



Courtesy photo

## Classically contemporary: Portland Cello Project is in Pinedale

By Matthew Manguso

**PINEDALE** – When the Portland Cello Project (PCP) sits down for a performance, no one knows what to expect; with hundreds of pieces in their repertoire and the technical skill to leap from standard chamber music to hip hop, there’s no telling what could happen. That’s exactly the point.

The ensemble formed in 2007, when a group of cellists living in the ever-hip Oregon city started hanging out and playing music with one another. The sessions were relaxed, just a bunch of cellists playing in a friend’s basement

for the fun of it, and despite everyone being classically trained, they all brought their own unique style of playing.

“We did it a few times, and then one night we thought we’d do it as a performance,” cellist Douglas Jenkins said. “I think Portland was a good place to start it out because the music scene is so vibrant there, people were

looking for something different and the idea felt natural.”

While the idea of a chamber ensemble seemed pretty standard, the settings where the group played were anything but. Raucous bars, heavy metal clubs, hipster hangouts, PCP found its way into them all, and the group realized it didn’t have to adhere to the

status quo to produce great music.

“All of us are classically trained, most of us have gone to college for it and some of us have degrees,” Jenkins said. “I never finished my degree because I

didn’t like the boxes that were put up around me. Music is so communicative and I wanted to play with more people in different situations.”

The other members of the PCP felt the same way, and as the group continued to hone its sound, styles and techniques, it was clear the collective skills of the musicians

**The PCP and Laura Gibson play the Pinedale Auditorium tonight at 7 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at Rock Rabbit, the Cowboy Shop, Pine Street Floral and Gifts, Isabel Jewelry, Office Outlet the Big Piney library and the Pinedale Fine Arts Council. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$7 for students and are \$2 extra at the door.**

## Conrad featured on ReverbNation

By Kathy Carlson

**PINEDALE** - This week, local singer and songwriter, Tomara Conrad, has earned a spot as one of the featured artists of the week on ReverbNation, a website where up-and-coming artists showcase their songs. ReverbNation receives roughly 20 million visitors a month, who stop in to listen to new songs by mostly unsigned musicians.

Conrad, though of slight build, has a unique, deep, bluesy voice akin to Macy Gray or Etta James. She has been performing since age 13, when she first took the stage at the Rock Rabbit. Since her start, she has sang on the Rachael Ray show in New York and made the cut to the blind auditions on The Voice.

Conrad was chosen to be a featured artist on ReverbNation after she uploaded three songs to be reviewed. Artists who earn a score of 7.8 or higher on a scale of 10 procure a spot as one of the site’s artists of the week. The musicians are then ranked

and scored by genre and location. Unsurprisingly, Conrad is ranked No. 1 for rhythm and blues in Pinedale. ReverbNation is rather selective and being picked shows just how much sultry talent the young singer has.

In addition to being talented, Conrad is also generous. Half of the proceeds from her songs downloaded off of ReverbNation are donated to programs to bring music to kids and various other charities. Conrad often plays at the Rock Rabbit on Tuesday evenings, so if a resident would like to hear her live, they are in luck.

Conrad is not the only Pinedale musician to be on ReverbNation. Cary Laine, also seen at the Rock Rabbit on most Tuesday evenings, has four songs available for the listening on the site. She is currently ranked as the No. 1 country artist in Pinedale. ■

[kcarlson@pinedaleroundup.com](mailto:kcarlson@pinedaleroundup.com)

could expand and fit any genre of music.

“We practice a lot,” Jenkins emphasized. “It’s really thinking about the whole as well as the individual voices, and since there’s no conductor, there’s a lot of discussion about how we should do this or play that.”

PCP leaps effortlessly from Bach to Brubeck to Beck, with quick twists and turns that lead the audience to Kanye West before diving headfirst into Radiohead. The song choices rely only on the mood of the performers and the feeling emitted from the audience.

“It’s always just a big variety and music to fit the venue but also contrast with it,” Jenkins said. “We never plan anything out, we just feel the reaction from the audience and can

change it midstream; what does the night feel like in this town and what are we going to do?”

Since PCP has never been to Pinedale before, the evening should be unique, and as an extra special treat the ensemble is going to be joined by vocalist Laura Gibson.

A native Oregonian, Gibson has been entrancing audiences with her melodic, cradle song voice since the release of her debut album *If You Come Greet Me* in 2006.

While the motto of the group seems to be “expect the unexpected,” Pinedale can certainly anticipate a singular performance from a group of remarkable artists. ■

[mmanguso@pinedaleroundup.com](mailto:mmanguso@pinedaleroundup.com)

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