

## Preview

### Joshua Smith and Franklin Cohen to be featured soloists in next weekend's Cleveland Orchestra concerts at Blossom

by Daniel Hathaway



Violinists and pianists — with cellists not so close behind — are the usual suspects for concerto soloists with a symphony orchestra, but this weekend, The Cleveland Orchestra will reach into its own wind section for soloists in concertos by Wolfgang Amadè Mozart and Oscar Navarro. Principal flutist Joshua Smith will play Mozart's *Flute Concerto No. 1 in G* under Nicholas McGegan on Saturday, July 20 at 8 pm and principal clarinetist Franklin Cohen will join his colleagues for Navarro's *II Concerto* on Sunday, July 21 at 7 pm under the baton of James Feddeck, taking over for Robert Porco, who is indisposed.

Joshua Smith finds Mozart's first concerto entirely delightful. “Is it on the same level of writing as the piano concertos? No, but it's Mozart in a young, charming, good mood,” he told us on the phone. “It's frothy, really operatic in the slow movement, and the minuet is completely fun. The finale is a real gas to play with lots of things bouncing back and forth between the soloist and the orchestra.”

Mozart wrote the two flute concertos as part of a commission for the Dutch flutist Ferdinand de Jean but he never got around to a promised third concerto. “Though he used the instrument so beautifully in the piano concertos and operas, word on the street was that Mozart didn't like the flute that much,” Smith noted. “Often orchestral flute parts were played by oboists, who may have laid their instruments down and taken up flutes for movements like the second movement of this concerto.”

Weather conditions at Blossom may provide some challenges for many Cleveland Orchestra musicians' instruments, but not for Joshua Smith's. “I'm going to be playing my wooden flute for the Mozart — it really likes humidity so it's really enjoyable right now.” Playing half outdoors in cooperation with the sounds of nature's critters isn't a problem either. “The pavilion is a really big space but music sounds good there and we always think that the extraneous noise is a charming aspect of it all.”

Also on Saturday's program: Mozart's *Symphony No. 33*, Cimarosa's *Overture to "The Secret Marriage"* and Haydn's *Symphony No. 103, "Drum Roll."*

Franklin Cohen is sorry that Robert Porco has had to withdraw because of eye problems, but is looking forward to collaborating with James Feddeck this Sunday. "I've worked with James several times. It always goes well and I enjoy his work very much."

Cohen came across Spanish composer Oscar Navarro's *II Concerto* in a thoroughly modern way. "I found the piece on YouTube," he told us in a phone conversation. The concerto is almost hot off the press, having been completed in 2012 and dedicated to the Spanish clarinetist José Franch-Ballester. "The work appealed to me especially considering the Blossom environment," Cohen said. "The orchestra has big moments when they can put out their usual glorious sound, and there's a lot of other participation like clapping."

Navarro, who will be coming to Cuyahoga Falls to hear the performance, is a composer with wide-ranging interests including concert, television and movie music. "He seems like a really sweet guy," Cohen says. "His style is eclectic and very descriptive — like film music should be. Some Flamenco gets interspersed, some Spanish dance music, a bit of everything," which fits right into a program that ranges from the music of John Williams to highlights from *Porgy and Bess*. Cohen hasn't yet seen a score of the piece, only his own solo part, so rehearsals may yield some surprises. "There's some improvisation hinted at in the part but on the recording I've heard it isn't done, so I think I'll take the extra measure or two to rest!"

Frank Cohen may need those extra measures of repose after a highly successful but very busy two weeks hosting the musicians of ChamberFest Cleveland, which ended its second season on June 30. Has he recovered? "I'm working on it. I'm working on recovering by practicing this concerto!"

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