

Violinist Andrew Sords: at home, with friends

by Mike Telin



While violinist [Andrew Sords](#)' prolific career as a soloist and chamber musician takes him around the world to far away places, there's just something about coming back to Cleveland and making music with his friends. "There's nothing better than to rehearse with these high-level colleagues, and have dinner afterwards," the Cleveland Institute of Music graduate said by telephone on his way to Toronto.

On Sunday, September 22 at 3:00 pm at Rocky River Presbyterian Church, Sords will join violinist Mari Sato, violist Eric Wong, cellist Nathanael Matthews, and pianist Elizabeth DeMio for a program titled "An Afternoon of Romantic Chamber Music." The free concert is presented as part of the church's [Artist Concert Series](#).

"Liz and I have done nearly 400 performances together," Sords said, "and I've known Nate Matthews for a number of years. Mari was a coach of mine at CIM. We get along so well and I'm always inspired by her classy playing. And Eric and I were both students at CIM but never worked together until this year, when we played the Schumann piano quintet back in January. I thought wow, what a player."

For Sunday's program, Sords has assembled works that he said are "off the beaten path," and were written to be performed with the composer's friends. "Mahler wrote his *Piano Quartet* early in his career — I think he was 15 or 16," the violinist said. He also noted that Shostakovich wrote his Piano Quintet for the Beethoven Quartet and it was premiered by them with the composer at the keyboard.

“Moritz Moszkowski’s *Suite for two violins and piano* is known about, but rarely heard on programs,” Sords said. “It’s a dense, showy work with both violins on equal footing. And Sarasate’s *Navarra* is also for two violins and piano. It’s stuffed full of dance rhythms from the border of Spain and France where he was from.”

In addition to his 15-stop concert tour this fall, Sords will celebrate Beethoven’s 250th anniversary by performing complete cycles of the composer’s sonatas and piano trios as well as the *Violin Concerto* and *Triple Concerto* in Australia, Mexico, Quebec, the Caribbean, the Canary Islands, and the United States.

Sords was not always encouraged to pursue a career as a soloist. At one point he received some discouraging words from a teacher about his limited chances of ever being able to play the Beethoven Concerto with an orchestra. “That lit a fire under me,” he said. “When I was eighteen, I thought it would be great to play a dozen concerts a year. Now I do that many in a month. I feel very grateful that I’m now to the point where I can choose many of my own projects and the people that I work with. I also have a great list of conductors who know me.”

Staying true to his hometown, Sords is a die-hard fan of the Cleveland Indians. “When I was a little boy, after I was sent to bed, I would dive under the covers with my Walkman and tune into Tom Hamilton calling the games. I’ve never lost my love for that ball club.”

In 2017 a dream came true for Sords when he was invited to perform the National Anthem at Progressive Field. “I first played it about five years ago,” he recalled. “It was for the first Pride Game ESPN had ever broadcast. But getting the invitation to play it for the Tribe, I had to come up with an arrangement that was tasteful, my own, and would go over with the thousands of people at the ballpark who might not be expecting a violinist to play it. The moment I started to play, I saw the players, the crowd, and the flags flying, and I thought, this is pretty special. I have to say, that was the most exhilarating and the scariest thing I’ve ever done.”

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