

ChamberFest Cleveland — *Together Again*

by Mike Telin



Since its debut season in 2012, ChamberFest Cleveland has been guided by a single idea — to create a family of musicians and audiences who come together to share their love of chamber music. And like so many families who were separated due to the pandemic, so was the ChamberFest family.

Earlier this week, Festival co-artistic directors Diana and Franklin Cohen announced that the “chamberhood” will come together again June 9-26 with free, safe, family-friendly outdoor concerts, allowing as many as possible to experience the healing power of live music.

Around the theme of *Together Again*, the majority of the Festival’s concerts will be held at The Grove Amphitheatre, 425 N. Commons Blvd. in Mayfield. Click [here](#) for details and [here](#) for reservations (required). Audiences should bring a lawn chair or

blanket as the venue has no permanent seating. Enhance your evening by bringing a picnic or [ordering take-out](#) from a local restaurant. The responsible consumption of alcohol is permitted. In case of rain, concerts will be moved to St. Paschal Baylon Church in Highland Heights (also the venue for the Festival’s final concert.)

“We can’t wait to share music with the community,” longtime ChamberFest pianist Roman Rabinovich said by telephone. “These times have made it clear about what is important in music — and that is the sharing part.”

Rabinovich, who is married to Diana Cohen and is also part of ChamberFest’s organizing team, said that although they considered holding the Festival indoors, they weren’t sure how people would feel about being inside. “This was right when the vaccinations began

and it was unclear how it would go and what the comfort level of the audience and musicians would be.”

The pianist noted that the decision to move the Festival outdoors was also sparked by the reception he and Diana received while playing impromptu concerts at their home in Calgary. “We played on our porch all of last summer and we had very enthusiastic responses from people. So we thought it might be wise to take the Festival outside and make it an informal celebration of music,” Rabinovich said. “It’s going to be a very different feeling but I think it will bring people together. They can bring food and drinks and make it a time for community gathering.”



As we have come to expect from ChamberFest, this season’s programs include engaging titles and diverse repertoire. “The theme is *Together Again*, so we wanted to create programs that are fun, with different kinds of musical styles and traditions.” A full Festival schedule can be found at the end of this article.

This season’s returning artists include Festival favorites Julie Albers and Oliver Herbert (cellos), Alexi Kenney (violin), Yura Lee (violin and viola), Dimitri Murrath (viola), Amanda Powell (soprano), Benjamin Chen (clarinet), and Alexander Cohen (percussion).

“We also have some new musicians this year who I’m sure will create beautiful connections with the music and audiences,” Rabinovich said. First-timers include Liza Ferschtman (violin), Zoltimer Fung (cello), Ayane Kozasa (viola), Amitai Vardi (clarinet), and Shai Wosner (piano).

ChamberFest’s popular Rising Stars initiative also returns. This year’s artists include Sterling Elliot (cello), Zubin Hathi and Jeremy Sreejayan (percussion), Nathan Meltzer

(violin), and Hugh Shihao Zhu (clarinet). “It’s a beautiful thing to watch these people grow from amazing young players into mature artists in a matter of a few years.”



Although Rabinovich looks forward to playing on or listening to all of the programs, the June 18 concert, “Goldberg Variations,” will be special. “Learning the Goldbergs was my COVID project — it’s what enabled me to stay sane during these times,” he said. “Every musician knows the piece to a certain degree but I’ve never played it. It’s not something you can learn in two weeks — it requires a lot of time to study, and this past year allowed me to do just that. You can discover new things in it every day for the rest of your life. It’s like an onion that keeps unpeeling.”

On June 16, as part of the “Luscious Soundscapes” program, Rabinovich and Diana Cohen will perform Richard Strauss’ *Violin Sonata in E-flat*. “It’s a piece that is full of love,” he said. “It was written by a young Strauss around age 20 and it’s extremely virtuosic for both instruments. It’s symphonic in scope. Some of it sounds like his tone poems — *Don Juan* is very much inside it. This was also a COVID project and I was very lucky to have a chamber music partner at home with me. So many people didn’t have that.”

Wrapping up our conversation, Rabinovich pointed out that the Father’s Day Family Concert featuring Alain Ridout’s *Ferdinand the Bull* for violin and speaker is something to look forward to. “Alexi Kenney suggested it. He’s performed it many times at outreach events. He loves doing it and he’ll also be the narrator. I’m sure it will be engaging and delightful for the kids and the fathers.”

