

# Bach & Boombox

Cellist

Nathaniel Chaitkin **de-Classifies the Classics!**

## Nat in the News

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### Cellist Chaitkin's "Bach and Boombox" Draws It All Together

**Mary Ellyn Hutton,**  
**Music In Cincinnati.com**  
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Declassifying the classics.

That's what cellist Nathaniel Chaitkin does.

Otherwise known as "Bach and Boombox," Chaitkin does it in jeans -- and he does it in schools, businesses, public spaces, anywhere he can get people to listen (including Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport).

Chaitkin, a former member of the U.S. Marine Chamber Orchestra with which he performed frequently at the White House, mixes live performance of classics on the cello with snatches of pop, rock, jazz, you name it, on the boombox. His objective is to show what they have in common.

And "what is that," he asked, in a demonstration in the green room at Memorial Hall Saturday morning? The event was part of Macy's Arts Sampler Weekend, part of the annual ArtsWave campaign for the arts in Cincinnati.

"Repetition of an idea," Chaitkin said, whether it be of a "motive" in classical music, a "riff" in jazz or a "hook" in popular music. To illustrate, he performed the Courante from Johann Sebastian Bach's Suite for Unaccompanied Cello No. 6 in D Major, followed by examples on the boombox by Glenn Miller, Tito Puente, Cab Calloway, Justin Timberlake, James Brown and others.

"Music is communication," said Chaitkin, a member of the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra who also teaches in the Preparatory Department at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. He illustrated with Calloway's call and response hit "Hi-Di-Ho," following it with the Gigue from Bach's Suite No. 4 in E-flat Major, pointing out Bach's interchange of musical ideas.

Music can be a "contest," too, he said, sharing the famous anecdote about Bach's encounter with an angry bassoonist (Bach actually drew his sword). As a musical example, he performed a very combative-sounding excerpt from Paul Hindemith's Sonata for Solo

Cello, Op. 25, No. 3 (1923).

Music may "mimic words," Chaitkin said, but "it can do things words cannot." How better to evoke the U.S. Marine Corps than John Philip Sousa's "Semper fidelis" (official march of the Marine Corps)?

Finally, he said, music "can take you somewhere else." He illustrated this with the evocative opening movement of Spanish cellist/composer Gaspar Cassadó's Suite for Cello (1926).

Chaitkin developed "Bach and Boombox," something he has always wanted to do, he said, after receiving a Cincinnati Arts Ambassador Fellowship in 2012.

For further information and to arrange a performance, visit [bachandboombox.com](http://bachandboombox.com).

To learn more, or watch a video about BACH and BOOMBOX, contact:

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