

## ChamberFest 2025: a conversation with composer/pianist Roman Rabinovich

by Mike Telin



Ever since childhood Roman Rabinovich has been driven by a desire to create — whether that was sculpting from dirt and found objects, or improvising character pieces on the piano.

Although you may know him as an extraordinary pianist and ChamberFest Cleveland co-artistic director, you may not know him as an accomplished composer. That’s about to change.

On Thursday, June 26 at 7:30 pm in Mixon Hall, Rabinovich will make his ChamberFest debut as a composer/pianist with the U.S. premiere of his *Capriccio Errante for Violin and Piano*. The

program also includes Brahms’s *Two Songs for Voice, Viola and Piano*, John Adams’ *Hallelujah Junction*, and Felix Mendelssohn’s *Piano Trio No. 1*. Tickets are available [online](#).

“The piece is a set of five vignettes of contrasting moods,” Rabinovich said during a Zoom conversation. “I had a lot of fun writing it, and I can’t wait to play it with Itamar Zorman.”

Rabinovich noted that although performing and composing are often seen as distinct, they are both acts of creation. “In composing, there are no fixed instructions — each piece slowly reveals its unique internal logic. It’s often a long, uncertain process that teaches me as much about myself as it does about music.”

Rabinovich said that as a kid he was always composing. “At some point I stopped writing it down — but I still improvised a lot. Then, about ten years ago I decided to really give composing a try. So I’ve been writing quite a bit of piano music and some

chamber music as well, although I have to say that I find it much harder to compose than to perform.”

He pointed out that prior to the beginning of the 20th century most performers were also composers. “For some reason this divide started to happen — before that you were just a musician and it was assumed that you would do both. So in a way what I’m doing and what Michael Stephen Brown and Errollyn Wallen are doing is not anything special — we’re all just being musicians.”

As a pianist/composer Rabinovich believes that one discipline informs the other. “I think you become a better composer if you perform. You understand the instrument, you understand the physicality of playing and how to communicate with the audience. And, if a composer doesn’t perform, that link is missing.”

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