

# READER

Cellist Judith Hamann summons a multitude of voices on two new paired albums

By Bill Meyer  
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With almost identical moonlit cover images and similarly intimate recordings of her cello, voice, and electronics, **Judith Hamann's** two new albums are a matched set.

Both releases present dialogues between the peripatetic Australian-born musician's main instrument and her body. On the LP *Shaking Studies*, whose program she [performed in Chicago two years ago](#), she activates her cello's resonant frequencies, causing it to vibrate so vigorously that it shakes her body. Transferred to vinyl, these pulsing sounds still exert a powerful physical effect; "A Reading" hurtles like a locomotive, and the two-part "Pulse Study" oscillates among sounds that feel like they're shaking different parts of your skeleton.

The CD *Music for Cello and Humming* places Hamann's studies of cello and humming (of course) alongside a pair of pieces written for her by compatriot [Anthony Pateras](#) and American composer [Sarah Hennies](#). On her originals, layers of vocal and bowed pitches combine to form drawn-out progressions of mutating textures, with pure tones morphing into beating, abrading multiphonics. On Pateras's "Down to Dust" electronics patiently buff Hamann's sounds until they melt into a flickering, alien presence. Hennies's "Loss," on the other hand, courts the limits of human functioning: the score requires Hamann to push her voice beyond its natural range, so that she gulps and coughs as her singing breaks against the solid wall of sound erected by her playing. Though both albums unfold as cohesive sequences, they were assembled from three years of recordings from three continents, including Australian sessions engineered by former Chicagoan Casey Rice.

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