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Bio information: **JANEL AND ANTHONY**

Title: **WHERE IS HOME** (Cuneiform Rune 338)

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FILE UNDER: POST-JAZZ / EXPERIMENTAL ROCK / AMBIENT / WORLD / 21st C. GLOBAL

"Janel and Anthony are an important step in the evolution of music. They both exist on so many levels, each piece is like a hundred doors opening up!" – Jimmy Chamberlin (Smashing Pumpkins)

"Janel & Anthony - guitars and 'cello respectively - play a haunting and humbly virtuosic form of music wherein the elements of electronics, looping, and lo-fi timbres live both in intimacy and in majesty in the same house as acoustic instruments and folk/blues-inspired melodies. As such, it is both timely and timeless, drenched as it is in intoxicating atmosphere; wan, quiet voices submitting to waves of sonic drama. Who could possibly resist it?" – Nels Cline (Wilco, Nels Cline Singers)

Janel and Anthony are a Washington DC based instrumental duo whose elegant experimental music has gained the attention of some of the world's most important improvisers and musicians, and captivated live audiences (and NPR and BBC listeners) locally and abroad. For *Where Is Home*, their second album and first release on **Cuneiform**, the duo have created a lush, orchestral work investigating the treacherous emotional terrain at the hyper-mobile heart of 21st century America. Drawing on everything from Hindustani ragas and surf rock licks to Appalachian laments and post-bop harmonies, the album alternates between intricately lapidary, electro-acoustic soundscapes and brief improvised dialogues. Transcending music genre as well as geographic locale, *Where Is Home* is rooted equally in the 21st century's global village and in Washington's vanished past.

Janel and Anthony is the collaborative venture of two of the fastest-rising stars in DC's burgeoning experimental music scene, **Anthony Pirog**, an omnivorous guitarist, and **Janel Leppin**, a conservatory trained cellist steeped in North Indian and Persian classical music, free improvisation and jazz. They began performing as a duo in 2005, and in 2006, they recorded and self-released an eponymous album which sold thousands of copies at countless shows they've played since. Their new album, *Where is Home*, was recorded over the past several years during an exhilarating and exhausting period for the two professional musicians. An ethereal instrumental song cycle soaked in the apprehension and thrill of wanderlust, *Where Is Home* in an astonishing creation, born in a studio that served as spiritual heart, home, and only fixed locale during 3 years of constant touring, travel to distant locales for musical collaborations, and multiple moves. While exploring themes of restlessness, homesickness and feelings of disorientation, the music itself is deft and focused—a vivid, dynamic offering that shimmers with consummate professionalism and a bond shared since adolescence.

As teenagers in the DC suburb of Vienna, Virginia during the 1990s, Leppin and Pirog attended the same high school. But they only began playing music together during college years, playing music at **Wedderburn**, home of Leppin's family for over a century and the idyllic setting of her childhood years. Located in Vienna and once served by a train stop, Wedderburn originally was built by Leppin's family as a late 19th century summer retreat for Washingtonians: a secluded village of architecturally-fanciful arts-and-crafts cottages, secret walled gardens, and various older structures, nestled deep in old-growth woods. Her family later converted the complex to year-round residences, rented to artists. Early in the 21st century, DC's explosive and imminent urban growth led to Wedderburn being acquired by developers and, despite her efforts to preserve it, subdivided and clear-cut for new suburban housing developments. Wedderburn serves as prologue to *Where is Home's* wanderlust, and one of its underlying and most intimate inspirations.

"Wedderburn had been in my family for five generations, and it was a paradise for me throughout my life," Leppin says. "I would have Anthony and other friends over to my cottage when I was in college – I had my own, hand-crafted, simple, rustic house deep in the woods...built by my ancestors – we would build bonfires and play music, improvise and write songs together. It was a beautiful time when I lived there. Since moving from Wedderburn, I've been trying to find a new, deep-seated home."

