

ChamberFest Cleveland: a conversation with Young Artist Evren Ozel

by Mike Telin



From its inception, the nurturing of young artists has been an important part of [ChamberFest Cleveland](#)'s mission. That tradition will continue during the Festival's opening concert on Thursday, June 13 at 7:30 pm in CIM's Mixon Hall, when pianist [Evren Ozel](#) joins clarinetist Franklin Cohen and cellist Peter Wiley for a performance of Beethoven's *Clarinet Trio in B-flat*. "It's an unbelievable opportunity," Ozel said by telephone. "This is my first time playing that piece and to get to

do it with these great masters of their instruments is very exciting."

Ozel began his musical studies at age three in his hometown of Minneapolis and in 2014 moved to Massachusetts to attend the Walnut Hill School for the Arts. His many achievements include scholarships from the U.S. Chopin Foundation and the YoungArts Foundation. He has performed three times on NPR's *From the Top*, and has participated in the Marlboro Music Festival and International Mendelssohn Akademie Leipzig. He was awarded second prize as well as the Mozart and Chopin special prizes at the 2018 Dublin International Piano Competition.

The pianist is also no stranger to Cleveland-area audiences — he was a finalist and audience prize-winner at the 2014 Thomas and Evon Cooper International Competition. In 2016 he returned to the Cooper and was awarded second prize. He recently completed his second year at the New England Conservatory.

Ozel said that his invitation to be part of ChamberFest came from founder and co-artistic director Diana Cohen. “She’s an alumna of the Marlboro Festival, where I was last summer and will be again later this summer, and after she came to visit she reached out to me. I was very excited and I’m really looking forward to being back in Cleveland.”

On Friday, June 14 at 7:30 pm in CIM’s Kulas Hall, Ozel will again team up with Franklin Cohen for Bernstein’s *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, and will share the stage with violinist Diana Cohen, violist Tanner Menees (his fellow NEC classmate), and cellist Peter Wiley in Dvořák’s *Piano Quartet in D*. “Both of these pieces are new to me — I’m starting from scratch — but they were very good about letting me know what I would be playing back in February or March. Even though I didn’t have a lot of time until I had finished school, it was nice that I knew so that I could listen to the pieces and get a feel for them.”

Ozel will then have a five-day performing hiatus. “But I’ll be practicing like mad during that period,” he said. On Thursday, June 20 at 7:30 pm at Mixon Hall he will perform Poulenc’s *Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano* for the first time.

His performing duties will wrap up on Sunday, June 23 at 1:45 pm in CWRU’s Harkness Chapel, when he will team up with violinist Nathan Meltzer for a pre-concert performance of Ponce’s *Estrellita* and the Franck *Sonata*.

“Nathan and I played on the same *From the Top* show in 2012. It’s been a while, but I have met him before. And the Franck is the only piece I’m playing at ChamberFest that I have played before. It’s difficult but it’s one of the great masterpieces, and always a joy to perform.” Later in the concert Ozel will be featured in four of Bruch’s *Eight Pieces for Clarinet, Viola and Piano*.

Turning our conversation to the topic of competitions, Ozel said that he had chosen not to enter any during the past year, opting to spend his time learning solo and chamber pieces. “It was interesting because even though I didn’t do any competitions, I was still just as busy if not more. I think it’s important to try and space them out so that you have the time to build your repertoire. If you do too many you can lose sight of who you are as a musician because you’re always trying to get through the next one.”

Ozel also has a healthy approach to competitions. “The best thing is to just go to them with the attitude that it’s an opportunity for you to build a significant program of two and a half to three hours of music and to prepare that to the highest level that you can, and hope that you get to present as much of that program as you can. That’s really all

it is because ultimately you have to serve the music as you see fit. And the results are not in your control.”

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