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ASPEN MUSIC FESTIVAL AND SCHOOL ANNOUNCES 2025 SUMMER SEASON

Concerning the Spiritual in Art

July 2 – August 24, 2025

ASPEN, COLORADO — The Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS) celebrates 76 years of performance and mentorship this summer, when more than 450 young artists from around the world come together, with artist-faculty and guests from the foremost orchestras and music schools nationwide, for almost 200 public events.



Titled “Concerning the Spiritual in Art,” the 2025 Festival explores this theme

through works including *Siddhartha*, *She*—an AMFS co-commission from Christopher Theofanidis and Melissa Studdard; this immersive new music drama receives its world premiere under the baton of Music Director Robert Spano. Other festival highlights include a fully staged production of Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*, marking Co-Artistic Director Renée Fleming’s directorial debut; an Opera Benefit headlined by mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard; the U.S. premiere of Thomas Adès’s *The Origin of the Harp*, another AMFS co-commission; world premieres of new AMFS co-commissions from Samuel Adams, Christopher Stark, and Max Vinetz; performances of recent AMFS co-commissions from Jasmine Barnes, Anna Clyne, Avner Dorman, Edgar Meyer, and Tyshawn Sorey; and a celebration of this year’s Boulez centennial with conductor David Robertson, a leading exponent of the composer’s work.

In Festival debuts, **Davóne Tines** performs a wide-ranging solo recital program, **Pierre-Laurent Aimard** plays site-specific Messiaen, **Patricia Kopatchinskaja** duets with **Sol Gabetta**, **Enrique Mazzola** leads *La bohème* in concert, and **Stéphane Denève** conducts Richard Strauss. **Lang Lang** and **Patti LuPone** both give mainstage solo recitals; other returning favorites include conductors **Vasily Petrenko** and **Xian Zhang**, recitalists **Conrad Tao** and **Alexander Malofeev**, and orchestral soloists **Yefim Bronfman**, **Sheku Kanneh-Mason**, **Gil Shaham**, and **Alisa Weilerstein**. As in previous seasons, these events will all be presented over eight weeks in Aspen's spectacular mountain setting (July 2–Aug 24).

“Concerning the Spiritual in Art” draws inspiration from Kandinsky’s book of that name. AMFS President and CEO **Alan Fletcher** explains:

“Kandinsky is not interested in organized religion so much as what is called, in a beautiful word, the ‘numinous’ – experiences and artworks that engage one’s sense of something greater than one’s self, beyond the everyday and expected. This inspired us in programming a summer of music embodying wonder, mystery, contemplation, inwardness, and ecstasy. We include works with explicit spirituality, like Handel’s *Messiah* and Theofanidis and Studdard’s *Siddhartha, She*, but we also invite listeners to find, in works as different as Holst’s *The Planets* and Mozart’s ‘Paris’ symphony, something that pulls them from the moment into a transcendent world.”

Currently celebrating his 20th anniversary at the helm of the AMFS, Fletcher is the honoree of this season’s benefit, “A Feast of Music” (Aug 11).

World premiere production of *Siddhartha, She*

Aspen boasts a long history of fostering new music through commissions, premieres, and performances. A centerpiece of this summer’s programming is the **world premiere** of *Siddhartha, She*, a ritual music drama in seven tableaux by composer-in-residence **Christopher Theofanidis** and his longtime collaborator, librettist **Melissa Studdard**. An **AMFS co-commission**, their work offers an original, gender-swapping take on Hermann Hesse’s allegorical 1922 novel about the search for enlightenment. Theofanidis’s “**lyrical, exotic soul-searching**” music (*The New York Times*) has twice been nominated for Grammy Awards. He explains:

“The creative team has felt this work in a deeply personal and transformative way. The character of *Siddhartha* represents each of our own personal journeys in art and spirit over a lifetime. The origin of this piece goes back 20 years for me and involves my closest friends and lifetime collaborators.”

