos in Thread

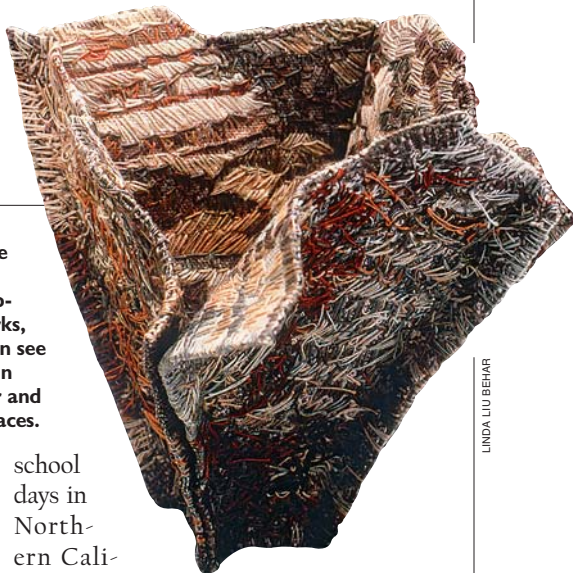
*Photorealistic fabric art that embraces both f-stops and embroidery*

by CRAIG LAMBERT

FROM A DISTANCE, they look like framed four-by-six-inch color photographs of landscapes and still-life subjects—salt marshes, fountains, rocks, squashes. Come closer, and they are revealed as three-dimensional images rendered in intricate embroidery. In fact, these miniatures by Linda Liu Behar ’68 combine photography and fabric art. Behar begins each piece by printing one of her own photographs on cotton broadcloth. Then, with lapidary care, she stitches the forms, lines, colors, and light of the photo directly onto the underlying picture with colored threads. This makes for sharp realism—“photorealism,” if you will—and produces a captivating piece of fiber art. Despite their small size, each work can take four to six weeks to complete. Yet with embroidery, “the repetitiveness is sort of meditative,” Behar says. “I enjoy making the image come alive in the stitching.”

Behar has been crafting these tiny gems (the largest is seven inches by nine) since 1992, building on a prior decade of making large contemporary-art designs in the form of quilts. Apart from one other fiber artist in Colorado, who works entirely on a sewing machine, Behar is the only person making such photorealistic objects. Her work has appeared in many solo and group exhibitions, including one in 2002 at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, and has been featured in dozens of articles. The Mobilia Gallery in Cambridge ([www.mobilia-gallery.com](http://www.mobilia-gallery.com)) represents her; the miniatures sell for several thousand dollars apiece. “With a draftsman’s command of form,” wrote *American Craft* magazine in 1998, “she creates exquisite, tiny windows on the natural world.”

A serious photographer since her high-



In *Quarry* (1997), one of Behar’s rare “sculptural” works, viewers can see stitching on both inner and outer surfaces.

school days in Northern California, Behar

starts with a vivid image. “It has taken me all these years to realize that if I want to do a good embroidery, it has to be based on a good photograph,” she explains. With the salt marshes, for example (she has done 18 salt-marsh embroideries since 1997, each from a different image), “I had to consider the time of day, lighting conditions, the weather, the tides,” she says. “It’s

LINDA LIU BEHAR