

Chagrin Concert Series: “The Poet Speaks” — reflections by artistic director Hristo Popov

by Daniel Hathaway



On Sunday, April 10 at 3:00 pm, the Chagrin Concert Series will present its final concert of the season at Valley Lutheran Church in Chagrin Falls. We emailed artistic director Hristo Popov some questions about the series and Sunday’s program.

Daniel Hathaway: What’s in store for the audience this Sunday afternoon in Chagrin Falls?

Hristo Popov: The last concert of the our season features Johannes Brahms’s *Zwei Gesänge*, Op. 91, performed by mezzo-soprano Lara Nie, cellist Kent Collier, and pianist Sungeun Kim; Manuel de Falla’s *Siete Canciones Populares Españolas* performed by myself, Lara and Sungeun; and ends with Robert Schumann’s *Piano Quintet* performed by

the previously mentioned instrumentalists plus Barton Samuel Rotberg on violin and Wanda Sobieska on viola.

DH: The concert is titled “The Poet Speaks” which also refers to a movement from Schumann’s Kinderszenen. That composer was highly motivated by poetry. What do you find especially poetic about this program, and especially the Piano Quintet?

HP: “The Poet Speaks” seemed to me as the most fitting way to describe the music. I always like to include voice in our programing and we are very fortunate to be working with a specialist in the field of Lieder such as Lara Nie. In many ways, songs are the most basic way of making music — a simple lullaby a mother could sing to a child, or a story



about fish swimming in a river, or a broken heart in a love story. Lara Nie can masterfully bring all these characters into an art song through music and poetry.

As for Schumann, his music is entirely poetic whether he titles it as such or not. His works tend to feature the whole range of the piano extremely well (no surprise there, since he was a pianist himself), and as a string player one is bound to think in terms of this type of tone. Sungeun Kim, who is Professor of Piano at Baldwin Wallace, has a special affinity for this music and I am very much looking forward to working with her. The string quartet adds a symphonic quality to the music with a sense of bravado. I think it makes a perfect ending to our season.

DH: You've moved from Cleveland to Florida, but you're going to be continuing to operate the Chagrin Concert Series.

HP: Now that I live in Florida, I especially appreciate what the city of Cleveland has to offer to our great nation. The arts in Cleveland are some of the best in the world and I believe the local audience and their support has a lot to do with it. I lived in the Cleveland area for 18 years, including my college years at Oberlin, and I feel very fortunate to have spent this time here. I plan to organize and seek support for many more great performances, and as usual, I will involve talent from Cleveland and nationally.

What I try to do is to bring art music of the highest quality to smaller venues as I think sometimes we miss an important connection between our ordinary lives and art music. If we keep this connection alive I believe that 'contemporary' or unfamiliar music will become much more relevant to people's lives and interest in classical music will return. Currently, we are working on our next season and I have some fantastic music in the planning. But before we get there, please come and spend a great afternoon at our concert this Sunday at Valley Lutheran Church in Chagrin Falls.

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