

## BlueWater Chamber Orchestra builds bridges with Verb Ballets

by Daniel Hathaway



A chance meeting at Lakeside — where Verb Ballets was performing and BlueWater Chamber Orchestra artistic director Daniel Meyer was auditioning for a job — has resulted in the first collaboration between the two organizations. Although the original idea was for an in-person performance, the pandemic forced the project online.

Not such a bad thing, as it turns out. “Building Bridges

Together,” which debuted as a video production on November 21, combined the strengths of two fine Cleveland performing arts organizations in a beautifully edited virtual event — bringing them into the same performing space for the first time through digital means.



The program began with Heinz Poll’s 1973 *Adagio for Two Dancers* and ended with Michael Escovedo’s *Broken Bridges*, choreographed in 2016. Verb already had the

works in repertoire, and pulling the so-called Albinoni *Adagio* and Shostakovich's *Chamber Symphony* (alias String Quartet No. 8) into the mix was no problem for BlueWater, who added their own solo work between the dances, Anton Webern's *Langsamer Satz*.



The *Adagio*, dedicated to the memory of Ohio Ballet's recently-departed music director, David Fisher, featured Kelly Korfhage and Benjamin Shepard shaping beautiful body lines in a gorgeous *pas de deux*, bathed in soft light designed by Thomas R. Skelton and adapted by Christopher Pepe. BlueWater contributed a lush performance of the bogus score, actually composed by 19th-century Italian musicologist Remo Giazotto.



BlueWater's choice of the Webern — a one-movement work that lives in the world of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* — was enlightened, and Meyer shaped a robust, expressive performance.



Danced by Kate Webb, Lieneke Matte, Robert Carter, Daniel Cho, Kelly Korfhage, Antonio Morillo, Noe Iwamatsu, and Julie Russel, *Broken Bridges* made a striking contrast with what went before. Shostakovich's music, originally intended for a film score, was inspired by the ruins of Dresden, the memory of the victims of fascism and war, and the composer's own thoughts about his mortality. There's a lot of musical material to put to movement, and Escovedo used it to good effect.

The broadcast was accompanied by an elaborate program book which attests to the seriousness with which the two organizations undertook their collaboration. It worked spectacularly on the first try, and its success suggests that future plans should be in order.

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