

Cleveland Chamber Music brings some favorites back for its 2016-2017 season at Plymouth Church

by Daniel Hathaway



For its 67th season, the Cleveland Chamber Music Society will present its customary lineup of seven world-class chamber music groups — plus a young artists showcase and a young artists competition. You won't see the names of any new ensembles on the roster for 2016-2017, but there's a major personnel change and an interesting realignment of musicians that will be of primary interest to chamber music lovers.

“I'm looking forward to the new configuration of the Juilliard String Quartet (pictured left),” said CCMS president Barbara Green in a telephone conversation last weekend. “It's the first time the Juilliard have included a woman [cellist Astrid Schween, who replaces Joel Krosnick], and I've heard every

permutation since the very beginning. And then there's the Cleveland debut of the Montrose Piano Trio, which includes violinist Martin Beaver and cellist Clive Greensmith — the two remaining members of the Tokyo Quartet — plus pianist Jon Kimura Parker, who played for CCMS some years ago with the Berlin Philharmonic Woodwind Quintet.”

Green is also eagerly anticipating the return of the Berlin Quintet, and the Takács Quartet in an all-Beethoven program “including Op. 135, which we haven't heard for some time.” Another evening to look forward to is the Chamber Music from Lincoln Center ensemble, which includes Paul Watkins, the new cellist with the Emerson Quartet, Ani Kavafian, and Yura Lee — who Green also enjoys hearing at ChamberFest Cleveland. “And then we have the ‘young’ quartets — who aren't that young anymore — the Belcea and the Jerusalem. It's a good, strong season.”

Though not a musician herself, Barbara Green is one of classical music's most ardent fans. "I was always very interested in music, and at the age of 14 I went on the streetcar by myself to hear Ezio Pinza in *Boris Godunov* with the Metropolitan Opera — they were on tour in Baltimore. I love orchestral music, but I was enchanted by the intimacy of chamber music. When I was studying chemistry at Goucher College, I was up working far into the night when I heard a radio broadcast of the Budapest Quartet from the Library of Congress. I grew up listening to the Budapest. Then I came to Cleveland in 1961 and have been attending CCMS concerts ever since. I've heard wonderful things."

Green said that she could visualize where she was sitting in the hall when she heard the Guarneri quartet play Beethoven's Op. 132 in Gartner Auditorium. She remembers wishing that no one would applaud — that the audience would just sit and think about what they had heard.

She describes herself as the Chamber Music Society's 'recycled president.' "I was president 30 years ago, and in the early '90s I served as chairman of the program committee. My great claim to fame was that around 1991, I brought Les Arts Florissants for their only performance in Cleveland. When they really became famous, I confessed to their manager that we couldn't afford them anymore. He said, 'No one can!'"

How does the Chamber Music Society build a season? "We have the best program chairman in Steve Somach," Green said. "He is a doctor and cellist — a fine chamber player with an uncanny ability to spot new ensembles and bring them to us. Steve listens a lot, as we all do. We contribute lists and get together to listen and discuss, then Steve contacts managements to see if the artists we want are available and affordable, and whether their fees are negotiable."

Of course, personal tastes come to bear on the lists of suggested artists. "It's truly democratic. Our audience would probably be very happy if we presented seven string quartets, but we try to vary it," Green said. "Since I like vocal music, I'm the one who always talks about singers. I also sit on the board of the Art Song Festival. I've probably been to every major performance of theirs going back to Gérard Souzay, Elly Ameling, and Dalton Baldwin. We've had fine singers for CCMS the last few years, especially Ian Bostridge and Stephanie Blythe — people found her recital totally renewing, and her sing-a-long was wonderful fun."

Does the program committee have any say over an ensemble's repertoire? "It depends," Green said. "Usually an ensemble presents us with a choice between two or three programs, and they're willing to change their repertoire only if there's a piece that would be repeated by another ensemble. I do long for the days of the Beaux Arts Trio, who had

such a vast repertoire they'd send a proposal that looked like a menu at a Chinese restaurant: choose one piece from column A, etc. We keep careful records about repertoire so as not to be repetitive, because people's memory can be faulty. They might have thought they heard a certain piece yesterday — or five years ago.”

The identity of the eighth group to perform this season won't be revealed until December. “Annie Fullard of Cavani works with a young ensemble to arrange the school performances for us, and we usually decide on our Young Artists for the year during CIM's December Chamber Music Festival.”

After a late summer hiatus, Barbara Green is looking forward to the new CCMS season. “I'm ready to listen to a lot of music. Things have been quiet for a few weeks.”

The season schedule follows. All performances take place on Tuesdays at 7:30 pm at Plymouth Church UCC, 2860 Coventry Rd. in Shaker Heights except for the Young Artists Showcase. Tickets may be purchased [online](#). Pre-concert lectures begin at 6:30 pm.

September 27 • Montrose Piano Trio. Turina: Trio No. 2 in b, Op. 76, Beethoven: Trio in E-flat, Op. 1, No. 1, Brahms: Trio No. 1 in B, Op. 8.

October 18 • Belcea Quartet. Schubert: Quartet in E-flat, D. 87, Shostakovich: Quartet No. 8 in c, Op. 110, Schubert: Quartet in G, D. 887.

December 6 • Juillard Quartet. Haydn: Quartet in f, Op. 20, No. 5, Bartók: Quartet No. 1 in a, Beethoven: String Quartet in B-flat, Op. 130 (Grosse Fuge).

January 17 • Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Brahms: Scherzo in c from the F.A.E. Sonata for Violin and Piano, WoO 2, Fauré: Piano Quartet in g, Op. 45, Brahms: Piano Quartet in A, Op. 26.

February 7 • Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet. Anton Reicha: Andante arioso for English Horn and Woodwind Quartet, Kalevi Aho: Quintet No. 2, Ligeti: Six Bagatelles, Nielsen: Quintet, Op. 43.

March 21 • Jerusalem Quartet. Haydn: Quartet in D, Op. 64, No. 5, “The Lark,” Prokofiev: Quartet No. 1 in b, Op. 50, Dvořák: Quartet in G, Op. 106.

April 18 • Takács Quartet. All-Beethoven: Quartet in B-flat, Op. 18, No. 6, Quartet in F, Op. 135 & Quartet in C, Op. 59, No. 3 “Razumovsky.”

May 7 • Young Artists Showcase. Sunday at 7:00 pm. First Unitarian Church, 21600 Shaker Blvd., Shaker Heights (free).

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