These key associates include **Robert Spano**, a prime mover behind the project, who conducts its first performance. Anchored by the **Aspen Festival Orchestra** and the Denver-based **Kantorei** chorus with its artistic director **Joel Rinsema**, this will star sopranos **Caitlin Lynch** and **Maya Kherani**, mezzo-sopranos **Kelley O’Connor** and **Tamara Mumford**, countertenor **Key’mon Murrah**, and baritone **Nmon Ford** in an immersive production by multidisciplinary artist **Anne Patterson**, featuring video projections by **Adam Larsen**, sound design by **Patrick Harlin**, and scenic installations by the director herself (Aug 2).

Renée Fleming’s Directorial Debut and Other Operatic Highlights

Now in her fifth season as co-artistic director of the **Aspen Opera Theater & VocalARTS (AOTVA)** program, superstar soprano **Renée Fleming** steps into a new role this summer, when she makes her **directorial debut** with a fully staged new production of *Così fan tutte*. Featuring AOTVA students under the baton of Co-

Artistic Director **Patrick Summers** at the **Wheeler Opera House**, this reimagines Mozart's comedy in a 1980s high school setting (**July 21, 23, & 26**). Fleming says:

“*Così fan tutte* poses dramaturgical challenges today, beginning with the title, ‘All Women Are Like That.’ However, universal truths remain, and Mozart’s glorious music guides the way. I’ll be presenting his opera as a coming-of-age scenario in Yarmouth, MA, at the beginning of the wrestling craze.”

An AMFS student in the 1980s, Fleming remembers the decade fondly; it was in Aspen’s 1984 production of *Le nozze di Figaro* that she gave her first performance as Countess Almaviva, the vehicle for her subsequent Metropolitan Opera debut.

Other operatic highlights include a festive **Opera Benefit** featuring three-time Grammy-winning mezzo-soprano **Isabel Leonard** (**July 8**), who then returns for a solo recital (**July 12**). Bass-baritone **Davóne Tines**, whom *The New Yorker’s* Alex Ross credits with “changing what it means to be a classical singer,” also appears in recital, making his **AMFS debut** with a thoughtfully curated solo program featuring composers from J.S. Bach to Tyshawn Sorey and Caroline Shaw (**Aug 9**).

In addition to weekly masterclasses, spotlight recitals, and other performance opportunities, this summer’s AOTVA students will participate in *Siddhartha*, *She*; *Così fan tutte*; the Festival’s first complete concert performance of Handel’s *Messiah*, given by Chicago’s **Music of the Baroque** chorus, the **Aspen Festival Ensemble**, and **Jane Glover** in the acoustically perfect **Harris Concert Hall** (**Aug 6**); and a semi-staged production of Puccini’s *La bohème* in the Klein Music Tent, with tenor **Matthew Polenzani** as Rodolfo under the leadership of conductor **Enrique Mazzola** in his Festival debut (**Aug 19**).

Boulez at 100 with David Robertson; Messiaen with Pierre-Laurent Aimard

This year marks the centennial of **Pierre Boulez**, and **David Robertson** returns to conduct the **Aspen Contemporary Ensemble** in an evening devoted to the great French avant-gardist, who until his death was a close friend and mentor of Robertson’s. Indeed, it was the American conductor who originally led the world premieres of two of the evening’s featured works: Boulez’s *sur Incises* and *...explosante-fixe...* (**July 9**).

Another great interpreter of the modernist canon is Grammy-winning French pianist **Pierre-Laurent Aimard**, who makes his **AMFS debut** with a recital of **Boulez**, **Schoenberg**, **Messiaen**, and **Debussy** (**July 30**). Aimard then joins the **Aspen Contemporary Ensemble** for a performance of *Couleurs de la Cité Céleste* by **Messiaen** (**Aug 2**), one of several 20th-century masters with whom the pianist enjoyed especially close personal and professional ties. As a former student of Yvonne Loriod, the late French composer’s wife, Aimard is “a peerless interpreter of Messiaen’s music” (*Boston Globe*). He completes his Aspen residency with one of his signature, site-specific open-air performances of Messiaen’s birdsong-inspired magnum opus, *Catalogue d’oiseaux* (**Aug 4**).

