

## BlueWater Chamber Orchestra: “Exploration CLE” at the Breen (Nov. 20)

by Daniel Hathaway



*Exploration*  
**CLE**

One of the latest instrumental ensembles to announce a new season of concerts, BlueWater Chamber Orchestra began 2021-2022 with an imaginative program on November 20 at the Breen Center at St. Ignatius High School in Ohio City. The time was unusual — Saturday afternoon at 3:00 pm.

Music director and conductor Daniel Meyer built his playlist around Cleveland themes and scenes. “Exploration CLE” made use of engaging selections from the

classical canon and beyond that celebrated “what makes Cleveland so special.” Happily, he and his musicians avoided constructing a visual slide show, choosing to let the music speak for itself.

Respighi’s “La Primavera” from *Trittico Botticelliano* represented the glories of the Cleveland Museum of Art, Debussy’s “En bateau” from *Petite Suite* called our Great Lake to mind, Jennifer Higdon’s *Machina Rockus* invoked the once-vibrant steel industry, and Mendelssohn’s “Intermezzo” from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* suggested the “Emerald



Necklace” formed by the Metroparks.



The “Rondo” from Mozart’s 19th Piano Concerto became a metaphor for runners pacing themselves in the Cleveland Marathon, Howard Arlen’s *Over the Rainbow* evoked East Side jazz in general and Art Tatum and Val’s in the Valley specifically, and Michael Daugherty’s *Flamingo* — his unrelenting concerto for dueling tambourines — conjured up Cleveland’s rock scene.

Elizabeth DeMio was the fleet-fingered soloist in the Mozart, and Theron Brown the jazzy pianist for the Arlen, first presented in a straight orchestral arrangement, then in a quietly swinging solo piano version.

As it turned out, Brown made more than a mere cameo appearance as Meyer devoted several minutes to a live interview. Percussionists Bruce Golden and Evan Mitchell, soloists in the Daugherty, modestly performed from their normal position in the back row. The bassoon section (Philip Austin and Mark DeMio) won a moment in the spotlight when Meyer singled them out for their scene-changing buffoonery at the end of the Mendelssohn.



BlueWater sounded terrific on Saturday in a hall that isn’t always entirely supportive of orchestral music. And although the hour-long program, played without intermission, hinted at its origin as a presentation for schools, it worked well for an intergenerational audience. Meyer was as engaging and energetic an emcee with a mic in his hand as he was on the podium with a baton.

Having survived the passing of its founder and after pretty well working its way through the traditional chamber orchestra repertoire, it’s good to see BlueWater doing its own exploring. The ensemble, which boasts some of the best freelancers in town, remains a Cleveland product and deserves the community’s enthusiastic support.

The next concert on March 5, “Fantastical Machines,” features Jonathan Moyer and the organs of the Church of the Covenant in Walter Piston’s *Prelude and Allegro for Organ and Strings*, Eric Satie’s *Jack in the Box*, Jean-Baptiste Robin’s *Mechanic Fantasy*, and Haydn’s *Symphony No. 101*, nicknamed “The Clock.”

On May 7 — Mother’s Day weekend — Cleveland Orchestra assistant principal flute Jessica Sindell will join BlueWater for Mozart’s D-Major Concerto in a program titled “Taking Flight,” which begins with Welch composer Hilary Tann’s *With the Heather and Small Birds* and ends with Beethoven’s Second Symphony.

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