While Janel and Anthony's music is informed by the intense attachment to ancestral land and intimate knowledge of the local landscape, there's nothing parochial about their expression. Their music is global in its sonic, instrumental and emotional reach, sharing the inclusive spirit of jazz and 21st century classical music. Pirog's "Big Sur" perfectly captures their expansive musical vision. Featuring Leppin on bowed and pizzicato cello, loops, a vintage Prophet 5 analog synthesizer, and Saarang Maestro Dx (a digital tanpura, or long-neck North Indian lute); and Pirog on electric and acoustic guitars, electric sitar, bells and loops; *Where Is Home's* opening track is a high energy excursion, marked by soaring solos full of wonder. Inspired by the many places they'd visited and lived, the album is a lavishly detailed musical journey, by turns ravishing and harrowing. Themes of home ("A Viennesean Life") give way to those of travel, in a panorama that spans from "Big Sur" to "Cross the Williamsburg Bridge".

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An astoundingly mature and developed work, *Where is Home* was recorded over a three-year period onto two-inch tape at **The Brink**, an analog recording studio outside Washington, DC, and engineered by **Mike Reina**. Pirog remarks, “We really took our time in developing the material on this album and took every measure to make sure every idea was very clear. We also allowed ourselves to mature as musicians so our voices on our instruments developed further.” Leppin adds: “*Where is Home* is symbolic of a kind of crossroads for us. We finally settled on a studio to work and create in, and Anthony and I were stretching beyond our musical reach in this period, which was a beautiful but sometimes painful experience.”

Alternating compositions with brief improvisational encounters, *Where Is Home* captures the dynamic ebb and flow of the duo’s live shows, where they artfully employ loops and some prepared tracks. That said, the album is very much a product of the studio, an environment conducive to experimentation. “I’m always interested in filling up space sonically,” Leppin says. “You can record something very low in pitch and then something quite high in pitch filling up the pieces range. We use loops all the time to create a carpet or a blanket of sound. We’re always thinking in terms of texture. We were recording at the Brink, which is a wonderland. For instance, there was a harpsichord in the main room, so I wrote a part on it, adding a new subtle texture to “Viennesian Life”.”

Leppin and Pirog first recorded together on several tracks written by Pirog for his project *Ignorant American* (2012 self-release). In 2005, they performed their first two shows as Janel and Anthony at Arlington VA’s Galaxy Hut and Sangha Café in Takoma Park, MD. Since then, they have played hundreds of shows at rock and jazz clubs, art galleries, experimental lofts, and other venues, and shared bills with heavyweight acts such as **Fennesz**, **Andrea Parkins**, **Kyp Malone**, **Eugene Chadborne**, **Susan Alcorn**, **Evan Parker**, **Peter Brötzmann**, **Marshall Allen**, **Mary Halvorson** and **Jessica Pavonne**. Janel and Anthony toured both East and West Coasts as well as the Midwest and in October 2010 enjoyed a residency at Pete’s Candy Store in Brooklyn. In 2011, their first album, *Janel and Anthony*, was reissued on vinyl by **Cricket Cemetery Records**.

Signing to Cuneiform is a major indication that Janel and Anthony have come into their own. With an international roster featuring some of the world’s most influential and creative avant garde musicians, the Washington DC-based label hasn’t signed a local act in more than a decade. And it says something important about DC that the scene has nurtured such insistently embracing players. Beyond the extraordinary duo, there’s an experimental / avant music scene, nourished by the annual **Sonic Circuits Festival** and other presenters, on the verge of gaining international prominence.

Janel and Anthony’s budding development as artists mirrors the recent emergence of DC – long a political powerhouse – as an artistic, musical, and technological center of global importance. DC’s roiling underground scene boasts a global array of artists who are creating new sounds unconfined by genre conventions. While rooted in DC, they also experience the peripatetic lifestyle often required by a life in music. Pirog notes that at the most fundamental level *Where Is Home* reflects their gypsy existence in recent years. “The music on this album was inspired by the many places we’ve visited and lived. In the course of three years we moved at least 10 times.” But DC has always been a magnet for people – and music – from around the globe who are on the move. “The Washington scene has been ideal, because we’re both interested in so many different types of music,” Pirog says. “We’re able to play in all the different scenes, jazz, roots, surf, rockabilly, Persian, experimental. And then we bring all of that into Janel and Anthony.”

