

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



## ALLYSON STIBBARDS

*viola, second stand, inside chair*

The energy in the air on Final Sunday of the Aspen Music Festival and School is unlike anything else. It's a day to look back on and celebrate another fantastic season, but it's also all about the present, as it consistently features the most massive work of the summer that audiences have eagerly awaited for months.

Twenty-one-year-old violist Allyson Stibbards will be experiencing her first-ever Final Sunday today, but she's heard enough about the magical concert to know it's something special to look forward to.

"I'm really excited," she says. "I know from my experience with New York String Orchestra Seminar that the last concert just had so much energy. I'm so excited to see how awesome the final concert in Aspen is going to be."

Stibbards has spent all summer studying with AMFS artist-faculty members Sabina Thatcher and Stephen Wyczynski and performing in orchestra and chamber music groups. Her time here is supported in part by the University of Colorado Boulder. The Longmont, Colorado, native says her teacher at the CU Boulder College of Music, Erika Eckert, encouraged her to attend the AMFS this summer.

"She pushed me to get out there and meet a lot of people, and she told me I would get to study with some really great teachers," she says. "And it's been great. I've learned so much this summer, both from my private teachers and from getting to sit next to principals in orchestra; I've learned even more from them than I thought I would."

In fact, Stibbards has learned a whole new appreciation for orchestra playing. Before the AMFS, she focused more on chamber music. The violist started her music studies at five years old as a violinist, but at ten, she started playing viola in chamber groups. She fell in love with the instrument because of its role in the music.

"I really liked being a part of the inner voices and getting all of the colorful notes and the cool little parts instead of just playing the big solos on top of everything," she says.

Stibbards has been playing orchestral and chamber music in Aspen this summer, and she says each setting has its pros and cons, but she's surprised by how much she's enjoyed performing in orchestra here.

"Before this summer, I was leaning more toward chamber music, but after the summer, I'm thinking that playing in a professional orchestra would be really cool," she says. "This is the first time I've gotten to play in a really high-quality orchestra for an extended period of time, so it's been really cool to get to go through so much rep at such a high level. It's definitely a different experience from what I'm used to."

Stibbards says no matter what she ends up doing, she knows she wants to be a musician. She came to the University of Colorado Boulder as an engineering and viola performance double major, but right after school started, she dropped the engineering major because she wanted to focus on music. Now that she's entering her senior year, she's beginning to think seriously about graduate school and a career.

"I love being a musician because I get to collaborate with so many people all the time," she says. "No two days are exactly the same, and I don't think I'd do well at a desk job doing the same thing every day. It's nice to get to meet people and do something I love. And I'm always learning."

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