

Introduction

The DC Classical Chamber Music Players' Meetup group is a collection of classical musicians interested in playing chamber music for fun. While good music is the goal, the emphasis here is on fun and enjoyment! As of January 27, 2012, we have 204 members, covering 14+ different instruments, at varying skill levels. All musicians of all instruments, at all skill levels **except beginner**, are welcome to join. There's no obligation to play at any given gathering, but you might quickly find yourself tempted to join in. Many who were reticent to attend, or thought they might just "sit and listen", found themselves playing at their first meeting. Nerves and feeling intimidated can be left at the doorstep. We're a collegial, congenial, non-competitive group; *criticism and attitude are not welcome*; everyone's best effort is gratefully appreciated by all.

Questions?

Before peppering the organizer with questions about how the group works and how you can participate, please read this "About Us" document in its entirety and explore the website thoroughly. Yes, it's a bit long, but if you e-mail me a question and the answer is in here, I'm just going to point you to this doc... You can skim for major section headings, which are underlined.

Navigating the Website

The blue bar near the top of the home page, just beneath the group title, offers 7 options or sub-menus: Home, Members, Sponsors, Photos, Pages, Discussions, and More. Buried underneath these is some important information you'll need to access:

Members

Your Profile – Edit your personal info (see below for privacy tips)

All Members – Members' intro blurbs, photos, and e-mail gateway

Photos – Albums of collected photos from various events

Discussions

Message Board – Typical bulletin board, organized by subject/topic

Mailing List – Archive of all broadcast e-mails (good background)

More

Files – VERY IMPORTANT ONE, see more below on this.

An important note about the home page's display of upcoming events, it shows only the next upcoming 5 events. We often have many events scheduled months in advance. You'll need to scroll to the bottom of the upcoming event list and hit

"More Meetups." The next 5 will then be displayed. It may take multiple hits on "More Meetups" to exhaust the list and see all your options. There's also an alternate view of upcoming events by calendar (2 months at a time), just above the first upcoming event listing.

Types of Meetings and What to Expect

There are no fees for individual meetings. Our meetups generally fall into one of three formats:

Open Meetups: Usually held in a member's home, maximum attendance varies based on the host, lasting 2 to 4 hours. New and old members alike meet and greet. No obligation for any individual to play. Music for play or sight-reading will be provided in advance for the available instrumentalists, if possible. Food and beverages sometimes served at the option of the host; guest offerings always welcome. These are the best format meetings for new members to get introduced to the group and we recommend you attend one or two before attempting to build your own ensemble.

Note that for gatherings with a larger number of attendees, it will not be possible for everyone to play in every piece. In such cases, a round robin format is usually taken, allowing, as much as possible, everyone equal opportunities at play. Those not playing in a given piece at a given time may relax and quietly listen to your fellow musicians. (Of course, some venues have multiple rooms where multiple concurrent ensembles may play, which may mitigate this somewhat.)

Some open meetups may focus on a particular type of ensemble or piece(s) of music for the event. If so, please be mindful of the composition of the ensemble (you can see the program and the list of people who've already RSVP'ed) and RSVP only if appropriate. It may be necessary for hosts to decline "yes" RSVP's if the respondent plays an instrument that doesn't fit the meeting program.

Closed Rehearsals: As members meet and join together to form ensembles and select pieces to work on, they will set their own agendas and times for getting together to rehearse. These may be off-line to the meetup calendar or may appear on a restricted/informational basis only. While things remain casual, folks get a little more intense about the quality of music production.

Chamber Orchestra: Conductor Rob Goeke has stepped up to sponsor an effort to build a Chamber Orchestra. If you are interested, please check the "Calendar" section of the website to see about prior and upcoming meetings. These events are held at a church in NW DC, convenient to Metro and with street parking generally available for the days rehearsals are held. Please direct all inquiries about the Chamber Orchestra to Rob. You can contact sponsor Rob by clicking on his name or picture and selecting the "send email" option. Please note that while your membership dues help defray some of the contributions to the church for use

of their space, it doesn't amount to much and supplemental small contributions are requested at each rehearsal.

