

## The Best of ChamberFest Cleveland on WCLV 104.9 Ideastream

by Mike Telin



Founded in 2012 by Diana and Franklin Cohen, ChamberFest Cleveland has become a highly anticipated event each June for people seeking an immersive chamber music experience.

If the absence of live Festival performances this summer is leaving a void in your soul, take note: ChamberFest is collaborating with WCLV 104.9 Ideastream to broadcast nine programs drawing on material from all eight festival seasons on the station's Wednesday evening "Ovations" Series and six, one-hour Sunday evening broadcasts. WCLV co-founder Robert Conrad will host and produce the series.

Click [here](#) to view the schedule.

It's no secret that since the pandemic caused the cancellation of all live performances, there has been a seemingly never-ending "stream" of performances by musicians and arts organizations over the Internet. Coupled with the reality that our lives are now spent in front of a glowing computer screen, this has caused our eyes and minds to grow weary.

"That's what led us to radio," Diana Cohen said during — yes, a Zoom call. "I was reacting badly to all this content that has been put online. I think that radio gives you time to focus more, and to be more introspective without the distraction of the glare of the computer screen. I don't know if everybody feels that way, but for me, it's refreshing to just sit in a chair and listen."

The series' audio production is by the Grammy-winning team of Erica Brenner, Digital Media Director at ChamberFest, and audio engineers Ian Dobie and Bruce Egre. The radio broadcasts are mastered by Dobie.

“We’re very lucky because Erica has done a great job of making notes after concerts about what she thought went well and what didn’t,” Diana Cohen said. “We chose some performances that were already produced, and some that we thought were excellent but hadn’t yet been produced.”



Frank Cohen, who was also on the Zoom call, noted that trying to remember every performance was impossible. “The further you get away from any particular Festival, your memory fades,” he said. “For me it was getting all the program books in the room at the same time, then leafing through them. There were many performances that had stuck in my mind but I couldn’t remember exactly how they went. Then I’d go back into the archives and have a listen and say to Diana, ‘wow, you’ve got to hear this,’ or she would do the same with me. It’s been a real eye-opener.”

During past seasons WCLV has broadcast select ChamberFest performances, which Diana Cohen said revealed other issues. “There were pieces that I thought worked really well live but didn’t come across so well on the radio.” She added that the upcoming broadcasts will give audiences the opportunity to have a second listen to some lesser-known repertoire. “As musicians we have an intimate relationship with the music. How many times do we play through a piece before we perform it? Almost hundreds. I think it’s great for audiences to get a second listen to a Bartók quintet or some other unknown piece.”

Are there any particular pieces she is excited for people to hear again? “The Mahler *Piano Quartet* and the Korngold *Suite for Two Violins, Cello, and Piano Left Hand* — I

think that's a special gem that people can get a second crack at. And the Strauss *Metamorphosen*."

The Cohens agreed that making the final choices about which performances to air was far from easy. "We went through piece by piece, and Erica would check her notes," Diana Cohen said. "In the end it was about having to make decisions, which of course we're both very bad at, so it was nice to have organized people like Erica on the phone with us."

In addition to bringing ChamberFest performances to a world-wide audience, Frank Cohen said that his hope is for the broadcasts to bring back wonderful memories for the people who attend the Festival every year. "The weird part will be hearing ChamberFest concerts without seeing the people."

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