Empire Wild is a genre-bending, crossover trio founded by Ken Kubota, Brandon Ilaw, and Mitch Lyon. Ken and Mitch bring all the cello has to offer - bowed, plucked, chopped and more. Brandon can be found singing and playing anything he can get his hands on – often a cajon, sometimes a guitar or piano, maybe some ankle bells. All classically trained, the three musicians met at Juilliard and formed Empire Wild as a vehicle for their love of musical exploration - fusing the sounds of pop, folk, Broadway and more into their songwriting and composition. Their debut EP ‘Paper Seasons’ features all original songs, highlighting the trio’s unique sound and instrumentation. Based in NYC, they have brought their signature mix of original music, inventive covers and twists on the classical canon to audiences across the country.

Empire Wild was selected as an Ambassador Prize winner in the 2020 Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition and has spent this socially distant year working to reach out to audiences on social media and workshop material for their next album. Individually, all three musicians are committed to community engagement and teaching. Mitch has been a teaching artist with the New York Philharmonic for several years, Ken is on faculty at Peabody Preparatory and Brandon recently completed the Carnegie Hall Ensemble Connect Fellowship. Together as an ensemble, Empire Wild feels that it is important to continue this community-oriented work and bring creative musical outlets and opportunities to students of all backgrounds and skill levels. They have shared their unusual versatility with students through workshops at University of Iowa, the Peabody Institute, and the Preucil School, among others. Equally at home in classrooms, intimate salons and large concert halls, Empire Wild brings a sense of community to every performance.