

Rocky River Chamber Music Society: A celebration of friendship

by Mike Telin



“The thing about this concert is that it’s grounded in friendship and family,” Rocky River Chamber Music Society board member Dan McKelway said during a telephone conversation.

On Monday, May 6 at 7:30 pm at West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church, Rocky River Chamber Music Society will host Cleveland Orchestra principals, clarinetist Afendi Yusuf and violinist Wesley Collins, with pianist Dawoon Chung, in a program that will feature trios by Bruch, Mozart, and Robert Schumann. The concert is free. Click [here](#) to watch the livestream.

McKelway, who is the Orchestra’s assistant principal clarinet, said that “Afendi and Wes have been friends for a long time. And Afendi introduced Dewoon to Wes, and now they are a family.” He added that the friends theme continues into the program.

“Clarinet lore has it that Mozart and clarinetist Anton Stadler were close friends and the ‘Kegelstatt Trio’ was played for the first time at a friend’s house with Stadler playing clarinet and Mozart playing viola. And Max Bruch wrote his *Eight Pieces* for his son Max Felix, who was a talented clarinetist.” He added that Schumann’s *Märchenerzählungen* (Fairy Tales) were first played at a private gathering with his wife Clara as the pianist.

“All three works have entered into the standard repertoire and they are all pieces the audience is going to love. This is the final concert of our 2023-24 season and we will be announcing next season’s line-up at the concert,” McKelway said.

Pianist Dawoon Chung provided further insight into the trio’s friendship and the music via email.

Afendi and I met in LA when we were both studying at Colburn and USC. We pretty much instantly became really good friends and he's been one of my closest friends for over ten years now. When Afendi got the job at TCO, I came to visit him and met Wes at their mutual friend's birthday party. I don't know what or how it happened, but Wes and I got married a few years later and now Wes and I live within a mile from Afendi!

How did this concert come about?

I think Dan knew about our special friendship and kindly asked if we would be interested in playing together. It was honestly one of the easiest questions to answer and I've been so looking forward to this concert ever since.

Why did you choose this program?

As you know, there aren't that many pieces for this specific combination of instruments.. We had read the Mozart and Schumann together for fun among other pieces during COVID and we absolutely loved them. We hadn't played the Bruch together but we knew it would go so well with Mozart and Schumann.

What do you enjoy about the Bruch and Mozart trios?

Mozart's "Kegelstatt" is such a delightful and lovely piece. There is a story that Mozart composed the piece while he was out bowling with his friends. According to Alfred Einstein, this piece was "a work of intimate friendship and love," written to be enjoyed by friends playing together at home. This piece really reminds me of our friendship and I am so grateful we get to play it together, it's been a true joy.

Bruch's Eight Pieces are purely magical and very sentimental. It took us a long time to decide which ones to play because we really love all of them.

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