Feedback: After meetups, you are encouraged to respond to the Meetup generated request for feedback. This really helps out the hosts and the organizers to maintain and improve the quality of events in our meetup group. Consider throwing in an overall group review as well. These are great PR for potential new members and helps grow the group.

Event Locations: We have roughly 20 host locations, scattered throughout the metro area, from Reston, VA to Columbia, MD – some convenient to Metro, some not. Availability of pianos (or other keyboard instruments) at each meetup location is noted in the calendar event posting. Members are invited to suggest locations and/or open their homes for gatherings.

Meeting Etiquette, Food & Drink

As the opening "Welcome" blurb states, while good music is the goal, the emphasis is on fun and enjoyment. This certainly holds true for our open meetups. Things may get a little more intense in the closed rehearsals, still.... Keep it congenial, collegial and **non-competitive**, please. Sure, some folks are better at their instruments than others, but that just adds to the variety. Constructive comments and guidance are always welcome – some of our more advanced or experienced players are professionals and teachers. Criticism, condescension or attitude are not welcome. We are all very relaxed. Come casual, and be prepared to meet some good folks. Play at any given meeting is not required (unless a closed rehearsal) but it is encouraged. We find a lot to laugh about too – mostly ourselves and our musical foibles and gaffes. Serving food and drink is at the option of the host. Offerings by guests are always welcome (for general consumption by the group, no host gifts, please). Meeting notices will generally indicate if food or drink will be served.

Hosting (yes, most everyone can!)

Any member of the group is welcome to host; no experience required. If you have room for 3 or more musicians in your home, you are eligible. These events are very casual and little or no preparation is needed, other than having the space and the chairs. We especially need hosts with pianos or harpsichords and/or homes with multiple rooms that can support concurrent ensembles. Available parking and/or Metro accessibility are big pluses. You decide what and when you want to host – weekends work best, but weeknights can work too – avoid holidays. Please contact your meetup organizer if you wish to host.

Selecting Music for Your Event

There are two ways of approaching the music program for a given open event. The host can choose one or more pieces that they are interested in sponsoring and then solicit the appropriate musicians to complete the ensemble. Just as commonly though, open events have a maximum number of attendees, and as various folks respond, one or more possible common instrument configurations start to take shape. Music can then be selected to suit the possible ensembles. There are a wide variety of sources of public domain music available (see more below at Files) from which to select. As mentioned previously, if you need assistance, your organizer or one of the more experienced members of the meetup group may be able to provide assistance.

The FILES Section

Courtesy of a meetup design change, an important section called Files got buried under the More tab. You need to check this out. There's quite a collection of electronic scores (PDF) for a wide variety of chamber music. BUT, you will only be able to see these files if you are **logged in** to Meetup. These files are hidden from view for non-members of our group.

There are presently more than 6 page loads of listings, so it can take some time to browse the options. It is best to sort on the "Name/Description" field (simply click on that field in the column header). Files will then be sorted by composer name, opus (Deutsch, Kochel, what-have-you) number if available, title, item, and instrument part. (Some parts are wrapped up in a consolidated file of all parts). Either the collection of instrument parts, or the description for a consolidated file, tells you the ensemble mix.

Members are welcome to upload files (in PDF format only), but please follow, as best you can, the file naming convention; and make sure the file isn't already there.

Also in the Files section is a document called "Chamber Music Inventory," which when up to date (and it isn't, apologies), gives you a short, more readable listing of all the scores in the Files section AND a "Music Resources" document which includes collections of hyperlinks for on-line free or cheap electronic scores, local music store and music school resources, and ways to get deeply discounted tickets to concerts at the Kennedy Center and more...

