

Commentary

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BLAKE NELSON/COURTESY PHOTO

The Aspen Music Festival and School and Theatre Aspen collaborated once again this summer, this time to present *Fiddler on the Roof* in Concert starring Shuler Hensley with musical direction by Andy Einhorn to a completely sold-out tent.

75th season of Aspen Music Festival and School concludes

Yesterday we concluded, with much grandeur and good feeling, the 75th anniversary season of the Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS). The stage was packed with young artists from all over the world, their brilliant teachers, and some of the leading guest artists in our profession. Collectively, on that one stage, they represented literally hundreds of years of experience in Aspen.

It was a season we opened in June with the delicacy and fire of a solo piano recital by our alumna 17-year-old Harmony Zhu — a student in Aspen for 9 years, now at her own moment of crossing over from student to professional.

These concerts, and the hundreds of others in between them, captured the essence of the AMFS and of our anniversary season theme of “Becoming Who You Are.” It is a phrase derived from Albert Schweitzer’s keynote address to the first summer of music and ideas in Aspen in 1949.

Discovery, connection, and growth of body, mind, and spirit indeed were the founding ideals of Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke. They dreamed that sharing art and ideas up in the mountains,

away from distraction, could make us better people and, in that, make a better world — and they were right.

Seventy-five years in, this commitment to growth remains, and education is absolutely central to everything we do. There was not an hour of the day this summer that young artists, their teachers, or audience members weren’t learning and deepening through music, and often all three of them doing so at once.

Anniversaries offer the opportunity to look back but also to look forward, as we were enthusiastically encouraged to do by our new board chair Alexandra Munroe. She “walked her talk,” not only presiding elegantly over our 75th anniversary benefit but cheering loudly along with the children at our Family Concert on a beautiful mid-summer Saturday morning.

Our commitment to the community has grown each year, with thousands of lessons given to local schoolchildren and dozens of free events, now including a mariachi concert and fiesta.

Increasingly, partnerships expand us beyond where we could go ourselves: We opened our season with Aspen’s second-annual Pride Party, with more



DIEGO REDEL/COURTESY PHOTO

Starry AMFS alumni Joshua Bell violin and Steven Isserlis cello perform with the Aspen Festival Orchestra on a packed Sunday in the tent.

community partners and more rainbows on cheeks and in hearts than ever. With Theatre Aspen, we revived the timeless story of “Fiddler on the Roof”; with the Aspen Art Museum, we created exciting new work shared atop our iconic Aspen Mountain; with ACES, we celebrated birdsong; with the Wheeler, we highlighted the anniversary of a shared space; and with the Institute, we shared voices and ideas.

All the while, our board leadership challenged us to keep reaching, dream big, and find growth. And in that, they inspired fundraising to new heights and fortified projects and programs that brought the AMFS to the

global stage and shared our music and our story on five continents.

It has been an extraordinary seventy-five years, and I am meticulous about using “extraordinary” in its true sense. But history is also a living thing. The AMFS’ music, magic, hopes, and heart are part of us all.

We express our deepest gratitude to the amazing musicians, supporters, and community who came together in the anniversary season with both joy and purpose. It is a privilege to have celebrated together.

Alan Fletcher is president and CEO of the Aspen Music Festival and School.



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