

Maestro Murray

He's best known for his quirky film roles and eccentric personality, but Bill Murray's foray as a touring musician has made him a global sensation

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Bill Murray is on the road. Calling from Charlotte, N.C., where it's well after midnight, he and classical cellist Jan Vogler are winding down after a performance on their unusual tour, which sees the famously quirky movie star singing – yes, *singing* – and reciting literature with a chamber trio, of all things.

For such a spontaneous spirit, maybe it's no surprise that Murray, 68, would take a late-career dive into music. After all, there are countless stories circulating of Murray crashing real-life situations like some affable genie before exiting as

unexpectedly as he arrived.

He often materializes at indie rock gigs – catching bands like Rilo Kiley, Best Coast, Kings of Leon and Girlpool – and has been spotted riding kids' bicycles down the aisles of Walmart. He has crashed engagement parties, suddenly bartended at a music festival and even

once washed the dishes at a party in the home of some strangers.

His unlikely partnership with an acclaimed cello whiz sounds a bit like that too – Vogler, who hails from Germany but now lives in New York City, met Murray on an international flight, and their friendship and collaboration grew organically. The show launched by their partnership has toured the globe, including performances in Portland last fall, with no signs of slowing down.

Murray revels in being unpredictable. When setting up interviews with him, journalists are warned that he simply might not call, depending on how he's feeling at the time. And when he does call, a day and a half late, he's as likely to be gracious and articulate as he is to roast the interviewer: "I mean, *you* could sing in front of this band, and your voice sounds like a frog." (He's not wrong.)

The man is no stranger to travel – he has often shot on location across his 40-year movie career – but bouncing from city to city each night is new for him. It's just another part of the learning curve for his left-turn musical team-up with Vogler, which has so far yielded the 2017 album "New Worlds" and a widening tour.

"Yes, that is new," admitted Murray in his distinctively sleepy Chicago accent. "I didn't realize that, about an hour before you do the show, you have absolutely nothing (left). Yet somehow we end up doing a show that's better than the night before. I don't know how it happens. It's a deep mystery."

"That's something that musicians know all our lives," Vogler chimed in. "We always feel miserable before the concert and stress out that we can't do again what we did yesterday. And then when we come on stage, the audience carries you to these new heights somehow."

For Murray, who minted his withering wit and deadpan charisma in pop-culture touchstones like "Ghostbusters," "Groundhog Day," "Caddyshack" and "Rushmore," and the early days of "Saturday Night Live," this isn't his first brush with music. Playing the carefree bear Baloo in the 2016 remake of "The Jungle Book," he sang "The Bare Necessities" with a winsome drawl. And, on the 2015 Netflix special "A Very Murray Christmas," he dug into lovable holiday standards alongside Miley Cyrus, George Clooney and members of the French rock band Phoenix.

"I've always loved music," Murray said, pointing to his stints singing in folk and rock bands as a teen in the late 1960s. He also sang in Chicago improv-comedy troupe Second City, debuting his scenery-chewing character "Nick the Lounge Singer" there before taking it to SNL. He has shared stages with John Prine, Eric Clapton and even Clint Eastwood, and he delivered a crooning karaoke version of Roxy Music's "More Than This" during his Oscar-nominated

Bill Murray
and classical
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