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BlueWater begins the season's "Musical Metamorphosis" at the Church of the Covenant (Oct. 3)

by Stephanie Manning



The theme for the BlueWater Chamber Orchestra's current season — "Musical Metamorphosis" — was realized in miniature during the opening concert on October 3.

Although individually titled "Awakening," the program at the Church of the Covenant played with the idea of metamorphosis more than anything else, both between and within its pieces. Led by music director Daniel Meyer, the concert weaved through Baroque, contemporary, and Indian classical traditions skillfully, though not always seamlessly.

The best example of metamorphosis contained within a piece arrived in the middle of the program, with Lukas Foss' *Renaissance Concerto* and flute soloist Anthony Trionfo — the undeniable star of the evening.

Trionfo, making his debut appearance in Cleveland, immediately made a good impression with his easy speaking manner and stellar playing. He described how the composer based each of the four movements on Baroque pieces, gradually increasing the contemporary demands placed on the flutist as the music continues.

The second movement, "Baroque Interlude," intriguingly divides the orchestra into contrasting lanes of counterpoint, which meshed and clashed in turn as if two CD recordings were playing at once. For Trionfo's part, he flexed his mastery of the fundamentals in the earlier movements — a beautiful, healthy tone and impeccable posture — before exploring extended techniques.

Pitch bends, flutter tonguing, and mixed meter came to the forefront in the third and fourth movements, with the final movement incorporating a blisteringly technical

cadenza. Trionfo then paced slowly away, as the music instructs, during the ending section.

The flutist returned to walking — and even skipping — down the aisles during his encore, Ian Clarke's *Zoom Tube*. Initially confused laughter about the various extended techniques turned into genuine joy as the piece continued. Trionfo proceeded to play his heart out, making what seemed like every noise the flute could possibly make, before blowing a kiss to the audience as he departed to boisterous applause.

The program then abruptly shifted from fun and laughter to sorrow and seriousness for Richard Strauss' *Metamorphosen*. Although this would have been the perfect opportunity for a 10-minute intermission, both for timing and mood reasons, the 80-minute concert forged ahead without one.

Metamorphosen, a somber meditation written at the end of World War II, is sometimes performed in a string septet arrangement — an option no doubt easier to put on than its original 23-instrument form. But BlueWater assembled all 23 string players for this performance, an instrumentation that gives the music a more grand and sweeping aura. Musicians and conductor remained focused throughout and played as one.

The evening began with something totally different — Reena Esmail's *Testament from Vishwas*, a fun piece accentuated with Indian classical traditions. A mysterious oboe solo from Martin Neubert opened things off before the music became grander, with dashes of percussion. Dylan Moffitt made for a constant and distinctive presence on the Indian drum called the *tabla*, his deft playing accentuated by some well-balanced microphone work that made sure he could be heard at all times.

Throughout, classical Indian melodies from the full string section intertwined with more Western sensibilities from the winds and brass — metamorphosing into a blend all Esmail's own.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com *October 15, 2026*

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