

## **I rely on my own instincts** **by Joanna Kaczorowska**

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**David Finckel-- the genius of cello, a mastermind of the music business, the legend of classical music ...**

I'm so old already to be called a legend?

**You're so young, and you're a legend already. You were the cellist with the world famous Emerson String Quartet (earlier this year, David left the Emerson String Quartet - ed. JK). I still find it hard to think about your career with the Emerson's in the past tense.**

I have the same problem ...

**Thirty-four years with the Emerson String Quartet, nine Grammy Awards, three Gramophone Awards, more than thirty-six recordings with Deutsche Grammophone, two CD's recorded for Sony. You are the artistic director of New York's Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center), co-founder, along with your wife - the great pianist, Wu Han - of the chamber music festival in California, Music@Menlo. You are a co-founder and artistic director of the festival in South Korea under the name of Chamber Music Today ...**

I just realized how much responsibility I have ...

**ArtistLed, an independent recording label with sixteen CD's. There's so much that it is impossible to list everything.**

And I still have so many projects that I am interested in; I do not know where to begin. Now, that I am no longer with the Emerson String Quartet (who continues with their concerts with a new cellist), I fortunately have more time to tackle even more projects, so check in with me in three months and you will probably find at least another half dozen new projects that I have started.

**So you are expanding and the sky is the limit.**

Yes, I am expanding and I am also deepening my commitment to a place like the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (it presents the most famous series of chamber music concerts in the world, by organizing more than two hundred concerts a year, as well as concert tours, recording projects and a number of educational and charitable - editor JK), to Music@Menlo. I would like to make more recordings for ArtistLed, my recording company, I would like to play more concerts with more people that I meet, more musician friends, its all there and ready for me to do it and now I have some time.

**I read your blog posts and articles written by you for the "Huffington Post". I watched your cello lessons at [www.cellotalks.com](http://www.cellotalks.com) that are phenomenal, and every string player should study it. I was overwhelmed by the numbers: what you do, how you do it, whom you meet, how you manage to remember, so... what is your daily routine? Do you start the day with meditation, which will help you to focus, or do you just go for it?**

It's interesting that you mention meditation, because I have never formally done it or any physical exercise ...

**It's hard to believe, because you are in fantastic shape!**

I always say that I have health clubs all over the world. In London, it's called Heathrow, in Chicago it's called O'Hare, in New York it's called JFK. Really! Because running from one gate to another, you really work off some extra weight. Interesting about meditating, I realized that I have an interesting time of day, between waking up and getting out of bed when sometimes my mind works much better, because it's so rested, than the whole rest of the day. And so often I will lie in bed and just figure things out like if there are problems in front of me. So I am having a little bit of meditation time, but it's not the kind of meditation where you wipe it clean, it's the kind where you really concentrate and fix things mentally and visualize, so I have a lot of great ideas before I become vertical but then in the morning I try to stay with my own musical work in the beginning part of the day and to save all of the phone calls and email for later in the day, because I am a much nicer person if I have played the cello and my hands are warm... I am a much easier person to live with. You have to ask my wife Wu Han ...

**I will ask for sure. Tell me, please, what is the key to success, the key to the genius, and what drives you and what keeps you going?**

When I was very young, my parents were both musicians; my father was professional musician. It was a small family, only me as the child, and my father was a wonderful teacher. He initially was a jazz musician, then he went into classical, and then into teaching. And his way of teaching was not to sit you down and make you learn things but what he was best at was being excited about something himself. I remember, he would be playing a record and he would say, "Wow, listen to this harmony, this melody of Rachmaninoff, how it does this and that", because he was so excited, he got me excited about it. To this day, I think it's the way I do everything, not only in music but in planning and business, I try to make myself as excited as I can about an idea, and then somehow it's easier for others to understand it and come along with me. But if you ask me how do you run a festival or how do you program this, I can't really teach that. I just do it by instinct, and I do a lot by what I really love. I don't program and perform music that I don't really love. I don't subject myself or other people to it. So everything that comes across my stage is something that I really love, that I think is worthwhile for people to listen to. I think if you use that as a guide, then as a principle, you can't go wrong. Of course, music is subjective, you don't have to like the same music that I do, it doesn't mean that you're not a musician, but when you're an artistic director like I am at Lincoln Center or elsewhere, that's what people want you to do. They want you to say, "I'm excited about this, I think you should hear it."

In terms of my own cello playing, I love the feel of the cello and I love the sound of the cello. I love picking it up and feeling the strings under my fingers. I love the way the bow grips the strings and the deep sound that it makes and so I physically love it. I love picking it up and touching it, making it speak. That's kind of an addiction. If I could I would practice six, seven, hours a day, just because I love the feel of the instrument, it's so comfortable to play. That was my first impression, and it's still that way all these years later.

A video of the full interview with David Finckel is available at: [www.violinjoanna.com/blog](http://www.violinjoanna.com/blog).