

VC INTERVIEW | Newly-Formed Washington Arts Ensemble's 'Dynamic' Series

The first concert of the new Dynamic Chamber Music Series will be streamed on The Violin Channel on September 17 at 7:30 PM.

September 17, 2021



The Violin Channel recently discussed the launch of the Dynamic Chamber Music Series in Washington D.C. by the **Washington Arts Ensemble** with Co-Founders **Natalia Kazaryan** and **Christopher Schmitt**.

Tell us about the newly-formed Washington Arts Ensemble? How did you come together and what would you say is your collective vision?

Christopher: By chance, Natalia and I reconnected in D.C. years after studying at Juilliard together. Soon we discovered a mutual aspiration to found a new type of chamber music series that would bring new audiences to classical music and create a unique concert experience that emphasizes the connection between artist and audience.

The goal is to enrich and reinvigorate the classical music scene in our nation's capital, not just revive the same way things were done pre-pandemic. We are challenging norms with new and diverse programming of underrepresented composers, and a cultivation of a vibrant audience of lifelong classical music lovers alongside those just hearing it for the first time. As our series grows, we plan to offer many more concerts in varying settings and share our rehearsal process, excerpts of performances, and interviews on [washingtonartsensemble.org](https://www.washingtonartsensemble.org).

What unique musical experience do you want to create for your audience?

Natalia: We want our audience to come away from our events feeling elated. Not only will they experience music-making at the highest level, but they will also connect with our artists in a way that has not been done before. Rather than briefly greeting the musician after the performance, they will be able to meet and really get to know our musicians before, during, and after the concerts over wine and hors d'oeuvres.

We want our audience to feel like they are a core part of the cultural community, making a personal connection with the artists as well as fellow listeners that lasts and makes them look forward to seeing each other at the next event.

Reading about your ensemble, there seems to be a positive focus on lowering the physical and metaphorical boundaries between your musicians, your audiences, and your wider community. Why is this important and can you tell us more about this greater pursuit?

Christopher: Classical music is often seen as inaccessible to newcomers, with high barriers to entry to understanding the music and norms of concertgoing. Many believe classical music is only for high society types, but we believe it should feel accessible to anyone.

One way we hope to achieve this is by performing in nontraditional venues that are more familiar to people who do not yet attend classical concerts, and another is that the increased interaction with the musicians helps the audience perceive the artists as people like them, members of the same community they can feel a connection towards.

To celebrate your inaugural concert, you will stream the first in the series here on The Violin Channel this evening. Can you tell us what your in-person and online audience can expect?

Natalia: Our concerts are designed to be experienced in person. There is a community and fellowship aspect, as well as the culinary experience that we emphasize. We meet, connect over a glass of wine and food, and experience live music together.

However, for many people, this is not an option. Whether they are located in D.C. but prefer to stay home or they are tuning in from out of town, we

want to bring them in by giving them a window into our community. We are partnering with a professional video/live-streaming team, and are committed to bringing our remote listeners the highest quality musical experience, too.

When programming and putting this season together, what would you say were your core idea?

Natalia: A balanced, diverse program is extremely important to us, but only without compromising on the quality of music. In our fall season, we are programming beloved works by older masters, great works by women, lesser-performed gems of the past, contemporary works, and works by POC.

What are your plans for the ensemble? Where would you love to see yourselves expand with this concept?

Natalia: As the series grows, we hope to offer many more informal performances and gatherings, in addition to the larger concerts. While continuing our partnership with the Arts Club, we want to curate musical experiences in unusual venues in and around D.C., in a way that celebrates culture, creativity, and building a community that helps revitalize the hard-hit performing arts scene in D.C. and eventually beyond.

Tell us about the beautiful Arts Club of Washington, where your inaugural series is taking place. How does this opulent historical venue add to your mission to cultivate an unforgettable classical experience?

Natalia: The Arts Club is a warm, inviting space. Its rich history, beautiful architecture, and frequently changing art collections is a fitting venue for our series. It's a place that celebrates history, creativity, and a sense of community. Fun fact: ever since it founding in 1916, they have welcomed both women and men to join.

What other concerts do you have programmed in the series, and if audiences would like to attend or tune in online, how can they go about doing this?

Christopher: We have three additional concerts programmed in D.C. with more on the way, all of which listeners can buy tickets to attend in-person or stream online. Tickets and livestream information is on our website, which is also the best place to check for future concerts and other content.

Tune into **The Violin Channel's Facebook page** at 7:30 PM EST to watch the concert live.

