

Rambling House: fifteen minutes with violinist Edwin Huizinga

by Daniel Hathaway



One of the most flexible and prolific violinists on the concert circuit, Edwin Huizinga will bring one of his multiple musical personalities to Medina and Cleveland this weekend, when he joins the musicians and dancers of Rambling House for an early-bird St. Patrick's Day celebration.

The Celtic show, which will also feature soprano Amanda Powell, guitarist William Coulter, uilleann piper and flutist Brian Bigley, violinist Kristen Bigley, storyteller Tomàseen Foley, and dancers Brandon Asazawa and Alyssa Reichert, will be performed on Saturday, March 2 at 7:30 at the Medina Performing Arts Center (tickets [here](#)), and on Sunday, March 3 at 7:00 pm at the Bop Stop (tickets [here](#)).

“We’ll be performing in one big venue and one intimate one,” Huizinga said in a recent telephone conversation, “as well as doing a private concert on the farm of friends of mine. It’s a very eclectic show that will also feature Fire and Grace, my duo with William Coulter.”

Himself born on a farm outside Guelph, Ontario, Huizinga came to folk music through a different portal. “I grew up very much as a classical violinist, and studied at Oberlin, where Marilyn McDonald was instrumental in introducing me to Baroque music and let me borrow my first Baroque violin.”

One of the many groups Huizinga plays with — a Baroque string band that recently performed in Youngstown — also traces its origin to the Oberlin Conservatory. “All four of the violinists in ACRONYM were at Oberlin together. That basically opened doors for me. It was like discovering another language. Now I always carry a double violin case when I fly, and several different bows.”



Huizinga’s interest in traditional music blossomed a bit later. “Only in the last ten years have I expanded my passions, desires, and interests into the folk world. I absolutely love this kind of music.” A visit to Ireland fanned the flames. “I went with a team of people and was amazed how ingrained folk music was into the social context.”

American traditional music was even a more recent discovery. “I made an album of Americana in Big Sur with the great mandolinist Ashley Broder and William Coulter,” Huizinga said. “I’ll be bringing some of that and maybe a song or two from the Bluegrass, Old Time world to the Cleveland area concerts.”

I asked Edwin Huizinga what else he’d been involved with lately, and his answer was impressive. “I’ve just finished off some programs with Brandywine Baroque in Wilmington Delaware — we work a lot with original harpsichords and other instruments that were actually made in the period. I’ll be heading to Washington Cathedral to launch a new community involvement program with Phil Barker, the

director of London’s Globe Theatre, and in Toronto I’ll be presenting the North American premiere of a new cantata I wrote.”

That cantata, based on Rainer Maria Rilke poetry about the Annunciation, was first performed in the chapel of the Palace of Versailles. “It’s all about the significance of being able to communicate between angels and humans, and discovering the emotional connections between those two worlds that have been so much a part of religious culture.” That first performance in France left the composer speechless. “To this day I don’t have the words to describe it. It was one of those moments in my life when I wasn’t sure if everything was real.”

Although his schedule doesn’t leave Huizinga much time these days to participate in Classical Revolution — the organization he helped found that sponsors performances of classical chamber music in non-traditional venues like Cleveland’s The Happy Dog — Edwin Huizinga has taken on another major project: he’s started a PhD at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

Huizinga ends the [bio](#) on his website with a nod to his globe-hopping activities: “At the moment, I call Toronto my home, although anyone that knows me well might nickname me a wandering minstrel.” Perhaps, but certainly less ‘a thing of shreds and patches’ than a musician of boundless energy and talent.



The Rambling House cast.

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