

### Callisto Quartet to perform live and *al fresco* in Solon on July 17

by Daniel Hathaway



Life is full of new experiences for a young chamber music ensemble, but this week will mark a real first for the Callisto Quartet. Although violinists Paul Aguilar and Rachel Stenzel, violist Eva Kennedy, and cellist Hanna Moses played a number of outdoor concerts on their Italian tour

last summer, Friday will be their debut performing on a baseball field.

On July 17 at 7:00 pm, the Callistos will play Mozart's "Hunt" Quartet, K. 458, and Debussy's Quartet in a free concert at Solon Community Park.

The event, presented by Chagrin Arts in cooperation with the City of Solon, will observe social distancing. Face masks are mandatory, and each household will be asked to stay within circles chalked on the field. Attendees should bring their own snacks and lawn chairs. The players, who will perform "right in front of the dugout," will be miked.

Formed in 2016 at the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Callisto Quartet won the 2018 Fischoff Competition and took second prize at Banff in 2019. They're currently in the middle of their two-year appointment as graduate quartet-in-residence at the Shepherd School of Music at Houston's Rice University.

I caught up with them via Zoom at Hanna Moses' home in Stow, and began by asking how this concert — one of the first local live performances since the lockdown — came about.

"We have been close with Karen Prasser at Chagrin Arts, and we were supposed to be working together on school performances in March before the pandemic hit," Hanna said. "We were looking for a place to make a recording, and she asked if we

would be interested in a live concert. She thought that Solon Community Park would be a perfect place.”



Moses is a local, but the other members hail from Columbus, Chicago, and South Carolina. They drove up to Cleveland for the concert and the recording — which will be made at the Masonic Temple in Chagrin Falls and streamed online on July 18 as part of the Carolina Music Festival.

The quartet proposed the Mozart and Debussy works for the Solon concert. “Those are two favorites of

ours, and tend to be favorites of audiences as well,” Eva said. “The character of the ‘Hunt’ Quartet is so exuberant and uplifting,” Rachel said. “It’s very appropriate for an outdoor venue, and really accessible for infrequent attendees of classical concerts,” Hanna added.

“The Debussy is so wonderful,” Paul added. “Its mood runs from stormy and brooding to heroic to danceable. The slow movement is gorgeous and the finale is so virtuosic.”

In addition to the music itself, the players are looking forward to the kind of live interaction with listeners that has been in short supply for the last few months — “simple face-to-face communication before, during, and after events.” Masks in place, of course.

When the pandemic hit, life was disrupted for the Callistos as it was for everyone. “We set some goals at the end of March,” Rachel said. “We decided to learn Bartók 4, and spend some more time on Beethoven and lesser-known repertoire.”

After finishing the spring semester remotely at Rice — having their own apartments meant that they didn’t have to leave Houston — the musicians have taken a month off to spend time with families. It’s the longest hiatus since they became a quartet in 2016.

While that time has proved to be relaxing, Eva noted that the pandemic was “a double-edged sword. We have all this extra time, but it’s difficult to stay motivated

when you don't have any performances ahead."

All the more reason to make something special out of Friday evening's live event. A promising weather forecast and the Callisto's fine reputation should add up to a memorable evening.

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