

The Chamber Project celebrates its 10th season with St. Louis-centric programming

Members combine a very old art form with modern sensibilities.

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A decade is a long, long time for a small arts group to survive. So how is it that the [Chamber Project](#) has flourished for 10 years? Partly, it's how its members have combined a very old art form with modern sensibilities. They hold "Very Open Rehearsals," inviting audiences into their practice space,

asking for feedback in real time. They play new music by young composers. Tickets are \$15 on the high end. And they ask audiences: What music do *you* want to hear?

That generosity infuses the Chamber Project's 2017–2018 season, which is dedicated to local musicians, local music, and local audiences. “Everything in season 10 is tying in to St. Louis somehow,” says co-founder Dana Hotle. “Of course, in St. Louis, you have to have the Arch in there. It was also the 70th anniversary of the design competition, so we commissioned a local composer, Zachary Cairns, to write a piece about the Arch.”

That composition, “Passing Through,” written for saxophone and string trio, debuts this month at The Chapel as part of *Blueprint*, an architecture-themed show that also includes Mozart's Flute Quartet in D Major; Paul Hayden's “Cherubs on the Ceiling” (an audience favorite from earlier seasons); Caroline Shaw's “In Manus Tuas,” a piece for solo cello that recaptures a choral performance in an ancient church; and Andrew Norman's “Light Screens,” inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's stained-glass windows. Chamber Project saxophone player Adrienne Honnold is flying back to the States (she lives in Belgium now) to perform as part of the world premiere of Cairns' piece.

If you've never been to a Chamber Project concert before, know that the experience is far livelier than the traditional classical music performance.

“Our audiences like being challenged a little bit, but they also like having some old favorites,” Hotle says, “so we mix things up. We love this music, and we love the art form, but we don't always love the stigma and traditions around classical music that are too formal, maybe—like, you've got to be quiet, and the musicians are over there, and your audience is way over here. We got rid of most of that. Every now and then, we have a bigger venue where it's a little more traditional, but most of the time we're in the lap of our audience and getting to know them. We keep it really informal. We talk between pieces. We tell the stories behind the music, to give people some context to hang it on. And people love it.”

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Three other season highlights

Origins: February 11, Schlafly Tap Room. The Chamber Project celebrates its 10th birthday with a program of musical best-loveds from the past decade (and yes, cake, too).

ECO: April 20, 560 Music Center; April 21, Augusta Plein Air Art Festival. In honor of Earth Day, they play music by Ravel, Mahler, and Schubert, plus a new work from young American composer (and Wash. U. alumna) Katherine Bodor.

Choice: June 2, The Chapel. After gathering ballots slipped into the programs throughout the season, the Chamber Project plays a program chosen by the audience.

For more information, visit chamberprojectstl.org.

Stefene Russell

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