

ChamberFest Cleveland: Looking Ahead at Week 2

by Mike Telin



The second week of ChamberFest Cleveland begins on Wednesday, June 16 at 7:00 pm at The Grove Amphitheatre in Mayfield. Admission is free, but [reservations](#) are required. A full weekly calendar listing is below.

The program “Luscious Soundscapes” begins with pianist Shai Wosner’s imaginative interweaving of sonatas by Italian Baroque composer [Domenico](#)

[Scarlatti](#) (1685-1757) with sonatas by American composer [Frederick Rzewski](#) (1938 -). Wosner’s three pairings include Scarlatti’s *Sonata in d* K. 141 with Rzewski’s *Nanosonata No. 36* (“To a Young Man”), Scarlatti’s *Sonata in d* K. 9 with Rzewski’s *Nanosonata No. 38* (“To a Great Guy”), and Scarlatti’s *Sonata in c* K. 230 with Rzewski’s *Nanosonata No. 12*.

If juxtaposing music by these two seemingly dissimilar composers sounds like an oddity, Wosner believes they make an interesting match. “I love Scarlatti and I love Rzewski,” the pianist said during an interview. “And I think that Scarlatti and Rzewski are mavericks in similar ways. Of course their music is very different from one another’s, and Rzewski was not trying to emulate Scarlatti in any way with his short sonatas. The Nanosonatas are almost like a stream of consciousness, but I hear that in the Scarlattis as well.”

Wosner also finds both composers’ sonatas to be well structured with a forward impulse to them. “Rzewski’s are short and in some cases even shorter than the Scarlattis, and both are very gestural — big, bold, decisive gestures. I feel something about the temperament of the two composers allows them to converse with each other even though one of them is no longer with us.”

For the program's concluding work — Amy Beach's *Piano Quintet* — Wosner will be joined by Alexi Kenney and Diana Cohen (violins), Dimitri Murrath (viola), and Oliver Herbert (cello). "I've never played the piece before, but it has some beautiful melodies and is harmonically interesting."



In the center of "Luscious Soundscapes," Diana Cohen will partner with pianist Roman Rabinovich for Richard Strauss' *Violin Sonata in E-flat*. During an interview, Rabinovich, who is married to Cohen, described the sonata as a piece that is full of love. "It was written by Staruss when he was around 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 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."

Rabinovich will take the stage alone on Friday, June 18 at 7:00 pm for a single work — J.S. Bach's *Aria with thirty variations* BWV 988, more commonly referred to as the "Goldberg Variations."

Learning the piece was another of Rabinovich's COVID projects. "It's what enabled me to stay sane during those 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."

That thrill of discovery also came with challenges. "This music is full of diverse and contrasting characters, yet it is absolutely unified and comes out of this very simple idea. So every day I'd try different ways of making it as interesting as I could, but at the same time, not losing track of that simple idea."

Rabinovich said that what he finds so fascinating about Bach's music is that it is "so democratic. It's so well-structured and there are so many ways you can play it. It's not an

accident that there are all these different arrangements — even in pop and hip-hop — and no matter what it's arranged for it still sounds good. That's a testimony to his genius.”

THIS WEEK'S CHAMBERFEST CALENDAR

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

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

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* and *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 — *ChamberFest Cleveland Family Program: Father's Day* — Alan Ridout's *Ferdinand the Bull for violin and speaker*, Jean-Philippe Rameau's *La Poule* and other works to be announced. 60-minute program.

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