

**Cleveland Composers Guild joins
area music students in 28th
“Creativity: Learning Through Experience” (Sept. 27)**

by Jarrett Hoffman



The Cleveland Composers Guild’s annual collaboration with music students in the area couldn’t go ahead as usual this year (I’ll let you guess why). But that didn’t stop the Guild and these young players from putting together something virtual.

In this 28th edition of “Creativity: Learning

Through Experience,” thirteen students ages 9-18 converged on the Bop Stop to premiere short, newly composed works by Guild members, all while following social distancing guidelines. The recordings from those performances were then tied together into a recital video — complete with composers’ comments and clips of coaching sessions — that arrived on YouTube on September 27.

Finding the right balance between context and main feature has been a challenge for many concerts presented online. Here, the pre-performance clips tended to go on longer than necessary, but in their best moments, they provided a unique perspective into this project. Perhaps most interesting was discovering why the composers wrote what they did — with reasons that ranged from the personalities of the performers, their interests (musical and otherwise), and in the case of some duos, their interpersonal dynamics.

Knowing that Hana Mazak (*pictured above*), 14, didn’t have a lot of experience with mixed meters, Margi Griebing-Haigh decided to challenge the violinist by emphasizing that technique in *Novelette*. Accompanied by a professional, pianist Benjamin Malkevitch, Mazak responded impressively all around, not only with her

rhythmic accuracy but also her technique and her dramatic interpretation. The sinister, Bartók-like middle section was a standout.



With *A Perfect Piece*, Jennifer Conner tackled the challenge of writing a cello duet for two players at different stages of their development, and making them equal partners throughout. Kei Kojima, 17, handled the expressive double stops and the agile birdcalls, while his brother Kenga, 10, shone with beautiful, leisurely underpinning and pleasant pizzicatos. What's more, their warm relationship came across both in music and conversation.

One of the most mature performances of the broadcast came from 18-year-old pianist Abra Lisowski, who brought graceful technique and a remarkably sensitive touch to Robert Rollin's *Nocturne on an Ancient Hebrew Theme*. Another highlight was Matthew Saunders' *Peristyle*, in which guitarist Parker Carrus, 13, belied his age with the elegant arc of his phrasing, and the sneering and grooving emotions he put across during the middle section.

Truly, congratulations are in order for all involved in this developmentally important, heart-warming, and stylistically diverse recital:

Composers — Griebing-Haigh, Conner, Rollin, Saunders, Sebastian Birch, Joseph Hollings, Ryan Charles Ramer, Nicholas Puin, Karen Griebing, and Robert Beckstrom

Students — Mazak, the Kojimas, Lisowski, Carrus, Ryah Bolotova, Kailani Farivar, Tim and Julia Denysyuk, Matthew Iacobelli, Leah Green, Allison Matovic, and Shanshan Ningshan Li

Teachers — Robert Gruca, Leisl Hook-Langmack, Svitlana Ivanova, Rob Kovacs, Kimberly Meier-Sims, Ida Mercer, Coren Mino, and Tatyana Tolmacheva

The recital is still available on [YouTube](#).

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