

Cleveland Chamber Music Society to welcome the Ehnes Quartet

by Mike Telin



The Cleveland Chamber Music Society will continue its season on Tuesday, November 13 when they welcome the Ehnes Quartet — James Ehnes and Amy Schwartz Moretti, violins, Richard O’Neill, viola, and Edward Arron, cello.

The 7:30 pm concert at Plymouth Church in Shaker Heights will include Haydn’s

Quartet in G, Op. 76, No. 1, Elgar’s *Quartet in e*, and Bartók’s *Quartet No. 5*. A pre-concert lecture by Richard Rodda will begin at 6:30 pm. Tickets are available [online](#).

During an email exchange, Amy Schwartz Moretti said that as a proud graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music, to be able to bring her colleagues to the place that was so formative in her life means a lot to her. She fondly remembers the “wonderful teaching and influence of the Weilersteins, Cavani Quartet, Peter Salaff, and all the amazing teachers who were there during that time. I love every opportunity to come back to Cleveland! It has been especially meaningful to come back for ChamberFest Cleveland each summer and I’m so thankful to the Cleveland Chamber Music Society for inviting my quartet.”

Mike Telin: You have a great program. Could you say a few words about each of the pieces?

Amy Schwartz Moretti: One of the wonderful aspects of being in a string quartet is the amazing selection of repertoire to choose from. These three composers and these three pieces are some of the very best.

I think almost everyone would agree that Beethoven is a true giant in the music world, and this early quartet, Op. 18, No. 4, has such incredible energy and drive.

The Elgar is not played that often, but his writing is some of the most beautifully Romantic — I adore his *Violin Concerto* and *Violin Sonata*. The second movement of this quartet, in particular, was a special one for his wife. She even requested it to be played at her funeral.

Learning and performing all the Bartók quartets has been a project of ours. Bartók 5 is famously fiendish as far as putting the parts together. Bartók is a master of incorporating folk elements into the art form, and you hear the awesome beauty of that. Beethoven also shows a little folk flair in the last movement of the quartet we're playing.

It's been awesome to delve into this music and I look forward to sharing it with everyone there in Cleveland!

MT: How did you first meet James Ehnes?

ASM: James and I first met at Meadowmount summer music camp in upstate New York. We were 12. We would occasionally see each other through those growing-up years, but we really reconnected after we both got out of college and were already going about our performing careers. It's so special to be experiencing life and the music world together through the years! Amazing, really.

MT: How and why was the Quartet originally formed?

ASM: Besides the fact that James and I already knew each other from a young age, as did Robert deMaine and James, we all crossed paths at the Seattle Chamber Music Society where James eventually became Artistic Director. We didn't perform there as a quartet but played together in various combinations. It wasn't until I invited the three guys to perform on my concert series in Macon, Georgia that we performed together as a quartet for the first time. We knew immediately that we wanted to do this as much as we could fit it into our lives.

MT: How did the group adjust to the change in cellists?

ASM: Adjusting to Ed has been so easy and so natural. The three of us had all performed with him in other concerts and groups and knew how compatible we all

felt. It's never easy to say goodbye to a quartet member (it's like family), but Ed smoothly picked right up and has been a wonderful new part of the group.

MT: You have a multifaceted career: how do you manage everything?

ASM: My life is one of excitement, that's for sure. I feel very fortunate to have all the diverse activities I get to do. I'm extremely proud of the McDuffie Center and what we are doing at Mercer University. Hearing and watching my college students as they grow, and performing as much as possible keeps me stimulated and engaged. The Ehnes Quartet is one of the most special things in my life. With all of this and more, I'm in a constant state of learning.

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