Co-Commissions from Adès, Clyne, Barnes, Dorman, Sorey, and More

The **Aspen Chamber Symphony** performs three major **AMFS co-commissions**, when conductor **Marie Jacquot** makes her **Aspen debut** with the U.S. premiere of *The Origin of the Harp*, a tone poem by contemporary music titan **Thomas Adès** (**July 5**); **Jeremy Denk** performs *ATLAS*, a piano concerto by Grammy nominee **Anna Clyne**, under the baton of **Jane Glover** (**Aug 8**); and AMFS assistant conductor **Paul-Boris Kertsman** leads *KINSFOLKNEM* by Emmy-winner **Jasmine Barnes**, whose concertante work

showcases the talents of four of the nation's leading Black woodwind principals: **Anthony McGill** and AMSF artist-faculty members **Andrew Brady**, **Demarre McGill**, and **Titus Underwood** (July 11).

Six more **AMFS co-commissions** will be heard at Aspen this summer. **Gil Shaham** and **Adele Anthony** are the soloists in a new double concerto for violins and strings by International Opera Award finalist **Avner Dorman** (July 29); the **American Brass Quintet** performs a new piece by Pulitzer Prize laureate **Tyshawn Sorey** (July 23); and AMFS artist-faculty bassist **Edgar Meyer** performs his own new string trio with violinist **Tessa Lark** and cellist **Joshua Roman** (July 7). The remaining three co-commissions will all receive **world premieres**: the **Aspen Contemporary Ensemble** premieres new compositions by Guggenheim Fellows **Samuel Adams** (Aug 16) and **Christopher Stark** (Aug 23), and the **Aspen Conducting Academy** premieres a new piece by **Max Vinetz**, winner of Aspen's 2024 Druckman Prize (Aug 13).

Other new music highlights include performances of **Matthias Pintscher's** *Assonanza* by the **Aspen Chamber Symphony**, with **Blake Pouliot** as violin soloist under the composer's leadership (July 25); of **Adès's** *Inferno Suite* by **Robert Spano** and the **Aspen Festival Orchestra** (July 6; see below); of "Motherboxx Connection" from **Carlos Simon's** *Tales: A Folklore Symphony* by the **Aspen Conducting Academy** (July 9); of **Stephen Hartke's** *Ship of State* by **Timothy Weiss** and the **Aspen Contemporary Ensemble**, with **Xak Bjerken** on piano (Aug 9); and of Grammy winner **Jessie Montgomery's** *Hymn for Everyone* by **Xian Zhang** and the **Aspen Festival Orchestra** (July 27).



As in previous seasons, fresh music is interwoven throughout the Aspen summer. Led by **Timothy Weiss**, the **Aspen Contemporary Ensemble** performs works by prominent living composers and classics of the 20th century every Saturday, and new works are programmed on virtually every orchestral and recital program. Composition students study at Aspen's **Schumann Center for Composition Studies** with **Theofanidis**, now in his twelfth season as its Co-Director, and with **Fletcher**, **Spano**, and visiting composers. Those in attendance this

summer include **Nico Muhly**, as well as **Adams**, **Barnes**, **Clyne**, **Dorman**, **Hartke**, **Meyer**, **Montgomery**, **Sorey**, **Stark**, and **Vinetz**.

Aspen Festival Orchestra and Aspen Chamber Symphony

The **Aspen Festival Orchestra** performs eight programs this summer. AMFS Music Director **Robert Spano** leads its opening and closing concerts. After leaning into the season's spiritual theme, with a program featuring both the "Inferno Suite" from **Thomas Adès's** *Dante* and the "Good Friday Spell" from **Wagner's** *Parsifal* (July 6), **Spano** draws the summer to a close with an uplifting pairing of **Holst's** *The Planets* and **Beethoven's** "Emperor" Concerto, for which he and the orchestra will be joined by powerhouse pianist **Yefim Bronfman** (Aug 24).

