

Cleveland Chamber Music Society: Next up — the Rosamunde String Quartet

by Mike Telin



When looking at the biographies of members of the next ensemble to perform on the Cleveland Chamber Music Society series, you ask yourself: how do they possibly have the time to take on anything more?

On Tuesday, March 15 at 7:30 pm at Plymouth Church, the Cleveland Chamber Music Society will present the [Rosamunde String Quartet](#) — Noah Bendix-Balgley (1st concertmaster, Berlin

Philharmonic), Shanshan Yao (concert violinist and former member of the New York Philharmonic), Teng Li (principal viola, Los Angeles Philharmonic), and Nathan Vickery (cello, New York Philharmonic). The program will include works by Beethoven, Barber, and Schubert. Tickets are available [online](#).

Turning on the Zoom camera in Asheville, North Carolina, Bendix-Balgley's hometown, he and Yao said that their quartet colleagues would soon be arriving to begin rehearsing for their upcoming concerts. "Sometimes scheduling does get a little complicated," Bendix-Balgley said. "But it always works out," Yao added.

Why did they decide to form the Quartet? The two violinists agreed that the four players enjoy making music together and sharing their love of chamber music with audiences.

Answering the question of how they came together was slightly more complicated. "We knew each other from different festivals, school, orchestras," Yao said. Following the conversation of who met whom where and when was like following a family tree. But it was clear that they all have known each other for some time and they wanted to pursue

every opportunity to play chamber music together. After a reading session in 2015 the members decided to make it official and the Rosamunde String Quartet became a reality.

“In that session everything felt so easy,” Yao said, “and I think a lot of it is the group’s dynamics. You hear about quartets that are afraid to say anything to the other members, or groups that are fighting all of the time. We’re somewhere in the middle.”

Moving on to their program, Bendix-Balgley noted that unlike other chamber ensembles, string quartets have so much repertoire to choose from. “We’re lucky that way,” he said, adding that they always offer two or three programming options to presenters.

Their program will open with Beethoven’s String Quartet Op. 18, No. 3. and conclude with Schubert’s Quartet in a (“Rosamunde”). “The two pieces complement each other very well,” Bendix-Balgley said. Both he and Yao agreed that there is something about the composer’s string quartets that holds your attention — even after all of the Beethoven anniversary celebrations.

“The Schubert is special for us,” Yao said. “It was the first piece we played during that reading session we talked about. And of course that’s how the group got its name.”

In between those works will come Samuel Barber’s rarely heard *String Quartet*. Bendix-Balgley said that although Barber’s string orchestra arrangement of the second movement (the *Adagio for Strings*) is well known — it was played at Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s funeral and after JFK’s assassination — it is a very different piece when heard in context of the quartet. “I think the Adagio becomes even more personal — more introspective,” he said. He added that the outer movements are great pieces of music as well. “We’re excited to play it.”

Rosamunde’s concert is, like many, a rescheduled appearance due to a COVID cancellation. “We’re just happy to be performing live again,” Yao said. “I always look forward to coming to Cleveland,” Bendix-Balgley said. “I’ve been part of ChamberFest for a long time, I’ve played with Apollo’s Fire, and I’m very happy this concert is going to happen.”

You can follow the Rosamunde on [Facebook](#) and Twitter (@rosamunde4tet) or @franksalomonassociates)

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