Frequent performers on DC’s live music scene, Janel and Anthony will celebrate the release of *Where is Home* with multiple shows both near and afar. Besides touring in the US, the duo is planning shows in Europe and elsewhere abroad.

For more information, see:
www.janelandanthony.com
www.facebook.com/janelandanthony

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS



Digital [High-Resolution] versions of these images are available for download on www.cuneiformrecords.com

JANEL AND ANTHONY BIOS (continued...)

JANEL LEPPIN <http://www.janelleppin.com>

Leppin grew up in Vienna, VA, in one of Wedderburn's nine cottages (each with a piano!), in a family where everyone played an instrument. She started on violin, switching to cello when her twin sister abandoned it for the clarinet. Leppin began studying Western classical music with National Symphony Orchestra players in her early teens, while also listening to Sonic Youth, Nirvana and Bikini Kill albums and attending shows in DC's thriving punk and hardcore scene. Leppin earned a degree in cello performance from George Mason University (minoring in world music and dance), where professor **Beth Bullard** introduced her to North Indian, Persian and Japanese classical music. As a student, she played in Balinese Gamelan groups, took private Japanese koto lessons and began touring internationally with Croatian pop star **Tajci**. She studied North Indian classical music in 2003 with Dutch cellist **Saskia Rao-de Haas** in Amsterdam, and, after graduating, studied with her in Delhi, India. Mrs. Rao de Haas had adapted a cello to play Indian classical music, and she gave Leppin the prototype, which Leppin presented at The American Musical Instrument Society's 2005 meeting. Leppin plays this "instrument of many colors" – a small cello with sympathetic strings that ring out when the bowed strings are touched, and variously called the Indian cello, cello sympathetique, or modified cello – on *Where is Home* and several other recordings.

Back in Virginia, Leppin studied classical Persian music from 2005-present with composer/violinist/tar master **Nader Majd** and performed and recorded in his **Chakavak Ensemble**. After college she began studying improvisation, and playing jazz and experimental music on the cello. She has also played electric bass (Fender Jaguar) in rock, ambient, and surf bands. Leppin recently (2011) began studying remotely with Persian classical music with master ney player **Hossein Omoumi**.

As a recording artist, Leppin "brings a haunting lyricism to the cello"[Hurd Audio] and has appeared on numerous recordings since 2005 with other experimental, jazz/improv, electronic, and world musicians. She's recorded and performed as a duo and in ensembles with legendary pedal steelist **Susan Alcorn**, has appeared on every Sonic Circuits compilation, done two self-released albums with DC surf group **The El Rays**, recorded a **Laughing Man** disc for **Dischord**, and led a string quartet recording the strings on **Skysaw's Great Civilizations**. Since spring 2012, Leppin has been based in Seattle to record with various West Coast artists. Most recently, she's recorded on **Oren Ambarchi's Audience of One (Touch)**; with pedal steelist **Susan Alcorn** on **Eyvind Kang's Visible Breathe (Editions Mego)**, on **Steven O'Malley's Ideologic Organ (Editions Mego)**, and with **Kang** on a piece for a forthcoming **Tzadik** album and, for another forthcoming recording, on a Persian ney concerto that **Kang** wrote for **Ustad Hossein Omoumi**. In addition, Leppin is currently working on a solo record at The Brink.

