

ChamberFest Cleveland — Season Seven: *In Search of Freedom*

by Mike Telin



Since [ChamberFest Cleveland's](#) inaugural season in 2012, Festival co-artist directors Diana and Franklin Cohen have taken the concept of thematic programming to new heights. *(It's) About Time* (2013) explored elements of time as related to the musical experience. Last

season's theme, *Cycles: Phases!* reflected on the complexity of the human experience at each stage of life.

This season ChamberFest will consider the concept of freedom — an essential ingredient to the creative process. Beginning of June 14 and continuing through June 30, *In Search of Freedom* will explore the range of freedom in music, with nine concerts in a variety of venues.

In addition to violinist Diana Cohen and clarinetist Franklin Cohen, this year's roster of returning artists will include violinists Noah Bendix-Balgley, Alexi Kenney, and Amy Schwartz-Moretti, violinist/violist Yura Lee, cellists Julie Albers, Clive Greensmith, and Oliver Herbert, bassist Nathan Farrington, and pianists Zoltán Fejérvári, Roman Rabinovich, and Orion Weiss. Making their ChamberFest debuts are violinist Noah Geller, violists Matthew Lipman and Tanner Menees, cellist Nicholas Canellakis, flutist Lorna McGhee, and singer Amanda Powell.

In addition to the “family” of musicians who return to ChamberFest each season, Franklin Cohen is especially proud of the role the Festival has played in the development of young artists. “Alexi Kenney's and Oliver Herbert's careers have really taken off,” Cohen said during a telephone interview. “They both came through the Young Artist program. We try to find great people but there's really no way to know how or when they're going to ignite.

“The other person I think about is Noah Bendix-Balgley. He was a very young concertmaster of Pittsburgh when we met him, and then he got the job of First Concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic. It feels wonderful to nurture these young people at a critical time in their careers. Of course we’d love to take some of the credit but we’re only part of a much bigger picture. It’s a privilege to have them here.”

This season’s Young Artist will be violist Tanner Menees. “I’ve talked to him on the phone a few times but I don’t know him personally,” Cohen said. “He was introduced to me through one of our cellists, Clive Greensmith, who teaches at Colburn and has played with him there quite a bit. Tanner will be doing some work at the Rainey Institute, which is an amazing opportunity for us. We’re very fortunate to have a relationship with them.”

The Festival’s opening concert on Thursday, June 14 at 7:30 pm in Mixon Hall is titled [A Burst of Freedom](#), and will include works by Schubert, Janáček, and Beethoven.

It’s time to put on your dancing shoes on Friday, June 15 at 6:30 pm at The Calfee Marble Atrium for ChamberFest’s benefit [A Big Band Bash](#), featuring the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra. “We’ve always tried to do our big fundraiser in the winter months but frankly, many of our loyal donors are in Florida at that time,” Cohen said. He also noted that past benefits have always centered around a classical music concert.



“We’ll feature a few of our people, as well as myself,” Cohen said — he’ll be teaming up with the CJO for Artie Shaw’s *Clarinet Concerto*. “It’s in a beautiful place, and a lot of folks know the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra and how wonderful they are. And jazz and chamber music are very much akin. Many times there is no conductor and the players have to be attuned to one another to make it work well.”

On Saturday, June 16 at 7:30 pm in Mixon Hall, [The Independent Spirit](#) will feature music by Mozart, Adams, and Brahms. Celebrate Father’s Day on Sunday, June 17 at 11:00 am at the Maron Glass Box-Holiday Inn with [Let Them Loose](#), which will include works by Ysaÿe and Beethoven. Attendees can also enjoy a light brunch on the venue’s new outside balcony.

Appalachian and Klezmer music will take center stage on Tuesday, June 19 at 7:30 pm at the Crawford Rotunda at The Cleveland History Center. The ethnically diverse program in [Free for All](#) includes music by Mark O'Connor, Dvořák, Penderecki, Weinberg, and Kohán. “When I walked into that space I thought wow, this is stunning with the backdrop of the beautiful cars and the renovated carousel,” Cohen said. “It’s going to be wonderful having Nathan Farrington back and he promises to bring a few surprises. The other spectacular thing will be to have Amanda Powell with us. She’s a fantastic singer.”

[A Turn in the Road](#) on Thursday, June 21 at 7:30 pm at Mixon Hall will include music by Berg, Crumb, and Dvořák. “I can’t wait to hear *Voice of the Whale*. I met George Crumb at Tanglewood in the very early ‘70s and he wrote the piece about that time. I’ve always found him to be fascinating because during that period of music history, people were trying anything and writing pieces that incorporated all the modern techniques. Many were good but most were not very satisfying. But I was impressed with him, and this piece has been in my brain since the first time I heard it. I’ve always wanted to program it on this Festival.” For this performance the stage will be bathed in deep blue light to evoke the oceanic depths that are home to the humpback whale, “singer” of fascinating songs.

On Saturday, June 23 at 7:30 pm at Mixon Hall, [Forging New Paths](#) includes music by Handel and Ligeti, and Brahms’ *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel* in a transcription for nine players by Roman Rabinovich.

On Wednesday, June 27 at 7:30 pm at Mixon Hall, [Escape, Survival, Remembrance](#) will highlight music by Prokofiev, Weinberg, Golijov, and Mendelssohn. And on Friday, June 29 at 7:30 pm at Reinberger Chamber Hall, [Behind Bars](#) will feature works by Bach, Cowell, and Schubert, as well as Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time*.

The Festival wraps up on Saturday, June 30 at 7:30 pm at the Maltz Performing Arts Center. [Dawn of a Revolution](#) will include works by Debussy, Ligeti, Beethoven, Ravel, Pärt, Shostakovich, and Ginastera — as well as the world premiere of Sebastian Chang’s *Cryptogenic Infrastructure Fantasy* for violin, clarinet, percussion, and piano. “I’m looking forward to playing it with my extended family,” Cohen said. “This will be the first time that Diana, Alex, Roman and I have performed together. It’s going to be the thrill of a lifetime.”

The evening will conclude with a second collaboration between ChamberFest and [Groundworks Dance Theater](#), again featuring the choreography of David Shimotakahara. “Ligeti’s *Musica Ricercata* is a stunning work. Diana and I thought

that since it's about searching and our theme is about searching for freedom, it would make a nice piece to use as an anchor. We could intersperse other works that were either groundbreaking, or written during wars or a time of crisis for the composer. David loved the idea and I can't wait to see what happens."

Published on ClevelandClassical.com May 29, 2018.

Click here for a printable copy of this article

[Return to the Front Page.](#)