

ChamberFest Cleveland — *Together Again* (June 11)

by Mike Telin

The text "Together Again!" is written in a vibrant, multi-colored cursive font. Each letter is filled with a different color, including shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, and red, giving it a festive and artistic appearance.

When faced with the uncertainty of what the restrictions governing indoor, in-person concerts might be this summer, the organizers at ChamberFest Cleveland made the bold decision to take the concerts outside and make them free.

This year the majority of the concerts are being held at a single location, the magnificent Grove Amphitheatre in Mayfield. Although the venue has no permanent seating, lawn chairs and blankets are the perfect solution. Picnics are encouraged and the responsible consumption of alcohol is permitted. Think Blossom Music Center on a smaller scale and you'll get the picture.

On Friday, June 11 a large audience gathered, picnic baskets in hand, to hear spectacular performances by returning and first-time ChamberFest musicians. Indeed this was an evening that celebrated the Festival's theme, *Together Again*.

Violinist Itamar Zorman and cellist Dane Johanson provided ample emotion and an expansive color palette during Ravel's *Sonata for Violin and Cello*. The opening "Allégo" was highly nuanced while "Très vif" was a brisk dance of pizzicatos. Following the soulful "Lent," the duo's entertaining "Vif, avec entrain" brought the work to a galloping conclusion.

During Carbarkapa Maljokovic's *Sonata for Four Clarinets*, Franklin Cohen, Benjamin Chen, Amitai Vardi, and Hugh Shihao Zhu produced a wonderfully mind-blowing sound. The three-movement work of Balkan-inspired folk dances is a fun romp full of humble tunes that I for one wished had gone on a bit longer.

Introducing Missy Mazzoli's *Vespers for Violin and Electronics*, Itamar Zorman noted that it was the perfect time of day and location for a performance of the piece. Zorman

gave a mesmerizing performance of this intoxicating composition that provided time to contemplate the fact that live music was actually occurring. At the work's apex, Zorman's full-bodied sound resonated — for a moment — into the sky.

Ernő Dohnányi's haunting *Piano Quintet No. 2 in e-flat* served as the perfect closer for the evening. From start to finish, pianist Shai Vosner, violinists Itamar Zorman and Diana Cohen, violist Dimitri Murrath, and cellist Zlatomir Fung played with a unified, intense musical mind. The opening "Allegro non troppo" was defined by sustained chords in the strings, highlighted by twinkling notes in the piano's upper register. The "Intermezzo" was tossed off with aplomb, and the work's serene, peaceful ending left one in a state of awe.

A big shout-out to the sound engineers, whose incredible talents did not go unnoticed by the musicians or the audience. The evening was a top-notch production on all counts.

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