

ENCORE Chamber Music Institute Music & Ideas Festival gets underway

by Mike Telin



Since June of 2016, young violinists, violists, and cellists have made their way to Northeast Ohio to take part in the [ENCORE Chamber Music Institute](#). Earlier this week, 92 students ages 13 to 26 arrived on the campuses of Gilmour Academy and John Carroll University to participate in either the String Quartet Intensive or the Summer Academy.

Both programs include masterclasses and workshops under the guidance of renowned artists, teachers, and guests. Over the course of three weeks, students will also perform fifteen community concerts as part of [ENCORE in Cle](#) and the concluding [Blooming Young Artist Concerts](#).

“The students also have movement classes, morning practice sessions, and lessons in the afternoon,” ENCORE founder and artistic director Jinjoo Cho said during a recent telephone conversation. “It’s a lot to handle, but this is probably the highest-level student pool that we have ever had. They come from all over the world, and it’s very exciting to hear them.”

This year ENCORE has expanded its reach further into the geographic area. “It’s quite exciting because we’re going to be in so many different locations. And all of the featured concerts are happening in Cleveland and in Akron.”

Those featured concerts are part of ENCORE’s [Music & Ideas Festival](#). With the theme “Creatures of Emotion,” the performances will include talks by experts in neuroscience

and music therapy. “It’s going to be a really interesting season,” Cho said, adding that it all kicks off this Friday, June 9 with a conversation with composer Juri Seo at Shafran Planetarium at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. The program, “Director’s Carte Blanche: Jinjoo Cho’s Toy Store,” includes J.S. Bach’s *Violin Partita No.2 in d* and Juri Seo’s *Toy Store for Violin and Fixed Media Electronics* (2022).

Why the Planetarium? “*Toy Store* is an audiovisual piece so we needed a venue that could support that,” the violinist said. “And the Planetarium is such an intimate venue that we thought it would be perfect for a solo violin recital. The Bach is one of the oldest pieces written for violin, and Juri Seo’s piece is hot off the press. So it’s sort of covering the beginning and the present of the violin repertoire, which is very exciting.”

Cho said she first encountered Seo’s music while researching composers who had written works about nature as part of her planning for a concert themed around Greta Thunberg. “I came across her sextet *Songbird*, which just really struck me. It’s a beautiful piece and thoughtfully organized which is, I wouldn’t say rare, but it is a treasured aspect when it comes to new works.”

After being in touch with Seo about purchasing the score and parts, Jinjoo Cho said she was surprised that the composer came to Cleveland to hear the performance. “We got to know each other, and I already had such respect for her, but she also teaches at Princeton University and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, so she’s done it all. And most importantly, I just love her music. It’s very funky and serious at the same time — there’s a strange and wonderful dichotomy between the two extremes, which I love in music and in art. So I think it’s something about her aesthetics that really appeals to my nature. And I ended up commissioning this piece from her.”

The series continues on Saturday, June 10 at 7:00 pm with the Cavani String Quartet and poet Mwatabu Okantah at the Akron-Summit County Public Library (Main Auditorium) and on Sunday at 3:00 pm with an Artist-Teacher Showcase at Harkness Chapel, where Lindsay Stefans of Selfspace Meditation Studio will present a pre-concert conversation.

On Friday, June 16 at 7:00 pm, Sandbox Percussion will take the stage at Drinko Hall. Nina Kraus, Professor of Neurobiology and Otolaryngology at Northwestern University, will speak about her research on sound and the brain. (The conversation will be virtual).

Although Jinjoo Cho couldn’t recall when Sandbox Percussion first came on her radar, she said there came a time when the group was doing so many interesting things it was difficult for her not to pay attention to them. “I’ve been following them for a while and they work with a lot of interesting creators. And I think artists like that are exactly the

kind of people who are attracted to ENCORE, so we invited them. This is their Cleveland debut and they're really excited about it."

On Saturday, June 17 at 7:00 pm, the Catalyst Quartet and clarinetist Sangyoon Kim will present "Station Hope" at Lakewood Congregational Church. Kathryn Pucket and Fran Steward from Restore Cleveland HOPE will give the pre-concert discussion.

"The Catalyst work in a lot of different mediums and play at the highest level. And I think they're just amazing role models for our students."

The series concludes on Sunday, June 18 at 3:00 pm with "Transcendence," an Artist-Teacher Showcase at Harkness Chapel that will feature a pre-concert discussion with music therapist Seneca Block of University Hospitals.

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