

## Kent/Blossom Music Festival: Conversations with Students

By Daniel Hautzinger



Ann Yeh wouldn't be applying to graduate school for cello performance if it weren't for Kent/Blossom Music Festival (KBMF). Now in her second year at the festival and entering her senior year at Vanderbilt University studying with Felix Wang, Yeh said that after "the incredible experience I had last time I thought that maybe I could make it as a musician."

Such career-changing influence is what every educational festival and its faculty hope to achieve. And KBMF students find this festival particularly effective. "My experience so far has been extremely enjoyable and productive," enthused violinist Gabe Napoli, currently studying at Northwestern University. "My peers are all amazingly talented and it's so much fun to make music with them. The instructors are both inspiring role models and great coaches. It's a privilege to learn from them."

Those instructors are one of the strongest draws of the festival. "The biggest attraction for me to attend KBMF is the opportunity to study with Joela Jones [principal keyboard in The Cleveland Orchestra]," said pianist Daniel Parvin, who will begin doctoral studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music this fall. He already has a strong connection to Cleveland, having earned a master's degree from CIM studying under Anita Pontremoli and Elizabeth DeMio.

In the first round of the festival's student recitals, Parvin performed Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* and Ernst von Dohnányi's *Quintet*, op. 1. "Ms. Jones coached my chamber groups particularly well because she personally studied with and interacted with Messiaen and Ernst von Dohnányi," he said.

Infrequently performed works such as the Dohnányi *Quintet* are another reason to attend KBMF, said clarinetist Rina Sugawara, who studied with Cleveland Orchestra assistant principal clarinet Daniel McKelway at Baldwin Wallace Conservatory and will begin graduate studies at the University of Michigan in the fall. Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony No. 1*, which she will perform this week in the second round of student recitals, is a piece she might not otherwise have encountered.



Going through the process of learning and coaching that repertoire gives students not only a chance to grow musically, but personally as well. “Your professional and personal lives are shared with the same people for five weeks,” said Sugawara. “So it is intense. But it has been a great experience learning to work with different people from all over the country and the world who come from different schools and styles of playing.”

Spending that much time with other students has the added bonus of building “a group of wonderful new friends,” as Napoli put it. The faculty provide a good example: “It’s really fun to watch musicians backstage,” said Yeh, who has ushered at some of the faculty recitals. “Spencer Myer and his colleagues were so relaxed and having a good time. Just another day in the life of a musician.” Soon, many of the students at KBMF may be living that life.

On July 26 at Blossom Music Center, KBMF students, conducted by Brett Mitchell, will perform pieces by Wagner and Ravel. Later in the evening they will join The Cleveland Orchestra in a side-by-side performance of Sibelius’s *Second Symphony*.

See our concert listings page for details about this weekend’s KBMF student chamber music recitals.

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