10/29/20 CI Music Hour Recap

Hello, everyone!

Last Thursday, we welcomed Joe Andrews to the CI Music Hour. Joe is a member of Old Crow Medicine Show and plays a variety of lesser-known string instruments. During our session, Joe demonstrated the mandolin, banjo, dobro, and pedal steel guitar. All of these instruments have deep histories in Americana genres such as blues, bluegrass, and country-western.

Joe first introduced us to the mandolin. In an old-time string band, the mandolin often represents the "snare drum" in the ensemble because of its punchy nature. String bands and bluegrass groups do not traditionally have drum sets, so the mandolin helps keep time instead. There was a lot of discussion about classical vs. folk mandolin, and Joe explained that the instrument is the same and the only difference is the style. He mentioned a crossover mandolinist, Chris Thile, who plays classical mandolin style but is best known for his work with the groups Nickel Creek and the [Punch Brothers](). If you'd like to check out classical mandolin, here's an [example](). Joe also mentioned larger mandolins; here's Sarah Jarosz playing the [mandocello]().

Next was the banjo, which has two types (open back or closed back) and two playing styles (finger picks or claw hammer). All banjos have a skin head of some kind on the front of the instrument like you would find on a drum. This also gives the banjo a percussive and resonant quality to its sound.

The last two instruments Joe demoed for us were the dobro and the pedal steel guitar. Both instruments are played with a slide over the frets. The dobro is played in the lap instead of across the body like a guitar. The pedal steel guitar, or the "guitar table" as Joe joked, is a console-style instrument that has pedals (like a piano) and knee levers that change the pitch of notes. Since it was a little difficult to watch Joe play pedal steel because of the camera angle, here's Barbra Mandrell giving it a [whirl]()!

Have a great weekend!
Chrysa & Julianne