

## Heights Arts begins its ninth season of “Close Encounters” on November 2

by Mike Telin



This Sunday, November 2, Heights Arts kicks off their ninth season of Close Encounters Chamber Music Concerts. Held in a distinctive array of locations in Cleveland Heights, Midtown, and Downtown Cleveland, these four Sunday afternoon concerts present classical music performed by members of The Cleveland Orchestra and guests. *(Note: the first concert is sold out.)*

“These concerts are a wonderful opportunity for audiences to experience chamber music the way it is meant to be: up-close in spectacular chambers,” said Close Encounters artistic director Isabel Trautwein during a recent telephone conversation. “I think this is the most intriguing season we have ever done. There’s such a variety of music performed in very interesting venues.”

Trautwein said the idea for the series grew out of a conversation she had with Heights Arts founding director Peggy Spaeth. “Although the organization was founded in 2000, I first met Peggy nine years ago. Over time, we’ve developed a season of four concerts each of which are designed by the musicians. This season I designed one myself, and I asked colleagues to do the other three. So it’s a wonderful collaboration on many levels. This season we’re happy to be including poetry during the concerts.”

In April, 2013, Kathleen Cervený was appointed the sixth Poet Laureate of Cleveland Heights and since that time, she has been instrumental in creating programs centered around the cross-pollination of art forms. “Since Close Encounters and my Laureateship are both sponsored by Heights Arts, this collaboration makes a lot of sense,” Cervený said during a recent telephone conversation. She also believes that when words or music come together, listeners hear both art forms differently. “It’s not unusual for poets to use music as a background to their readings. Ray McNiece, for example, works with a rock band for his poetry. And Katie Daily is a wonderful local poet whose husband is a folk musician. They often combine their work during performances, so it is not unheard of.”



How will Kathleen Cervený go about choosing the poetry, and how will it be incorporated into the concerts? “My idea is to choose a poem that has an affinity with a character or mood that relates to the beginning of the piece, so that the mood of the poem flows into the beginning of the musical selection. That’s how I’m thinking about it anyway,” Cervený said. “And since the idea is to have poetry at each of the concerts, it is likely that other poets will be involved as well. As Poet Laureate, part of my job is to engage the community in the artform of poetry, so it can’t all be about me, it’s about the art form. Finding poets whose writing works with the musical program is also part of the task.”

Sunday afternoon’s concert will feature the Factory Seconds Brass Trio in a program entitled “Second to None.” Trumpeter Jack Sutte, trombonist Rick Stout and hornist Jesse McCormick, - all Cleveland Orchestra musicians who serve as second players in their sections — will perform brass music from several centuries. Cervený admits that it has been an interesting task to find poems that will work with a program that features the music of Maurice Bardin, Alan Hovhaness, Marius Flothuis, Arthur Frackenpohl and Frigyes Hidas. “There’s a very wide variety of music on the program, including a couple of modern pieces by Leslie Bassett and Clint Needham. I’m not going to be reading a poem before every piece, but there will be three or four poems throughout the program.”

It must have been a daunting task choosing the poetry for this concert. “It has,” Cervený says with a laugh. “It’s been a bit of a challenge, but a lot of fun. Jesse McCormick has been good about sending links to some of the pieces and having a chance to listen to some of the works has helped a lot. After listening to the various pieces I really like the arch of the program. I think they’ve been very thoughtful about putting it together – the way it begins, the way it ends before intermission, how it resumes and how it finally concludes.”

Another program Kathleen Cervený has initiated at Heights Arts that cross-pollinates art forms is EKPHRASTACY. “There is a form of poetry called [Ekphrastic poetry](#), where a poet responds to a work of art with poetry. It’s generally a work of visual art, but it can also be dance, architecture or music. It’s a very old art form that goes back several centuries, Cervený explained. “Since Heights Arts has a regular series of exhibitions of local artists, I thought, why not have an evening where the artists come and talk about their work and the poets come and read the poems that have been inspired by the art. So I made up this word EKPHRASTACY.

Has the program been a successful venture? “Oh my, I have poets coming out of the woodwork, and in terms of the audience, we pack the gallery. There’re probably 40 to 60 people at each of the programs.

Kathleen Cerveny was trained as a visual artist (a ceramicist) and for many years operated her own pottery studio. In 1991 she joined the staff of [The Cleveland Foundation](#), where she currently serves as the Director of Institutional Learning and Arts Initiative. When did she first get bitten by the poetry bug? “Like a lot of people, I wrote poetry in high school. It was horrible stuff. I’ve always liked to write but for many decades my writing has been very technical in terms of grant writing and proposal write-ups. About 10 or 15 years ago I thought, well, I have to do all of this technical writing that uses one side of the brain, maybe I’ll go back and try my hand at poetry again to exercise the other side of my brain. I became pretty serious about it and found some other folks in the community. We all got along really nicely and they have become my writing group. So I write with a group of eight other women pretty regularly. We actually perform our work together.”

Two years ago, Cerveny became even more serious about her writing and went back to school to pursue a degree in poetry through the University of Southern Maine’s Stonecoast Creative Writing program. In July of this year she completed her Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing. “It felt good to have the formal study and to be able to have a better sense of what I was doing. I thought I could write fairly well but it is really great to have the academic grounding.”

How have Cerveny’s academic studies influenced her writing? “There are a couple of ways, but one that comes to mind is a wonderful lesson that my fourth-semester mentor taught me. It’s all about a word that I didn’t think was a real word, divagation. It’s where you start out at one place in the poem and you wander a little bit, and at the end, you pull these different places that you have wandered together in order to make your point. Prior to this my work had been pretty straightforward, but now it’s becoming more layered. That was a very important thing for me to encounter, think about, and put into my own practice.”

The Close Encounters Chamber Music Series continues on Sunday, February 15, 2015 at 3:00 pm with a program of Bach Bartók and the Beatles featuring violinists Katherine Bormann and Isabel Trautwein, violist Sonja Braaten Molloy and cellist Tanya Ell. Performed in a historic Midtown photography studio, the concert features works by three great masters of different eras and genres which explore how the basic elements of rhythm, harmony, and color can describe the full range of human emotion.

On Sunday, April 19, 2015 at 3:00 pm, Transfigured Bass features Amy Lee and Isabel Trautwein, violins, Yu Jin and Joanna Patterson, violas, Keith Robinson, cello, and Kevin

Switalski, bass. Performed in an art-filled, renovated stable in Cleveland Heights's Herrick Mews, the concert will feature "Transfigured Night," an early romantic work by Schoenberg, and Dvořák's G-major String Quintet.

The final concert in the series, "The Academy of Bluegrass in the Fields: Cleveland Orchestra Members in Disguise" takes place on Sunday, May 17, 2015 at 3:00. Mark Dumm, Jeff Zehngut, Trina Struble, Henry Peyrebrune, and Derek Zadinsky, five musicians of The Cleveland Orchestra with extreme but little-known bluegrass talents, will perform a program of light Classical music with special guests Isabel Trautwein and Tanys Ell as well as traditional Bluegrass favorites on fiddle, mandolin, saxophone, guitar, string bass, viola, and cello—all on a downtown Cleveland rooftop with 360° city views.

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