Two French conductors make **AMFS debuts** with the orchestra this season. Distinguished maestro **Stéphane Denève**, music director of the St. Louis Symphony and artistic director of the New World Symphony, couples works by **Jennifer Higdon** and **Tchaikovsky** with **Richard Strauss's** tone poem *An Alpine Symphony* (**Aug 10**). Denève's compatriot **Fabien Gabel**, the newly appointed music director designate of Austria's Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich, conducts a program featuring **Ana María Martínez** as the soprano soloist in **Ravel's** orchestral song cycle *Shéhérazade* (**July 20**). Other guest conducting highlights include a collaboration on **Lutosławski's** Cello Concerto by two-time Grammy winner **Ludovic Morlot** and MacArthur Fellow **Alisa Weilerstein** (**Aug 17**); Los Angeles Opera music director **James Conlon** leading his own arrangement of the Suite from **Shostakovich's** *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (**July 13**); and Grammy-winner **Xian Zhang's** interpretation of **Prokofiev's** Sixth (and perhaps most profound) Symphony (**July 27**).

With seven concert programs, the **Aspen Chamber Symphony** is similarly active this summer. **Ryan Bancroft**, who holds positions as chief conductor of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and principal conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, makes his **AMFS debut** with **Nielsen's** Fourth Symphony, "The Inextinguishable," and **Ravel's** G-major Piano Concerto, featuring French pianist **Lise de la Salle** (**Aug 1**). **Vasily Petrenko**, music director of London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, leads works by **Debussy**, **Stravinsky**, **Prokofiev**, and **Saint-Saëns**, with former BBC Young Musician of the Year **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** as the concerto soloist (**Aug 15**). **Nicholas McGegan** conducts **Mozart** and **Beethoven** symphonies (**July 11**); guest conductors **Marie Jacquot**, **Jane Glover**, and **Matthias Pintscher** lead programs showcasing AMFS co-commissions and other recent works, as detailed above; and **Spano** conducts an all-English evening of **Purcell**, **Elgar**, and **Vaughan Williams** (**July 18**).

Solo and Chamber Recitals: Lang Lang, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, and More

As ever, the AMFS summer features a wealth of solo and chamber recitals. In addition to Aimard's appearances, detailed above, this summer's piano offerings include Schubert, Kabalevsky, and Shostakovich from Tchaikovsky Competition winner **Alexander Malofeev** (**Aug 16**); Chopin, Schumann, and Fauré from Chinese superstar **Lang Lang** (**Aug 5**); Ravel's complete piano works from Chopin Competition winner **Seong-Jin Cho** (**July 22**); original compositions and arrangements from pathbreaking pianist **Conrad Tao** (**July 2**); transcriptions of classic film scores from Hollywood expert **Scott Dunn** (**Aug 18**); a Festival debut from **Tom Borrow** (**July 16**); and the returns of **Steven Osborne** (**July 10**), AMFS artist-faculty member **Mikhail Voskresensky** (**July 28**), and **Yefim Bronfman** (**Aug 14**). Continuing a long-standing tradition, the AMFS will also be among the first to present the winner of this year's **Van Cliburn International Piano Competition** in recital (**Aug 7**).

Three world-class violinists take part in duo recitals. **Patricia Kopatchinskaja** – "a 'quirky maverick' ... in a class of her own" (*The Times* of London) – makes her Festival debut alongside Argentine cellist **Sol Gabetta**, with more than three centuries of music (**July 14**); Grammy winner **Augustin Hadelich** performs an all-American program with regular piano partner **Orion Weiss** (**Aug 12**); and Finnish polymath **Pekka Kuusisto** joins forces with renowned pianist-composer **Nico Muhly** for Muhly's own music and more (**July 26**). Other recital highlights include two-time Grammy winner **Sharon Isbin** on classical guitar (**Aug 13**) and a special program celebrating "A Life in Notes" with Tony-winning Broadway sensation **Patti LuPone** (**Aug 22**). The summer's chamber lineup includes Schubert, Webern, and Brahms from the **Brentano String Quartet** (**July 19**); Haydn, Schulhoff, and Dvořák from the **Isidore String Quartet** (**Aug 23**); Beethoven, Haydn, and Janáček from the **Takács Quartet** (**July 31**); and performances by **Edgar Meyer**, **Tessa Lark**, **Joshua Roman**, and the **American Brass Quintet**, as detailed above.