Forming an Ensemble

The organizer is unable to help match up musicians to form ensembles for a given event or for a longer term group. As you might fathom from this document alone, the amount of questions and requests for support the organizer fields are substantial; and that doesn't cover all the regular organizing support and chamber music play. This meetup group exists to help you to identify musicians with whom

to form ensembles. First, and most tried and true, is to attend Open Meetups and the Chamber Orchestra to meet other musicians whom you can approach about ensembles. Next is the Message Board (see below) where you can solicit for ensembles – there are several examples already out there. Lastly is by sending a broadcast request to the entire Meetup Group. See [Contacting Members of the Group or the Entire Group](#) below on how to do that.

And cellist Julie reminded me of another technique which has been very effective for her. Takes a bit of effort, but it is worth it. Go to "All Members" type the instrument you are looking for in the search box, you will get a pop up of all profiles for that instrument. Review profiles until you find someone of the appropriate skill level you are looking for and then send them an email through the system.

The Message Board

Under the Discussions tab is the Message Board – a standard internet type bulletin board. Here, folks can post questions to the group, solicit for ensembles, post information, announce events, etc. Please note that, to date, this area of the website has gotten very little traffic and has not been an effective means of forming ensembles.

Contacting Members of the Group or the Entire Group

Meetup provides a protected mail gateway through which members can contact other members of meetup groups. Either on the Members page(s), or anywhere you see a member's name, you can click on their name. This will bring up their profile. There is a "send e-mail" option you can select to send an e-mail directly to them. Folks contacting you this way cannot see your private e-mail information, meetup hides that info. However, if you choose to contact someone this way, your private e-mail is revealed to the recipient, and if they choose to respond, then their private e-mail will be exposed as well.

If you have a general question, a concert announcement, ticket offers, performance opportunities, etc. for the entire group, you may address your mail to DC-Chamber-Music-List@Meetup.com. (We welcome and encourage news items about such opportunities – our goal is to foster interest in chamber music and performing arts, in general.) This goes to a listserv moderated by your organizer. The organizer can only choose to release the e-mail as is, or decline it. Personal e-mails and inappropriate content will be deleted without release. The organizer cannot edit the content, so please word the e-mail as though it were addressed to the entire group, not the organizer.

Privacy Issues

As privacy concerns go, Meetup is one of the better social media sites, but it is not without its concerns. By design, 95% of this Meetup group's content is publicly viewable, not only by non-members of our group, but non-members of Meetup. It serves as good advertising and PR and grows membership. Other than the previously mentioned electronic scores in the Files section, what is NOT publicly viewable are member addresses or phone numbers associated with event venues, nor personal e-mail addresses. Your organizer respects your privacy and never reveals your private contact info unless you expressly authorize it. Still, a few words to the wise:

- **NEVER** post your phone number, address, e-mail address or other private info to an event page comment. This is publicly viewable information. Web crawlers will immediately snap up this information and it will be cross-indexed a million times over in the wider web world. You'll be getting SPAM, possibly malicious, in no time; or sales calls, or worse.
- The above recommendation applies when mailing to the entire group through DC-Chamber-Music-List. An archive of all these e-mails is publicly viewable.
- Same thing holds true for your personal profile. There also are a couple of other privacy options here. You can choose not to reveal what other meetup groups of which you are a member and you can choose not to show your areas of interest. Do as you wish with these, but know that greetings posted to your profile by others can't be "turned off" and may reveal information you have otherwise thought was protected. You can delete these greetings.
- **For Event Hosts and Venue Information**... The standard way of dealing with this is that venues are marked private homes and info is only available to members of our meetup group (all members, not just those RSVP'ing to a given event at that venue). This has worked fairly successfully with no concerns to date. One of the reasons the organizer has reserved the event/venue creation ability to himself is that Meetup is not friendly about marking venues private; it has to be done "just so" or it leaks out in the wider Meetup as a shared venue for all Meetup groups, anyhow...
- For members who wish to keep their home address and phone contact info **even more private**, the option exists for event hosts to e-mail their contact info ONLY to the event attendees prior to their meetup. This can be done by the host on the event webpage using the "E-mail attendees" options above the RSVP list.
- And please see the preceding section on contacting other members of the group about the ways in which your personal e-mail may be revealed if you choose to use the e-mail gateway.

