

## Eastern Music Festival Presents Third Virtual Concert

### EVENT INFORMATION

( Mon., Jul. 13, 2020 )

[Eastern Music Festival: Online Chamber Music Concert](#)

Free, donations accepted -- Online , <https://www.youtube.com/user/EMFGreensboro> -- 7:00 PM

By [Timothy H. Lindeman](#)

July 13, 2020 - Greensboro, NC:

Monday night, the third [Eastern Music Festival](#) "Experience Music From Home" virtual chamber music concert was streamed on [YouTube](#). All recordings were made in June of this year in the musicians' homes.

Music director [Gerard Schwarz](#) gave the opening remarks, touching on the importance of music as well as the commitment and wonderful humanity of the EMF musicians, the Board, and the community that supports EMF. He stated the program was a "happy concert," with the musicians "up-close and personal." Schwarz also provided a brief overview of the evening's music.

**The performance of the first piece, *Lament for Our Times*, was a world premiere, written by [Judith Saxton](#) and recorded in Winston-Salem, NC. The composition for trumpet (Saxton) and viola ([Diane Phoenix-Neal](#)) was written as Saxton's response to [George Floyd's murder](#). As she explained in her opening remarks, she wanted to lift up her voice by writing music and collaborating with Phoenix-Neal, who has been a colleague and friend for over 20 years. "Writing for our two voices [trumpet and viola], even though it may initially seem like that pairing might not work, finding a way forward, together, and sharing the collaborative process of allowing both of our voices to be heard was part of the process of this piece." Saxton's program notes on the piece are posted at the [EMF website](#). She concluded the verbal explanation with "I hope you get the message of the piece through the power of music." The first movement, "I Can't Breathe/S.O.S.," begins with a plaintive 30-second solo lament from the trumpet. Phoenix-Neal (who was wearing a mask) joined in with an insistent, unrelenting SOS Morse code cry for help on a single note on the viola; it does not dissuade the lament, which lasts for another minute. In the closing seconds, the viola cry loses its energy, slows, and then becomes silent.**

The second movement, "2'53"," starts with a "chant," with Saxton on flugelhorn "deepening the feeling of lament and futility" of the first movement before switching to muted trumpet, which plays "a long note representing the breath of Floyd." Over this long note, the viola presents haunting, searching, slowly unfolding melodies.

"Resolve," the third movement, incorporates two tunes, "America the Beautiful" and "Amazing Grace," snippets of which are traded back and forth between viola and trumpet at the outset. Later the two are cast in a major mode, imparting hope.

Throughout, both Saxton and Phoenix-Neal turned in committed and powerful performances – intonation and ensemble were excellent. And it was impossible to NOT "get the message."

Up next was the seven-minute Suite for Viola Alone (1930) by [Quincy Porter](#) (United States, 1897-1966), recorded in the home of [Ben Geller](#) (the violist) in Charlotte, NC. This is a rather somber affair, often brooding. The four movements are in a slow-fast-slow-fast arrangement. Geller's playing was first-rate, steadfast and energetic in the fast passages (especially the fireworks in the final movement) and introspective in the solemn sections. Rich and beautiful tones emanated from his instrument.

The Duo for Violin and Viola in G, K.423, by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (Austria, 1756-91), was presented in an arrangement for flute and viola, performed by [Jake Fridkis](#) (flute) and [Heesun Yang](#) (viola). While the viola is cast mostly in an accompaniment role, the instrument occasionally stepped into the spotlight. The married couple played the opening Allegro movement with terrific ensemble and appropriate dignity and grace. The performance was recorded in Fort Worth, TX. Another unusual pairing of instruments was found in the movement "Hopeful Revelry," from *Snapshots* by Patrick Schulz, written for violin and euphonium. Husband-and-wife team [Demondrae Thurman](#) (euphonium) and [Jenny Grégoire](#) (violin) launched into the exuberant opening, which shared the melodic material between the two. A slower middle section presents a solemn mood with lovely playing from both. The joyous opening material returns to round out the three-minutes, recorded in Tuscaloosa, AL.

The final piece was the Cello Concerto No. 22 in A minor, RV 419, by Antonio Vivaldi (Italy, 1678-1741), arranged for the Cary Family Orchestra by [Neal Cary](#). This version featured Neal as the soloist (and covering the violin 2 part), wife [Cathy Cary](#) playing violin, daughter Emma on cello, and son Alan on harpsichord (played on a synthesizer). Neal and Cathy are both EMF faculty members, and the other two are both alumni. The recording is from their home in Richmond, VA.

The opening Allegro had Neal out front as soloist with the other three musicians situated behind him in the recording. Neal's playing sparkled; intonation was spot on. The accompanying instruments kept the good energy flowing. Effective changes in dynamics added good contrast.

The violin sits out the second sober movement, and the texture was dominated by the two cellos. The fast finale featured Neal plucking as well as some furious fiddling from him and Cathy, resulting in a rousing conclusion.

This series of virtual concerts continues on July 20 and 27. See our calendar for details in due course.

[Share](#)[Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)[Email](#)