

Welcoming the Apollon Musagète Quartet to the Cleveland Chamber Music Society

by Daniel Hathaway



Founded in Vienna in 2006 by four young Polish musicians, the Apollon Musagète Quartet will visit the Cleveland Chamber Music Society series at Plymouth Church in Shaker Heights on Tuesday, February 4 at 7:30 pm.

Violinists Paweł Zalejski and Bartosz Zachłód, violist Piotr Szumieł, and cellist Piotr Skweres, now on a multi-city tour of North America, will bookend their program with Haydn's *Quartet in D*, Op. 64, No. 5, "Lark," and Dvořák's *Quartet in A-flat*, Op. 105. Following their custom of featuring at least one work by a Polish composer on each of their concerts, the Quartet will center their

program with Krzysztof Penderecki's *Quartet No. 3*, "Leaves from an unwritten diary."

Written only two years after Apollon Musagète was formed — and named after Apollo 'The Inspirer of the Muses' — Penderecki's third quartet marked the composer's first foray into chamber music in four decades. As Peter Lakí writes in his program notes for the February 4 concert, "Penderecki rarely gives his works programmatic subtitles. The fact that he chose to do so in this case shows that this quartet meant something special to him."

The single-movement piece draws on some ideas embedded in the composer's 1991 *String Trio*, as well as on melodies recalled from earlier in his life — like a folk tune he heard his father play on his fiddle. The work is by turns dramatic and lyrical, with an unrestrained ostinato that reappears from time to time to give forward momentum to the 18-minute piece.

You can hear a thrilling performance of Penderecki No. 3 by the Apollon Musagète Quartet [here](#).

Digital technology and the internet can make us want to tear our hair out at times, but they also make terrific resources available without leaving the comfort of our homes. The Chamber Music Society is now posting [program notes](#) for its concerts on its website so that patrons can read them in advance and avoid multitasking during the concert.

And because it's difficult to get to know a Quartet in a single evening, here are two online videos that show other sides of the ensemble's personality.

The first is a charming performance of Shostakovich's *Polka* from a concert at the 2011 Annecy Classic Festival.



The second finds Apollon Musagète in more of a popular mode with its performance of *A Multitude of Shades*, dedicated to the American singer-songwriter and pianist Tori Amos and recorded live in Vienna in 2011.

Another resource will be available one hour before the performance. At 6:30 pm on February 4, musicologist Nicholas Stevens — who also reviews concerts as a correspondent for [ClevelandClassical.com](#) — will give a pre-concert lecture in Herr Chapel at Plymouth Church.

Asked to preview his talk, Stevens wrote,

The overarching theme will be the idea of the turning point — personal, artistic, philosophical — in the life of a composer, and how we can make sense of music relative to those moments.



Haydn wrote his piece that's on the program in the year his patron died and he became a free agent. Penderecki wrote his forty years after his previous string quartet, on the other side of a decades-long transition away from avant-gardism. And Dvořák composed his just before leaving non-programmatic, non-operatic music behind for the rest of his life.

I'll compare the quartets to pieces on the other side of the respective turning points and affirm the value of considering that sort of biographical information in the listening experience, before turning things around at the end and asking why we all seek to empathize with artists at points in our own lives.

Tickets for the Apollon Musagète concert at Plymouth Church on February 4 are available [online](#). Student tickets are only \$5.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com January 30, 2020.

Click here for a printable copy of this article

[Return to the Front Page.](#)