

Mp3 Water Bear - Skinnydipping



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The names of people inspire this intimate and danceable, all original roots-classical Name Music, with passionate melodies, harmonies and improvisation by two violins, cello, bass and voices. 13 MP3 Songs

CLASSICAL: Contemporary, JAZZ: Smooth Jazz Details: Composers/Performers: Mer Boel Ruth Roland, violins; Hank Roberts, cello; Tim Reppert, bass. Guest appearance by Joe Frisino, guitar. Water Bear founder Mer Boel writes the majority of the compositions on Skinnydipping, with two contributions (William and Wylatt) from Hank Roberts, the internationally known jazz cellist improviser extraordinaire, and two from Ruth Roland (Carma and Janice). "Water Bear is a string band and a string quartet, a new music ensemble and a folk music function, an improvising group and the presentation of a compositional modus. They sound like European folk musics, like Central and South American musics, like chamber or classical music, and like rural music from our own puddingstone of a country. Nevertheless, they sound like themselves." -Ithaca Times, Bert Patterns (Robert Patterson), August 8-14, 2001

The Name Music on Skinnydipping is inspired by people's names, and the desire to honor people through music. As explained by Mer Boel: "Usually what happens is that I find myself thinking about a particular person, reflecting on the qualities they seem to have, both inner and outer qualities. I recall what makes the person laugh, what their vulnerabilities are, how they approach life, or perhaps I am struck by some recent events in their life. Maybe we've had a conversation that has resonated with me. I become curious to hear how the music for their name would sound, and that's it, I'm off and running. "So I write out the pitches, in order, for the letters in the name, based on the correspondence system I developed where the alphabet fits the first position range on the violin. I play around on my violin with these pitches, trying out different rhythms, styles, and seeing if a particular direction feels right for this person. Usually I pluck my violin, but sometimes I use the bow also during this phase. What are the next parts of the melody for this name? Or

should the name pitches be a sort of repeating ground motif? I see what inspirations come, and write them down in pencil (this is smarter than using pen, which I also sometimes do) on some music notation paper. "Sometimes a whole section of melody will come to me as one piece, flowing very easily, and I have a sensation of knowing that this is right for the name, for the person. Other times I try several versions, and it takes a while to choose between them, or decide how to combine parts of one with parts of another. If I know more than one person with a particular name I'll be thinking/feeling about the qualities they have in common, sensing whether this music could fit them, describe them in some way. "Once I have written the melody or repeating ground part, I usually work on the chord progression, or sometimes I work on a harmony line first. It seems that often the chords for the piece have been in my head while developing the melody, so it is more a matter of trying to figure out which chords I am hearing, and writing them down. "I also take breaks, sometimes even for days or weeks, and work on other pieces. When I come back to playing the piece, I see how it feels: is it still right? What needs fixing? What am I hearing that I haven't gotten down on paper yet? Sometimes I play one line while singing the harmony, or I sing the melody and play the chords on the violin. Usually I enter the piece into a computer music notation program (I use Noteworthy Composer), and listen again to the harmonies. "And then, I take the piece to our band rehearsal, and we play through it, improvise on it, and find ways to bring out the character of the music, the person. Once we are comfortable with the piece, we perform it for the recording, doing several takes. The performance includes a lot of improvisation of melodic material, solos over the chord progression, inventive ways to accompany the melody, textures and bowing sounds, and other ideas that occur to us in the moment we are playing. This performing/recording phase is very satisfying to me - it is the piece coming to life, the qualities of the name and the person being expressed musically. We don't do any overdubbing or re-recording, although sometimes the final piece incorporates sections of different takes strung together." --Mer Boel

Water Bear artist line-up Mer Boel, Mama Bear

Composer, violinist, and vocalist Mer Boel has a B.F.A. in jazz vocal performance with a minor in violin from City College of New York. She was co-founder of The Daughters of Sweden and original music group Cymbidium, and has recorded with singer/songwriters Karen Beth and Tom Knight. She has played in the Catskill Symphony, and with The High Street Boys, The Sultans, and The Purple Mountain Cowtippers, all in upstate NY. She has sung with the Gerald Wolfe Singers, and the Robert Dale Chorale.

Hank Roberts Composer, cellist, and vocalist Hank Roberts, whom Jazz Express magazine calls "One of

the most respected improvising cellists on the international scene," has toured extensively in Europe, Canada, Japan, and the U.S., playing avant-garde jazz. He's performed with many artists, currently including Bill Frisell, Andy Summers, Tim Berne, The Second Hand (dance company), and also with Cologne Radio Orchestra, Arcado String Trio, and David Sanborn. In Ithaca, NY, where he has lived since the late 80's, he's played with Ti-Ti Chickapea, Martin Simpson, and Peter Dodge. He's also busy with his own Hank Roberts Group. Ruth Roland Composer, violinist, poet, and vocalist Ruth Roland grew up playing Eastern European folk music with her father's band. She has a bachelor's degree in music from Michigan State University and a master's degree in violin performance from the University of Minnesota. She is a member of the Binghamton Philharmonic and the Tri-Cities Opera Orchestra of New York. She is a founding member of Women's Works, an annual celebration of women composers, and has performed with artists such as George Benson, Smokey Robinson, and the Moody Blues. Tim Reppert Composer, bassist, and vocalist Tim Reppert studied at the Berklee School of Music in Boston, and has worked as a studio session musician in New York City, Boston, and Ithaca. Reppert is also a sound engineer, and owns REP Studios. He's recorded for diverse clients such as Sly Stone, Billy Ocean, and The Beastie Boys, and local artists such as the Burns Sisters, Mbusi, and Samite.

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