

IN THEIR OWN WORDS
Get to Know the WVS Musicians
Roland Gjernes, Principal Cello

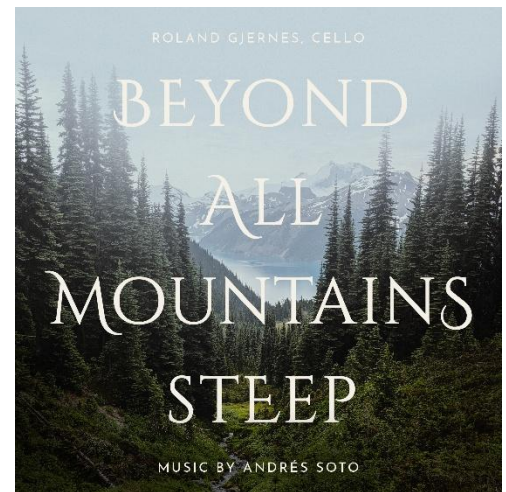


Tell us about your music journey:

Originally from Vancouver Canada, I'm a freelance musician based here in Phoenix. I've had the great pleasure of touring extensively with the hit Broadway musical *Hamilton*, in addition to many performances of musicals including *Les Misérables*, *Natasha*, *Pierre*, & *the Great Comet of 1812*, and *My Fair Lady*. I've performed worldwide with a piano quintet as part of Lincoln Center Stage, and have recorded for a wide range of films, TV shows, video games, and albums.

I began cello lessons with Harold Birston when I was only six years old, after starting piano at three. It wasn't until my teenage years that I finally developed a personal connection to the cello and began pushing my own growth as a musician. I went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in cello performance from the University of Ottawa, studying with Paul Marlyen, and a Master's in cello performance from Manhattan School of Music, studying with Philippe Muller.

One of the projects I'm most proud of is my 2025 album *Beyond All Mountains Steep*, composed by a great friend and longtime collaborator, Andrés Soto. We have worked on many projects over the years, notably the videogame *Wildmender*.



In 2017 I found the cello I play today in a New York shop. It was made in 2014 by Stefan Valcuha, an incredible violin maker and restorer who often works with Tarisio in NYC -- He even restored Yo-Yo Ma's Montagnana cello. I love the power and depth of this instrument.



Do you have a hobby?

I love dabbling in photography. While I'm no true photographer, it captures my imagination, and I love finding the best angle to capture a scene. Here are a couple of my favorites.



And recently, I've been taking the dive into baking sourdough bread. I may be 5 years late to the trend, but I've been thrilled to make and then eat some really great tasting bread.



Have you read any intriguing books lately?

A few come to mind. Perhaps one of the most beautifully written books that I've read is, *All the Light We Cannot See*, by Anthony Doerr. *The Three-Body Problem*, by Liu Cixin, was my most recent excursion into sci-fi and I was absolutely hooked. And venturing into high-fantasy, I was thoroughly enamored with Patrick Rothfuss' novel, *The Name of the Wind*.

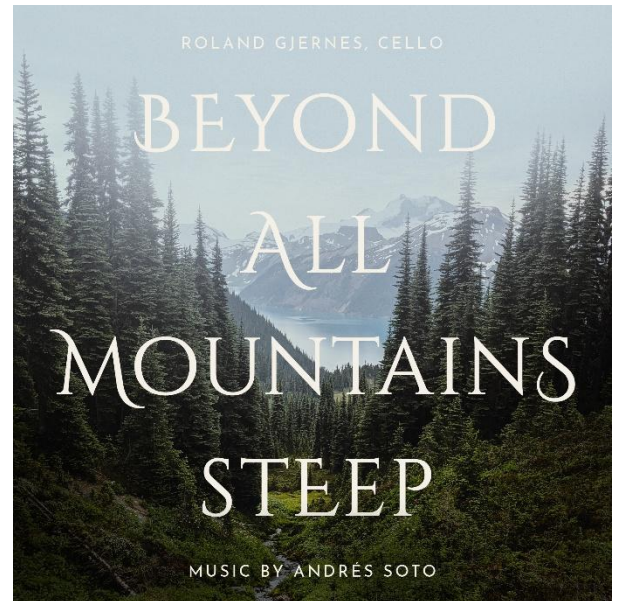
What's your current favorite TV show/movie/binge?

A couple movies that I could watch (and have watched) multiple times are, *The Devil Wears Prada*, and *Everything Everywhere All at Once*.

What's your claim to fame?

Two things come to mind. My 2025 album, *Beyond All Mountains Steep*, featuring 7 tracks, each with 7 layers of cello! It can be found on [YouTube](#) and on [Spotify](#).

And touring with Hamilton for 5 years. I performed that musical over 1100 times for tens of thousands of people.



How do you like to spend your free time?

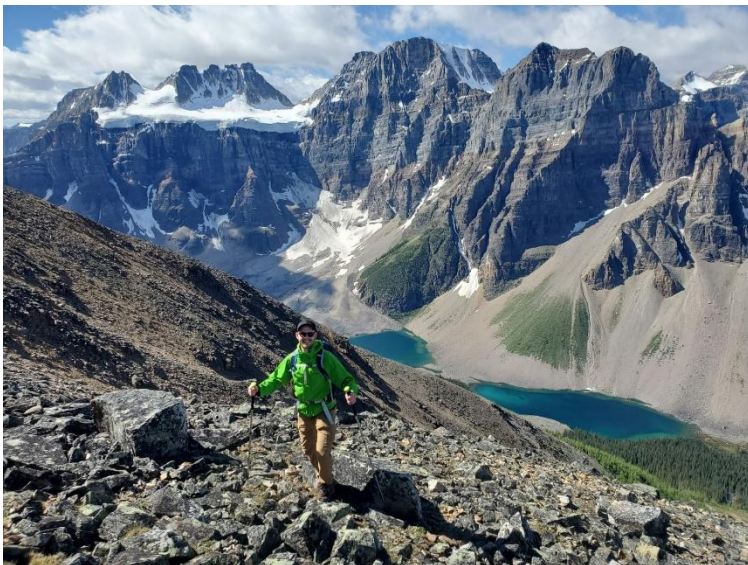
I love getting outside for a hike or maybe a bike ride. Lately, I've been spending most of my free time playing with, and taking care of, Mia, my mini Bernedoodle.



But I also love arranging music, recording cello covers, and reading (sci-fi & high fantasy are my favorite genres).

Do you prefer a beach or mountain vacation?

Definitely Mountain. Assuming I would be able to hike! I've had some amazing opportunities to hike in the Rocky Mountains, and along the coastal mountains of British Columbia. I've even encountered a wild grizzly bear on the trail! Fortunately, it was on its own journey (and didn't have cubs) so it sauntered past me.



What is something you've always wanted to learn?

I would love to learn Martial Arts. Specifically, Wing Chun, after watching the movie, Ip Man.