Special Events: *My Fair Lady* and "A Feast of Music"

Two special events help round out the summer season. Marking its sixth annual musical theater co-production with **Theatre Aspen**, AMFS presents a one-night-only concert performance of Lerner and Loewe's *My Fair Lady*, led by eminent Broadway music director and conductor **Andy Einhorn (July 15)**.

Now celebrating his 20th anniversary at the AMFS, **Alan Fletcher** is the honoree of this season's benefit event, "**A Feast of Music**" (**Aug 11**). Over the past two decades, Fletcher has overseen the full redevelopment of Aspen's 38-acre, \$80 million campus; created the new opera training program under Renée Fleming and Patrick Summers; stewarded the institution through the COVID pandemic; and helped the AMFS reach new educational and artistic heights, all while continuing his own work as a prolific composer.

The Aspen Spirit

The AMFS is a place artists return to in a spirit of deep affection and to give back. Former students like **Conrad Tao**, **Jeremy Denk**, and **Alisa Weilerstein** return as headlining artists and then also visit with their teachers. They return to play unusual repertoire, experiment with their own new works, or, like alumna **Renée Fleming**, to join the faculty or to design and lead their own programs.

They join other visiting artists who enjoy connecting with young, vibrant musicians in the cusp of their careers, or who got an early career break in Aspen and now never miss a summer. Performers showcased before their careers took off include **Inon Barnatan** and **Augustin Hadelich**. They both continue to come more than a decade later, now as friends, with their families and pets.



Aspen represents ideas and musicianship at their best, and in uniquely personal and authentic ways. There are no metaphorical barriers at the Festival. After performing, artists often slip into the audience for their concert's second half; they walk the streets casually, dropping bills in the instrument cases of busking students.

AMFS alumni returning to perform, direct, and teach this summer are **James Conlon** (July 13), **Jeremy Denk** (Aug 8), **Renée Fleming**, **Zlatomir Fung** (July 18), **Sharon Isbin** (Aug 13), **Marie Jacquot** (July 5; see debuts below), **Robert McDuffie** (Aug 20), **Edgar Meyer** (July 7), **Gil Shaham** (July 29 & Aug 3), **Conrad Tao** (July 2), **Alisa Weilerstein** (Aug 17), **Joyce Yang** (July 6), **Isabel Leonard** (July 8 & 12), **Blake Pouliot** (July 25), and the **American Brass Quintet** (July 23).

This year's returning artists include **Inon Barnatan** (July 13), **Yefim Bronfman** (Aug 14 & 24), **Jane Glover** (Aug 6 & 8), **Augustin Hadelich** (Aug 10 & 12), **Alexander Malofeev** (Aug 16), **Nicholas McGegan** (July 11 & 17), and **David Robertson** (July 9).

As detailed above, those making AMSF debuts this summer are **Stéphane Denève** (Aug 10), **Marie Jacquot** (July 5), **Patricia Kopatchinskaja** (July 14), **Tom Borrow** (July 16), **Fabien Gabel** (July 20), **Pierre-Laurent Aimard** (July 30; Aug 2 & 4), **Ryan Bancroft** (Aug 1), **Enrique Mazzola** (Aug 19), and **Davóne Tines** (Aug 9).

ABOUT THE ASPEN MUSIC FESTIVAL AND SCHOOL

The AMFS is the United States' premier classical music center for performance and education, presenting more than 200 musical events during its eight-week summer season in Aspen. Under the leadership of President and CEO Alan Fletcher and Music Director Robert Spano, the organization draws top classical musicians from around the world for a rich combination of performances of orchestral works, opera, chamber music, recitals, contemporary music, works by new or previously unrecognized voices, popular genres, family events, and talks, competitions, and classes.

More than 450 music students from 40 U.S. states and 40 countries come each summer to play in four orchestras, sing, conduct, compose and study with more than 100 artist-faculty members who come from the orchestras of Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Dallas, the Metropolitan Orchestra, and the leading conservatories and music schools like The Juilliard School, The Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, and The Colburn School. Students represent the field's best talent; many have already begun their professional careers, and others are on the cusp.