Maintaining Your Membership

This meetup group is for musicians only. Active participation is expected. There is an annual membership fee of \$10. While a nominal membership fee helps promote participation, it is primarily to defray expenses. Keeping current on membership fees is the first element of maintaining membership. Membership fees cover the following:

- \$180 per year for the Meetup site.
- E-scores stored in the Files section of the website, which is populated with a sizable number of scores for which a small fee was paid (generally \$4 to \$6) to acquire them from various e-score sites (IMSLP is great, but not all their scores are especially readable).
- Costs for hard-copy music which is still under copyright, which is used for both closed and open meetups. These often cost a pretty penny (\$25 to \$75). They are shared privately and legally (under limited copying permissions for personal reuse) with members of the ensembles or meetups.
- Underwriting donations to the church which hosts our chamber orchestra rehearsals. While the rehearsal room has nominally been offered for free, this is a church, like many others, that is financially challenged, and some base contribution per rehearsal for expenses and heating costs is appropriate. This will foster good will with the church, which may provide concert opportunities.
- Other, minimal, general overhead and administrative costs.

There's one other key to maintaining your membership, and that is showing up to events you have RSVP'ed "Yes" to. "No Shows" can put an awful dent in an event resulting in 1) singularly unsatisfying play of a piece absent a critical instrument, 2) collapse of one or more of the programmed pieces, and 3) sometimes collapse of an entire event. With rare exception, two "no-shows" will result in the removal of a member. Late notice is better than none. You can 1) change your RSVP or 2) e-mail or call the host – this information is available through either the venue listing or via private e-mail from the host. Cancellations less than two hours before the event usually count as "no shows." Event reminders go out a week before and one day before each event; if you have a change in plans, change your RSVP accordingly as soon as possible. Exceptions to this rule, for certain circumstances, may be made at the sole discretion of the organizer.

N.B.: For those more interested in just "listening in" on the group's activities, it is not necessary to be a member to track our activities – 95% of the website is viewable by the non-member public. If/when your time/interest permit active participation is the time to request membership, not before.

Make-up of DC Chamber Music Players (as of January 27, 2012)

There are 204 members on the rolls of DC-Chamber-Music-Players, at least 60% of whom have actively participated in at least one meeting. Many of them are too new to have had an opportunity to join in a meeting. Skill levels on a scale of 1 to 5 vary from a 2+ to a 5, where 1 = beginner, 2 = basic, 3 = intermediate, 4 = advanced, and 5 = professional. Many musicians play more than one instrument, but here is the current distribution of principal instruments:

Piano:	36
Violin:	61
Viola:	17
Cello:	27
Double Bass:	2
Clarinet:	16
Flute:	16
Oboe:	5
Guitar:	2
Bassoon:	6
French Horn:	8
Other:	8

Other instruments, second instruments and skillsets represented are harpsichord, organ, voice, percussion, conducting, harp, accordion, piccolo, recorder (various registers), trumpet, saxophone, tuba, "various brass," and who knows what else.

N.B.: There are in excess of 300 former members of our meetup group. Some were removed for inactivity, but many of those former members were very active – they were college and university students, interns, and professionals who've now left the area. We've got a very lively and active membership!

Final Note re Mailing List and Receiving E-mails

In your personal profile, please elect to stay on the mailing list (either per item, or by periodic digest). If you're not on the mailing list, you'll miss all announcements (events, discount ticket offers, etc.). E-mail is the primary form of communication for this meetup group!

Please add DC-Chamber-Music-announce@meetup.com to your address book too (or trust the meetup.com domain). This will prevent any spam or junk mail filters from sidelining announcements (it's happened to many folks). Wouldn't want you to discover weeks later an event you would like to have attended.