



## D.J. Spins Museum's Attitude



Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

By ALLAN KOZINN  
Published: October 25, 2012

SOON after the Metropolitan Museum of Art hired Limor Tomer last year to oversee its concerts and lectures department, she invited her old friend Paul D. Miller, the hip-hop turntablist, composer and author, on a private tour of the galleries.

### Connect With Us on Twitter

Follow @nytimesarts for arts and entertainment news.

Arts Twitter List: Critics, Reporters and Editors

### Arts & Entertainment Guide

A sortable calendar of noteworthy cultural events in the New York region, selected by Times critics.

[Go to Event Listings »](#)

The two had known each other since the 1990s, when Ms. Tomer was overseeing the programming at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's BAMcafé, and Mr. Miller was starting his career as "D J Spooky, [That Subliminal Kid](#)." By the end of their walkabout, which hadn't begun with an agenda, Ms. Tomer and Mr. Miller were sketching out ideas that he will explore in a yearlong artist residency at the Met that begins Friday with a screening of the 1956 South Korean film "[Madame Freedom](#)." Mr. Miller has composed a new soundtrack score for the film that he and a

string quartet will perform live.

"What I tend to do," Ms. Tomer said, "is walk around the museum with artists and try to see the galleries from their perspective — to see what they see and to understand what speaks to them and how they would animate these spaces. With Paul every gallery we visited he'd say, 'Oh, yeah, I have this project.' In the Asian gallery he was talking about early Korean film and postwar Korean theater, art and culture. When we went to the Oceanic gallery it turned out he's building an artist retreat on a small Pacific island and has been studying the musical instruments there." The tour led Ms. Tomer to reconsider what residencies at the Met — previously long-term affairs — should be and to see Mr. Miller as exactly the game changer she was looking for.

"To me the Met is like a huge record collection," Mr. Miller said. "You have everything from Napoleon's sword to Thomas Edison's first cylinder recordings. They have an incredible archive — not just the paintings and sculptures, but technological artifacts, armor. And I thought that would be incredible to do a megamix, responding to the collection. So Limor

FACEBOOK

TWITTER

GOOGLE+

SAVE

E-MAIL

SHARE

PRINT

SINGLE PAGE

REPRINTS



Log in to see what your friends are sharing on nytimes.com. [Privacy Policy](#) | [What's This?](#)

[Log In With Facebook](#)

### What's Popular Now

Nashville Takes Its Turn in the Spotlight



Richard Blanco, 2013 Inaugural Poet



### Get the Times Limited E-Mail



[Privacy Policy](#)

[Sign Up](#)

MOST E-MAILED

MOST VIEWED



1. Nashville's Latest Big Hit Could Be the City Itself



2. MAUREEN DOWD He Who Knew Not



3. A Financial Service for People Fed Up With Banks



4. ECONOMIC SCENE Health Care and Profits, a Poor Mix



5. THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN The Market and Mother Nature



6. Study Questions Effectiveness of Therapy for Suicidal Teenagers



7. WELL Do the Brain Benefits of Exercise Last?



8. Flu Widespread, Leading a Range of Winter's Ills



9. For Americans Under 50, Stark Findings on Health

and I began to talk about that, and I said: 'I don't want it to just be music. I want it to be conceptual. I want it to be a rigorous engagement with contemporary art.' "

Mr. Miller, at 42, is a self-contained industry. He makes CDs — the latest is "The Secret Song" (Thirsty Ear) — in which he revels in the art of the remix, a magpielike approach to juxtaposing newly composed music with snippets of existing recordings that become a kind of running commentary, and he has been engaged to remix tracks for other artists, including Yoko Ono, Meredith Monk, Stewart Copeland and Steve Reich. He has ruminated on what he calls "remix culture" in a book, "Rhythm Science," and compiled "[Sound Unbound](#)," a collection of essays on the subject by musicians, novelists, lawyers and filmmakers. (Both are published by MIT Press and come with CDs.)

Then there's his D J Spooky [iPhone and iPad app](#) (an Android version is in the works), which lets users do D.J. moves — mixing, scratching, beat-matching and adding electronic effects — on tracks from their iTunes libraries using a twin-turntable interface. And he edits a magazine, [Origin](#), which describes its mission as reporting on "yoga, art, music, conscious lifestyle, humanitarianism and sustainability."

Mr. Miller allowed that he does not do yoga — his preferred form of exercise is jogging — but calls himself "kind of a workaholic."

Echoes of most of these projects will find their way into Mr. Miller's Met residency, which will include not only concerts and talks but also a gallery tour and the publication of three books based on his planned multimedia performances.

Mr. Miller seems perpetually onstage, but comfortably so. Raised in Washington and now based in New York, he is the son of two academics. His father, Paul E. Miller, was the dean of Howard University Law School; his mother, Rosemary Eloise Reed Miller, is a historian of design. The younger Mr. Miller attended Bowdoin College in Maine, and though he studied composition with [Elliott Schwartz](#), he expected to pursue a career in diplomacy.

"I wasn't planning to do music," he said. "It still blows my mind that I'm 42 and being called D J Spooky."

Speaking about his projects on a rainy morning recently he settled into a plush chair backstage at the Met's Grace Rainey Rogers auditorium and set out a handful of gadgets, including an iPad and a Samsung tablet — he believes in giving the recent litigants equal time — on a coffee table.

The devices were in constant use as he spoke. Discussing "Madame Freedom," for example, he pulled up the film's original Korean poster on his iPad. A passing mention of the Renaissance mathematician and astronomer [Johannes Kepler](#) was followed quickly by a portrait, which he displayed on the Samsung. Visual and musical examples, as well as film clips, punctuated the discussion of his Met projects.

In "Madame Freedom," a morality tale about the collision of Korean and Western culture, Mr. Miller's 2011 score replaces the original jazz-tinged soundtrack music by Kim Yong-hwan. Mr. Miller's contribution will be performed live by the Korean Film Ensemble, a string group, with Mr. Miller adding electronic sound and using his iPad app to manipulate the ensemble's performance electronically.

"The reason I'm interested in this film," Mr. Miller said, pulling up a copy of his carefully notated score on his iPad, "is that after the Korean War we saw the rise of Korean cinema, which is now really dominant in Asia. And at the time of 'Madame Freedom,' jazz, rock and a lot of the Korean musical scene was what was coming out of American soldiers' radios.

1 | [2](#) | [NEXT PAGE »](#)

A version of this article appeared in print on October 26, 2012, on page C21 of the New York edition with the headline: D.J. Spins Museum's Attitude.

SAVE E-MAIL SHARE

Get Free E-mail Alerts on These Topics

Music

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Miller, Paul D

Spooky, D J

Ads by Google

what's this?

[Art Gallery](#)

Search Our Exclusive Art Library.

10. OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR  
Chuck Hagel, Under Attack Again

[Go to Complete List »](#)

[Show My Recommendations](#)



## Agenda 2013

IHT MAGAZINE | GLOBAL AGENDA 2013 »

Gordon Brown: Let's Stick Together  
Are We Becoming Cyborgs?

The New York Times International Herald Tribune

ADVERTISEMENTS

