

“Gather Around the Music” at Riverside Park with ENCORE

by Mike Telin



With the local weather forecast predicting a sunny 78 degrees with zero percent chance on rain on Friday, September 25, why not pack a picnic, put your lawn chairs and blankets in the car, and head to Riverside Park in Chagrin Falls for a 6:00 pm family-friendly concert presented by ENCORE Chamber Music.

The program, “Gather Around the Music,” will feature classical favorites and American popular music performed

by artistic director and violinist Jinjoo Cho, faculty violist Eric Wong, and a pair of ENCORE alums: violinist Kiarra Saito-Beckman and cellist Maya Enstad.

ENCORE staff will enforce social distancing via designated sitting areas on the park lawn. Audience members are asked to bring their masks and be considerate of their fellow listeners’ personal space.

“We think of this concert as a contribution to the community that has embraced us over the years,” Jinjoo Cho said during a recent telephone conversation. “We wanted to give something back that would bring people together in a safe way, and Riverside Park is the perfect venue to do that. We’ll perform in the small courtyard, and people will be able to sit in the Park’s large open area — social distancing tapes will mark the available spots.”

The one-hour-plus program will begin with selections from *Woodworks*, a collection of Scandinavian folk songs compiled by the Danish String Quartet. That will be followed by Bach’s Third Brandenburg Concerto and the first movement of Haydn’s “Sunrise” Quartet. The remainder of the program will be dedicated to popular tunes, beginning with Florence Price’s arrangement of *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*.



“It’s nice to see that Price is finally getting the recognition she deserves,” Cho said. “The songs and movie themes have all been arranged by excellent classical musicians or ensembles. For example, the arrangement of ‘Misirlou’ was made by the Ébène Quartet. It’s part of their *Pulp Fiction* album which is what put them on the international map. And who doesn’t love *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*.”

One of ENCORE’s goals is to provide opportunities for their alums to perform with visiting artists and faculty members. “I learned the most by collaborating with my teachers and coaches,” she said. “It’s always very special to be able to share the stage with someone you admire. But these times have been especially difficult for young people — their education has been compromised as have their work opportunities, so we’re very happy to have Kiarra and Maya join Eric and me for this concert.”

Kiarra Saito-Beckman was a prize-winner of the 2017 Cooper International Violin Competition, and winner of the 2015 Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Senior Strings Competition. “She’s a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music and is now studying with me at McGill. She’s a fantastic musician and a young artist that deserves any opportunity to be heard.”

Cellist Maya Enstad is a member of the Cornell Quartet as well as an Ethel Crook String Competition Winner, and has been a Fellow at the Marrowstone Music Festival and CREDO Summer Music Festival. “She’s a wonderful musician who just graduated from Oberlin, and I’m excited to get to play with her.”

Cho always looks forward to working with her fellow ENCORE faculty member, Eric Wong, violist of the Cavani String Quartet and a first prize winner of the Fischhoff, Coleman, and Concert Artist Guild competitions. “We both studied with Paul Kantor at the same time at CIM — he’s been a dear friend for a long time. He’s also one of the most multifaceted people I know. He’s an incredible bread baker, an amazing writer, and as a musician, he’s one of the best. And he’s so humble — it’s just a joy to be around him.”

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