

New director Ricardo Sepulveda talks about 2017 Kent/Blossom Festival

by Mike Telin



Beginning next week, 43 young classical musicians from around the globe will gather on the campus of Kent State University to begin five weeks of intensive chamber music study with members of The Cleveland Orchestra as well as other renowned artists in the field. Alumni of the [Kent/Blossom Music Festival](#), founded in 1968 by George Szell and Louis Lane, have gone on to hold positions in many of the world's major orchestras and ensembles.

“This summer we have twelve international students, as well as participants from Juilliard, Rice, the Cleveland Institute of Music, Oberlin, the University of Akron, Northwestern, and Kent State as well as others,” KBMF Director Ricardo Sepulveda, who was appointed to his position in late March, said during a recent telephone conversation. “It’s exciting, and I look forward to this season. This Festival is close to my heart, and I’m excited and honored to be leading it.”

Sepulveda noted that assembling the many pieces of the Festival’s puzzle — such as selecting repertoire, scheduling coaching sessions, and arranging the nine student and five faculty concerts — is a big job. “The Festival team has been amazing to work with. Danna Sundet is the Artistic Coordinator, but choosing repertoire is a group process. All our coaches suggest chamber music that they would like to teach. Then we sort through previous seasons to keep the repertoire from being too repetitive.”

After the musical selections have been made, Sepulveda said the next step is to create the best programming and personnel options. “Because there are so many possible configurations, this summer every student will learn at least four different pieces of chamber music. We’ve also added a ninth student recital to keep the length of the performances manageable — in the past some have gone on a little too long.”



This year's programs include some works that Sepulveda believes have never been performed at KBMF. "One is Lowell Liebermann's *Fantasy on a Fugue of J.S. Bach*. Another is Piotr Szewczyk's *Three Episodes for violin, oboe, cello, and bassoon*. He's a violinist who went to school in Cincinnati and is a member of the Jacksonville Symphony." In addition to Kent's Ludwig Recital Hall, student recitals will be held at Hudson Library and Historical Society and Laurel Lake Retirement Community. All performances are free and open to the public.

The 2017 edition of KBMF will include five Wednesday evening faculty concerts in Ludwig Hall. The concerts are free to people 18 years old and under.



On June 28, Kulas Guest Artist Jennifer Koh will perform works for solo violin by Bach, Berio, and Missy Mazzoli. "I've been following Jennifer on social media, and she is everywhere right now," Sepulveda said. "The July 5 concert will feature the Miami String Quartet and pianist Spencer Myer, and that's always a great collaboration." Cellist Mark Kosower and pianist Jee-Won Oh will present works by Stravinsky, Rachmaninoff, and Karen Khachaturian on July 12.

The July 19th concert features a program curated by clarinetist Daniel McKelway. "Dan hasn't performed on the series for a while and he wanted to be part of it this summer. It's great that he included Schubert's *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* for soprano, clarinet, and piano, because we don't often have vocal music at the Festival. And he's included American composer George Rochberg's *Trio for Clarinet, Horn, and Piano* from 1980.

The faculty series concludes on Wednesday, July 26 when bassoonist Barrick Stees, oboist Frank Rosenwein, cellist Richard Weiss, and pianist Jerry Wong present an

evening of music by Villa-Lobos, Brahms, Willard Elliot, and Rochberg.

Saturday, July 22 will be the annual KBMF Chamber Orchestra side-by-side concert with The Cleveland Orchestra at Blossom. Click [here](#) for further details about all Festival performances.

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