As a performer, Leppin remains especially active in both Washington and NY. While living in NY in 2010, she recorded with **Carla Bozulich's** band **Evangelista** for a forthcoming album and worked with **Kyp Malone (T.V. on the Radio)**, touring Europe with his psych rock band **Rain Machine**. She's performed in such venues as DC's Velvet Lounge and Pyramid Atlantic (w/**Samita Singha & Julia Ulehla**, opening for **Keith Row & John Butcher**) to the French Embassy (w/ **Hume** opening for **Magma** and at La Fete de la Musique w/ **Janel and Anthony**), the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage (w/ **Arturas Bumsteinas**) and Strathmore Mansion (opening for **Fennesz**). She has performed at every Sonic Circuits Festival of Experimental Music since 2007. In 2008, she was the first Washington musician to be invited to perform at Baltimore's High Zero Festival of Improvisational Music, playing w/**Tetuzi Akiyama, Camel Zekri, Tony Buck, Arrington de Dioniso** and numerous others, and in playing solo in 2011 with dancer **Lily Susskind** for the festival's first Dance & Music performance. 2012 has brought Leppin numerous high-profile NY gigs. She performed 3 times at The Stone – including a sold out show, curated by **Lou Reed** and **Laurie Anderson**, playing with **Susan Alcorn, Eyvind Kang** and **Jessika Kenney**, and a night that she curated for **Andrea Centazzo's** label **Ictus Records**, playing in a quartet with **Jessica Pavonne**. On May 31st, Leppin curates the **Issue Project Room**, where she will perform her arrangements of the music of **Susan Alcorn** with **Skuli Sverrisson, Kang, Jessika Kenney, Doug Weisemann, Andrea Parkins, and Pirog**.

ANTHONY PIROG <http://www.anthonypirog.com>

Born in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, Pirog grew up in Chevy Chase, Md. (DC metro area) and in Carmel Valley, California before his family settled in Vienna, Va in 1989. He began playing music at home, with access to his father's Delta blues, surf and doo-wop albums and the 1963 Fender Jaguar from his father's surf rock band. Pirog played in more than a dozen bands during his high school years. Interested in free jazz and experimental music, he studied jazz guitar in Boston's **Berklee** before completing his degree in jazz performance at NYU in 2002.

Back in DC by 2004, he quickly earned a reputation as a wide-ranging master, ready to add his studied but unorthodox voice to just about any musical situation, from jazz, country, fingerstyle and old time music to free improvisation, free jazz, surf and experimental music. Pirog has performed with renown avant jazzers such as **Elliott Sharp** and **Mary Halvorson**, and played in numerous jazz, electronic, and improv groups based in DC, NYC and elsewhere on the East Coast, including **Better Than Lost, The Landscaping Crew, The Bobby Muncy Quartet, Ad Hoc Quartet, Inner Loop, Stylus**, and countless more. He has also performed with rock, roots, and rockabilly musicians and ensembles, playing with **Billy Hancock, Dave Elliot** and **Joe Stanley**; and **The Dave Kitchen Band** (SXSW 2008), **Out of Your Head Collective, The El Rays, The Rocking Bones**, and dozens more. In 2012, he performed a sold-out show at The Stone with **Violet (Jeff Surak)** and Berlin filmmaker **Sylvia Schedelabuer**. In addition to these collaborations, Pirog leads several groups of his own, including the **Anthony Pirog Trio** and a **Sextet**, as well as running his own label, **Sonic Mass Records**, which he began in 2009 to document his solo work. He has self-released numerous recordings and appeared on numerous DC Sonic Circuits compilations. **Dangerbird Records** recently released Pirog's new album with **Skysaw**, his rock trio with ex-**Smashing Pumpkins** drummer **Jimmy Chamberlin** and **Reina**.

Extremely active on the DC new music scene, Pirog's played at venues ranging from the Black Cat and Twin's Jazz to The Rock and Roll Hotel, Strathmore Mansion and French Embassy; performed 5 years in a row at DC's Sonic Circuits Festival, and appeared in numerous concerts presented by DC Sonic Circuits, **Claveus Productions, Electric Possible, and Brightest Young Things**. Pirog's performances have been acclaimed by the local press, with *The Washington Post* praising his music in 2012 for its "fusion of talent and creativity". For the **2011 Sonic Circuits Festival**, Pirog recruited, organized and conducted a 22-piece orchestra to perform **Terry Riley's "In C"**, at a free outdoor concert in Silver Spring, MD's central plaza. That same year, Washington's most prestigious music awards, **WAMA (Washington Area Music Association)**, named Pirog **Washington's Best Modern Rock Instrumentalist 2011**.