

Kent/Blossom Festival: Danna Sundet returns from a busy summer for last faculty concert

by Daniel Hathaway



Kent State oboe professor Danna Sundet will join members of The Cleveland Orchestra in the final faculty concert of the Kent/Blossom Music festival on Wednesday, July 29 at 8:00 pm in Ludwig Recital Hall on the Kent State Campus. Sundet, who is co-artistic director of the festival, will join pianist Joela Jones and violist Stanley Konopka in Charles Martin Loeffler's *Two Rhapsodies for oboe, viola and piano*, originally conceived for bass voice, clarinet and piano.

The program includes Mozart's *Trio in E-flat*, K. 498 "Kegelstatt" (with Konopka and clarinetist Robert Woolfrey), and three works for cello and piano featuring Richard Weiss: Gaspar Cassadó's *Requiebros* (1934) & *Danse du Diable Vert* (1926), and Charles-Marie Widor's *Cello Sonata in A*, op. 80.

"Depending on who you ask, Loeffler was French or German," Sundet said. "Some say he was born in Alsace on January 30, 1861, and other sources refer to him as a German-born composer who moved to Paris. The bottom line is that his parents traveled a lot and absorbed some gypsy influences. Eventually he became assistant concertmaster of the Boston Symphony. The two rhapsodies are such great chamber pieces in the oboe repertoire. They're based on poems by the French poet Maurice Rollinat that are somewhat dark but don't have to be seen that way. It's intriguing to imagine a composer's state of mind when he decides to set poetry to music."

Sundet hopes this performance goes off without incident — unlike the last time around. "Stan and I were scheduled to play the Loeffler at Kent/Blossom several years ago with Joela. Two days before the concert he sliced up the middle finger of his left hand pretty badly and we weren't sure he was going to be able to play. Lynne Ramsey offered to step in at the last moment, but Stan superglued the heck out of his finger and went ahead and

played. I think it'll be fun to do it with Stan and Joela when we don't have to worry if his finger will start bleeding in the middle of the performance."

If a summer music festival hums right along from the moment that faculty and students arrive, it's because months of planning and organization have already gone into the project. "All the pieces to the puzzle have to be in place before the first day," Sundet said in a phone call from Washington state, where she has been playing oboe in the Bellingham Festival Orchestra for the second summer. "I got Kent/Blossom started and then flew out here for twenty days. Then I'll go back to Cleveland for the last two weeks of Kent/Blossom and the faculty concert.

"I am heavily involved with Kent/Blossom, but Keith Robinson, the co-artistic director, and I are performers first and administrators second. I went to my bosses at Kent a year ago and said that Bellingham was too good an opportunity to turn down as a performer — and I could be even more valuable to Kent/Blossom by scouting out other music festivals and bringing back my findings and knowledge. They said, 'sure, let's try it.'"

Sundet has taken a number of ideas away from her two Bellingham experiences, one of which Kent/Blossom instituted this season. "Last summer they did a cool little comic opera at Bellingham," she said. "For many years there was a huge vocal contingent at Kent/Blossom, especially under Robert Shaw, and a large portion of the 2,500 Kent/Blossom alumni used to be singers and chorus members. When I went back to plan the Kent/Blossom Festival for this summer, I said we really needed to bring a vocal component back. Of course, we had to start small, but we thought the way to honor the past and see where the future might go, was to present this summer's Rossini opera, *La cambiale di matrimonio*."

Danna Sundet will have put a lot of miles on her oboe by the end of summer. She began it with a week at the John Mack Oboe Camp in Little Switzerland, North Carolina, where she has been director since 2006 of the week-long summer gathering founded by her teacher, the late principal oboe of The Cleveland Orchestra. "It's so spectacular. I'm so lucky to be continuing this camp. John Mack was like a jewel of which all of his students were facets. There were 89 oboists on the mountain this summer."

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