The AMFS is deeply committed to community and many events are free. Seating outside the Music Tent on the David Karetsky Music Lawn and in the Kaye Music Garden is always free. Regular livestreams are free anywhere in the world. The AMFS also runs popular music programs in-school and after-school at most schools in Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley.

Renowned alumni include violinists Joshua Bell, Sarah Chang, Midori, Gil Shaham, and Robert McDuffie; pianists Joyce Yang, Orli Shaham, Conrad Tao, Yuja Wang, and Wu Han; conductors Marin Alsop, James Conlon, Leonard Slatkin and Joshua Weilerstein; composers William Bolcom, Philip Glass, David Lang, Augusta Read Thomas, Bright Sheng and Joan Tower; singers Isabel Leonard, Jamie Barton, Sasha Cooke, Danielle de Niese, Renée Fleming, Dawn Upshaw and Tamara Wilson; cellist Alisa Weilerstein; guitarist Sharon Isbin; bassist Edgar Meyer; and former Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice.

The Aspen Story

The Aspen Music Festival and School started as a bold dream in June 1949, when Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke, with others from the University of Chicago, organized an event that brought leaders, artists, thinkers, and dreamers to the remote, dusty ex-mining mountain town of Aspen to discuss big ideas and naturally, listen to music that touched the soul. Their vision for the 1949 Goethe Bicentennial Convocation and Music Festival was to heal, hope and reach for the best in humanity in response to the devastation following World War II. More than 2,000 people made the trek to attend, as reported in *The New York Times*.

Participants included novelist Thornton Wilder, Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset, Italian literature professor Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, Israeli theologian Martin Buber, and doctor, humanitarian, and music scholar Albert Schweitzer on his first and only trip to the United States. Musicians included pianist Arthur Rubinstein, Dmitri Mitropolous, and the entire Minnesota Symphony Orchestra.

The experience was both profound and joyful, and the following year, the musicians returned. They brought their students, their ideals, and their hiking boots. Walter Paepcke asked singer Mack Harrell (father of cellist Lynn Harrell) to form a school. And like that, an annual music festival and school was born.

Over seven decades, Aspen’s magic has been in this combination of seasoned professionals and youth as colleagues and co-inspiring forces. Musicians don’t just come to Aspen to perform, they come to connect with other musicians, mentor and be mentored, find their best selves, and share it authentically. Aspen students fill every corner of the music world today—performing in orchestras, as soloists, singing, composing, conducting and teaching. Alumni include conductors Leonard Slatkin and James Conlon, violinists Gil Shaham and Midori, cellist Alisa Weilerstein, bassist Edgar Meyer. Even former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice took a turn in Aspen before giving up piano for politics.

From the beginning, Aspen has had the feeling of a “retreat,” a place to create and experiment, a tradition that is continued today. In 1950, Igor Stravinsky conducted his own works in the Music Tent, paving the way for so many composers to visit, study, and teach in Aspen, including Darius Milhaud, who led the contemporary music charge in Aspen from 1952-1968, Aaron Copland, Elliot Carter, Virgil Thomson, George Crumb, Jacob Druckman, William Schuman, Olivier Messiaen, Peter Maxwell Davies, David Lang, David del Tredici, Philip Glass, Peter Schickele, and more recently, Augusta Read Thomas, George Tsontakis, Christopher Rouse, Rufus Wainwright, Kaija Saariaho, Missy Mazzoli, Anthony Davis, John Luther Adams, and Nico Muhly.

Today Aspen continues to create, educate, and inspire. In 2024, more than 450 students will participate in orchestra, opera, chamber music, piano studies, classical guitar, composition, and conducting studies. It is the largest summer training program of its caliber—larger than all its peers combined.

Event and Ticket Information

The full summer schedule will be released February 19. Tickets go on sale to the public in April.

Online: [aspenmusicfestival.com](https://www.aspenmusicfestival.com)

Phone: 970 925 9042

Email: tickets@aspenmusic.org

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