

ChamberFest Cleveland: Opening Concert — “Legends” (June 6)

by Cait Winston



After the postponement of their 2020 season, ChamberFest Cleveland made a triumphant return on June 6, as they kicked off the 2021 concert series aptly named ‘Together Again.’ Originally planned to be held at The Grove Amphitheater, the venue was changed to St. Paschal Baylon church, due to rain.

The series opener, “Legends,” celebrated the return of in-person concerts with music by Antonín Dvořák, Enrique Granados, Paul Wiancko, and Franz Schubert. The musicians displayed the wide range of expression and color, enchanting communication, and technical brilliance that chamber music can provide.

The concert began with clarinetist Franklin Cohen, violist Dimitri Murrath, and pianist Shai Wosner playing Wosner’s arrangement of Dvořák’s *Legends*. Wosner mentioned in the program notes that he wrote the arrangement during the pandemic “as I missed so much playing with other people.” This love of communal music making was evident in the rich beauty of the delightfully complementary instruments. Out of the blended harmonies flew exquisite arches of sound from the clarinet and viola.

The trio maintained a joyful energy that motivated every moment of sound, so that even the more intense passages never felt too heavy. They made each dramatic gesture in complete cohesion, their camaraderie infectious.

In Enrique Granados’ *Sonata* H. 127, violinist Diana Cohen and pianist Roman Rabinovich met at the crossroads of passion and control. Their intense conversation burst into displays of virtuosity supported by airtight technique.

Rabinovich's control was captivating, especially at the beginning, when he alternated two chords in contrasting loud and soft dynamics. The Sonata follows a repeated motive through a number of emotional contexts, all portrayed brilliantly by the expressive Cohen, who contrasted dark tones with silvery, introspective ones.

The program took a contemporary turn with Paul Wiancko's 2014 *American Haiku*, performed by cellist Zlatomir Fung and violist Dimitri Murrath. Structured in three movements to represent the three syllabic groups of the haiku form, the piece explores the nuances of identity and ideas of home through a synthesis of traditional Japanese folk song with Appalachian music styles. Although seemingly contrasting, these styles engage with each other to create a blended sonority filled with expansive, wide-reaching melodies and dynamic, plucked rhythms.

The listener was offered a variety of texture throughout the piece — both instruments were as percussive as they were melodic, through plucked passages, drumming on the instruments, and sharp articulations. *American Haiku* delivers a full range of timbre as well — cello and viola frequently blending into a rich, new sonority.

Violinist Itamar Zorman joined Fung and Wosner in Schubert's Trio No. 2 in E-flat to conclude the program. As they journeyed through Schubert's world of emotions ranging from despair to triumph, the three musicians produced a collective sound with clarity in each part, allowing the audience to witness the electrifying group dynamic that in-person performance offers.

More information on the 2021 ChamberFest can be found [here](#).

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