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## ASPEN MUSIC FESTIVAL AND SCHOOL RENEWS MUSIC DIRECTOR ROBERT SPANO'S CONTRACT THROUGH 2030

Aspen, CO – The Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS) is delighted to announce the renewal of Music Director Robert Spano's contract for an additional five years, extending his remarkable tenure through September 2030. This decision underscores the Festival's commitment to artistic excellence and the training of the next generation of conductors.



Since joining AMFS in 2011, Spano has been instrumental in shaping the Festival's artistic direction, elevating its reputation as one of the world's premier summer music institutions. His innovative programming, inspiring leadership, mentorship of Aspen Conducting Academy fellows, and deep engagement with both audiences and artists have been hallmarks of his tenure.

Of Spano and the contract extension AMFS President and CEO Alan Fletcher said:

“Robert Spano brings to Aspen an unparalleled array of personal and musical achievement. Among the finest conductors in the world, with the broadest preparation and repertoire including significant focus on orchestral, operatic, choral, and contemporary music, he is also one of the great thinkers about music, and especially every aspect of the role of the conductor in a great musical enterprise. As a wonderful composer himself, he has an extraordinary record of advocacy for important new music. He is unsurpassed in his analysis and eloquence about music, culture, and learning. ‘Nice’ is far too simple a word; he is one of the most wonderful people I know in the world of music, and I know a lot of wonderful people.”

Under Spano's leadership, AMFS has continued to build on its rich history while embracing innovation and inclusivity. Highlights of his tenure include the expansion of the Festival's repertoire, a renewed focus on interdisciplinary collaborations, and the launch of initiatives that bring music to underserved communities. Spano skillfully navigated the Festival through the pandemic, pivoting to offer a season

of virtual performances and distanced programming, as well as the Festival's recent 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary season, and has been an advocate for the commissioning of new works and the growth of the Aspen Conducting Academy.

On the renewal of his contract, AMFS Music Director Robert Spano said:

“Working with the Aspen Music Festival and School for over a decade has been one of the great privileges of my life. With our extraordinary faculty, staff, board, and extended musical family, I am blessed with incomparable colleagues. The students who come each summer, with their passion and talent, are invariably an inspiration. With them, our uniquely Aspen experience of music in these mountains comes to new life each summer. We all share in the joy of being a part of the discovery and maturation of this next generation of musicians. I'm thrilled to know that I'll continue to be a part of this magic through 2030.”

## Looking Ahead

As Spano's renewed tenure begins, audiences can look forward to more groundbreaking programs, collaborations with iconic guest artists, and the continuation of AMFS's mission to inspire through music. With the theme “Concerning the Spiritual in Art,” the Festival's 2025 season promises to be a celebration of this ongoing partnership and a showcase of Spano's artistic vision. Spano will conduct the world premiere of the AFMS composer-in-residence Christopher Theofanidis's *Siddhartha*, *She* with libretto by Melissa Studdard; the Aspen Festival Orchestra's opening program that includes in the “Good Friday Spell” from Wagner's *Parsifal* and Thomas Adès' “Inferno Suite” from *Dante* (July 6); and the Aspen Conducting Academy Orchestra's performance of Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 featuring violinist Gil Shaham (Aug. 3), among others.

## Role of the Music Director



In his role as Music Director, Spano is responsible for the artistic and musical leadership of the Festival and School, bringing distinction through his national and international reputation. His duties include planning and implement a comprehensive annual music festival program, collaborating with the AMFS President and CEO Alan Fletcher and the AMFS artist-faculty in hiring new artist faculty, and overseeing the artistic standards of performances and teaching. Spano takes a

hands-on role in the selection, arrangement, and direction of symphony, new music, opera, and chamber music programs, as well as in the selection of guest conductors, composers-in-residence, and ensembles.

Spano conducts each of the three Festival orchestras—the Aspen Chamber Symphony, Aspen Festival Orchestra, and the Aspen Conducting Academy Orchestra—in addition to maintaining an active schedule as a collaborative pianist, performing recitals with artists including Gil Shaham, Robert McDuffie, Kelley O'Connor, Renée Fleming, and Rod Gilfry. Highlights of his tenure include performances of Bach's "B-minor Mass," Act 3 from Wagner's *Die Walküre*, the Berlioz Requiem, Mozart's *Idomeneo*, and the world premiere of Alan Fletcher's *Three American Songs*, written for and performed by Renée Fleming.

One of Spano's most noteworthy contributions to the AMFS is the growth and development of the **Aspen Conducting Academy**. Under his leadership, this immersive conducting program has produced alumni including Roderick Cox, Gemma New, Marie Jacquot, George Jackson, and Kerem Hasan, among others. Spano credits David Zinman for envisioning the ideal model for teaching the conductors of tomorrow by giving them what they need: an orchestra. To that foundation, Spano has engaged a roster of rotating guest teachers to supplement his instruction and enhanced the individualized learning experience, from in-depth score study sessions to regular meetings with each conductor throughout the summer. Spano's personalized approach allows each student to thrive and develop their unique conducting voice.

### About Robert Spano

Conductor, pianist, composer, and teacher Robert Spano is one of the most respected and celebrated figures in classical music. Known for his artistic leadership and dedication to innovation, Spano is the Music Director of both the Aspen Music Festival and School and the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. He is also the former Music Director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, where he served for two decades and now holds the title of Conductor Laureate. Spano is also the Music Director Designate for the Washington National Opera (WNO) and will start his three-year term in September of 2025.

Spano has a vast discography of critically acclaimed recordings and has led performances with many of the world's preeminent orchestras and opera companies. He is a fervent advocate for new music, having conducted numerous world premieres by some of today's most prominent composers. A devoted educator, Spano is passionate about nurturing the next generation of musicians, a commitment he exemplifies through his work at Aspen and beyond.



## About the Aspen Music Festival and School

Founded in 1949, the Aspen Music Festival and School is a beacon for classical music lovers and aspiring musicians alike. Nestled in the stunning Rocky Mountains, the Festival offers a unique blend of world-class performances, artist residencies, and educational opportunities. Each summer, it draws over 600 students and 150 artist-faculty members from around the globe, presenting more than 300 events ranging from orchestral concerts to intimate chamber music recitals.

*For high-resolution images, please email [jmoore@aspenmusic.org](mailto:jmoore@aspenmusic.org).*