

FULL BIO (650 Words):

Mike Block is a pioneering multi-style cello player, composer, singer, and educator, with a passion for cross-cultural collaborations. Hailed as “one of the bravest, most intriguing musicians on the American fusion scene” by *Gramophone*, he was acclaimed by the *New York Times* for his “vital rich-hued solo playing”, and “a true artist... a sight to behold” by *Salt Lake City Desert News*. In addition to his solo performances, Mike Block’s touring bands include Biribá Union, an electric trio with Christylez Bacon (beatbox/guitar/rhymes) & Patricia Ligia (electric bass), the Mike Block Trio, an acoustic string band with Joe K. Walsh (mandolin/vocals) & Zachariah Hickman (bass/vocals), a duo with Indian tabla player Sandeep Das, and a 6-piece American/African fusion band co-led with Malian balafon player Balla Kouyaté. Since 2005, Mike has been a member of the Silk Road Ensemble, founded by Yo-Yo Ma, with which he has been featured as a cello and vocal soloist, contributed arrangements and compositions, and earned a 2017 Grammy® Award for Best Global Music Album.

As an innovator, Mike was among the first wave of cellists to use a strap to stand and move while performing. Using his own patented design, The Block Strap, Mike was the first standing cellist to perform at Carnegie Hall, which *The New York Times* characterized as “breathless ... half dance, half dare.” Mike is also the Chief Operating Officer and Musical Instrument Consultant for Forte3D, creator of the world’s first 3D-Printed carbon fiber cello. In 2020, Mike founded Play For The Vote, which organizes musical performances at polling locations across the country on Election Days, with the goal of increasing voter turnout by providing a more positive voting experience.

As an educator, Mike is dedicated to creating transformative experiences with an emphasis on creativity, collaboration, and multi-style exploration. Mike is the Founder/Director of multiple annual programs, including the Mike Block String Camp (since 2010) each July in Vero Beach, FL, *Silkroad’s* Global Musician Workshop (since 2015) each

August in Boston, MA and Hangzhou, China, and Insight/Onsite: A Creative Music Retreat each June at Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater in Mill Run, PA (since 2024). Mike also teaches over 400 cello students online through his Multi-Style Cello School at ArtistWorks.com and authored the book *Contemporary Cello Etudes*, published by Berklee Press. Mike served as Associate Professor at the Berklee College of Music for 10 years (2012-2022), and since 2018 has been on faculty of the New England Conservatory in Boston, MA.

As a recording artist, Mike has released 20 albums of his own music that regularly chart near the top of multiple Billboard categories, and he has been a contributor to META's Sound Collection since 2017, for which he has produced around 500 tracks. Mike is also an in-demand arranger for other artists, and has contributed to recordings/performances for Miley Cyrus, Elton John, Bobby McFerrin, Metallica, Morrissey, Raffi, The Knights, and many of the world's finest dancers as Music Director of the Vail Dance Festival. Mike has worked closely with Yo-Yo Ma for many years as his "go to" arranger, and Mr. Ma has commissioned dozens of arrangements from Mike that have been performed on five continents. On Mr. Ma's 2021 album, *Notes for the Future*, a majority of the tracks feature cello parts that Mike composed, and Mike was Music Director of *Sarabande Africane*, Yo-Yo Ma's collaboration with the legendary West African singer, Angelique Kidjo.

Mike attended college at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied with Richard Aaron and received the Jim Hall Prize for Undergraduate Achievement in 2004. He earned a Masters Degree from The Juilliard School in 2006, where he studied with Darrett Adkins and Joel Krosnick. In performance, Mike amplifies his cello with a David Gage Realist pickup, Ear Trumpet Lab microphones, or the Yamaha electric cello, and primarily tours using D'Addario strings and the Block Strap on his Forte3D cello.

www.MikeBlockMusic.com

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