

Preview

Cleveland Chamber Music Society: Young Artists Showcase—The Omer Quartet

By Mike Telin



For the past six seasons the Cleveland Chamber Music Society has sponsored an outreach program that brings concerts to Cleveland area elementary school students. The program is designed to “stimulate interest in classical music, encourage aspiring musicians to share their enthusiasm, and develop chamber music lovers from childhood.” These concerts are presented by a young string quartet whose members are participants in the Intensive Quartet Seminar at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

In addition to presenting concerts in schools the selected quartet is invited to perform a concert on the CCMS series. For the second season, The

Omer Quartet, Mason Yu and Erica Tursi, violins, Joseph LoCicero, viola, and Alexander Cox, cello, has been the chosen group and on Sunday, May 5th beginning at 7:00 pm in First Unitarian Church of Cleveland the young award-winning quartet will perform a concert featuring Mendelssohn’s *Quartet in a, op. 13*, and Janáček’s *Quartet No. 1, “Kreutzer Sonata”*. A Pre-concert interview with Costa Petridis begins at 6:15 pm.

“They have always had a strong personality, but over time, I’ve seen them grow both in their commitment to playing together and developing their own unique voice as a quartet,” says Annie Fullard. “And my colleagues in the Cavani Quartet along with Peter Salaff have tried to nurture the development of their own personality as a unified ensemble along with their individual growth as young artists.”

Violist Joseph LoCicero says that being part of the Intensive Quartet program has given the group great performance opportunities. “Every Monday the members of the quartet seminar gather together and perform for each other. We are offered constructive criticism and it is really rewarding to watch each group grow from week to week. In addition to this, the seminar allows each group to become familiar with six different quartets at the same time. We are especially honored to be able to work so closely with the Cavani String Quartet and Peter Salaff.”

LoCicero also says that being part of the Chamber Music Society Young Artist Program has showed them what it means to be a professional quartet in the 21st century. "Creating outreach programs has taught us how to be proactive and make a career for ourselves. Going out and introducing music to the public is a necessity in keeping music alive. Being apart of this young artist program has been a very rewarding journey."

In addition to refining their musical skills, LoCicero points out that they have also learned other professional skills such as talking to an audience. "We have all become a lot more comfortable with public speaking thanks to the outreach programs. After speaking to an audience full of eager kids, speaking in public has become much more natural to us!"

This summer the Omer Quartet, along with another quartet from CIM, will attend the Aspen Music Festival as part of the quartet fellowship program. After that, it's off to graduate school; Mason Yu will be attending The New England Conservatory, Alex Cox and Erica Tursi will be attending The Juilliard School, and Joseph LoCicero will be returning to The Cleveland Institute of Music.

Annie Fullard says that although they are going to different schools for their masters' they are still in their formative years and she feels it is important for them to grow on an individual level as well. "They have developed their voice and it has given them all a lot of strength. They're a very interesting ensemble and I'm so happy for them."

On Wednesday, May 1st beginning at 7:00 pm in Mixon Hall, the CIM Intensive String Quartet Seminar presents the Gala Concert of Student performances coached by the Cavani String Quartet and Peter Salaff. The program, titled "Musical Folklore and Nationalism," features the quartets of Dvořák & Smetana, Borodin & Tchaikovsky, Ravel & Debussy.

On Monday, May 6th beginning at 7:30 pm, the Omer Quartet will repeat their Chamber Music Society program in the Studio Theatre at the Stocker Center for the Arts, as part of Lorain County Community College's Signature Series.

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