CHAMBERFEST CLEVELAND 2021 CALENDAR

Except where noted, all events are outdoors at The Grove Amphitheatre, 425 N. Commons Blvd., Mayfield, and are free, but [reservations](#) are required.

JUNE 9 - WEDNESDAY - 7:00 pm — *Legends* — Antonín Dvořák’s *Legends* (arranged by Shai Wosner), Enrique Granados’ *Sonata for Violin and Piano H.127*, Paul Wiancko’s *American Haiku* and Franz Schubert’s *Trio No. 2 in E-flat, D. 929*.

JUNE 11 - FRIDAY - 7:00 pm — *Blue Dress* — Maurice Ravel's Sonata for Violin and Cello, Carbakapa Maljokovic's Sonata for Four Clarinets, Julia Wolfe's With a blue dress on and Ernő Dohnányi's Piano Quintet No. 2 in e-flat, Op. 26.

JUNE 12 - SATURDAY - 7:00 pm — *Rambunctious Fun* — Béla Bartók's Selected Duos for Two Violins, Alexander Zemlinsky's Clarinet Trio, Op. 3, Franz Schubert's – Lebensstürme: Allegro in a, D. 947 and Folk Songs from Around the World: Lamma Bada (Classic Arabic, arr. Dave Morgan), To Yasemi (Traditional Cypriot, arr. Dave Morgan), Appalachian Suite (Traditional U.S., arr. Dave Morgan) and Sephardic Songs (Traditional Ladino, arr. Paul Ferguson).

JUNE 13 - SUNDAY - 11:00 am - Lawn Concert — *Bach and More* — Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber's Passacaglia from the Rosary Sonatas, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson's Lamentations suite and J.S. Bach's E major Partita. Private yard on Guilford Rd., Cleveland Hts. Free, but [reservations](#) required. Lawn chairs welcome.

JUNE 16 - WEDNESDAY - 7:00 pm — *Luscious Soundscapes* — Domenico Scarlatti Sonatas and Frederick Rzewski Nano Sonatas interleaved: Scarlatti's Sonatas K. 141, K. 9 and K. 230, Rzewski's Sonatas 36 ("To a Young Man"), 38 ("To a Great Guy") and 12, Richard Strauss' Violin Sonata in E-flat, Op.18 and Amy Beach's Piano Quintet, Op. 67.

JUNE 18 - FRIDAY - 7:00 pm — *Goldberg Variations* — Roman Rabinovich, piano. J. S Bach's Aria with thirty variations, BWV 988.

JUNE 19 - SATURDAY - 7:00 pm — *Nature Emerging* — Franz Schubert's Mein!, Die Taubenpost & Nacht und Träume, Jean-Philippe Rameau's La Poule, Kaija Saariaho's Petals (solo cello + electronics), Helen Grime's Aviary Sketches (after Joseph Cornell) and Antonín Dvořák's Piano Trio No. 4 in e, ("Dumky").

JUNE 20 - SUNDAY - 3:00 pm — *Father's Day* — Alan Ridout's Ferdinand the Bull for violin and speaker and Jean-Philippe Rameau's La Poule. Other works to be announced. 60-minute program.

JUNE 24 - THURSDAY - 7:00 pm — *Emerging into Light* — Beethoven's Magic Flute Variations in E-flat, Bedřich Smetana's Piano Trio in g, Op. 15 and Felix Mendelssohn's String Quintet No. 2 in B flat, Op. 87.

JUNE 25 - FRIDAY - 7:00 pm — *Romp (Around the World)* — Béla Kovács' Shalom Aleichem, Rov Feidman, Antonín Dvořák's Terzetto in C, Op. 74, Rolf Wallin's Scratch for amplified balloon, Friedrich Hermann's Capriccio No. 1 for 3 violins, Franghiz Ali-Zadeh's RƏQS (Dance), Yotam Haber's From The Book, Tanya Tagaq's Sivunitinni,

The Beatles' Come Together (arranged by the Ebene Quartet), and Hawa Kasse Mady Diabate's Tegere Tulon.

JUNE 26 - SATURDAY - 7:00 pm — *Festival Finale* — Hildegard of Bingen's "O Virtus Sapiente," Robert Schumann's Three Romances for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 94, Franklin Cohen, clarinet Roman Rabinovich, piano. Sofia Gubaidulina's String Trio and Johannes Brahms' Piano Quartet No. 1 in g, op. 25. St. Paschal Baylon, 5384 Wilson Mills Rd., Highland Hts.

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