

ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



GALLIA KASTNER *violin*

At the ripe age of three, Gallia Kastner was placed in tennis lessons with hopes that she would succeed and follow in the path of her cousins—all tennis enthusiasts who placed in state finals. This unfortunately proved to be an impossible feat for Kastner and it was her grandfather who eventually recommended that Kastner try out the violin. “My wrist was so floppy—not only would I miss the ball, but I dropped the tennis racket every time I swung. Little did anyone know that my floppy wrist was perfect for the violin,” Kastner said.

As a twenty-two-year old violinist, this is Kastner’s fourth summer studying at the Aspen Music Festival and School. This season, she is studying under Robert Lipsett, who teaches here as well as at Colburn Conservatory of Music where Kastner will begin her master’s degree in the fall. “I look forward to coming back to Aspen every single year,” Kastner said. Originally from Chicago and now studying in Los Angeles, Kastner is excited to get away from the hustle of a big city and be back in the mountains. “Seeing the mountains every morning when I wake up in Aspen inspires me to work really hard and it serves as a reminder to enjoy my time away from busy city life,” Kastner said.

When asked about the most memorable thing that a teacher has said to her, Kastner was quick to recall a teacher who gave advice on her career path. This teacher insured her that she can be a soloist, orchestral musician, and a chamber musician all at the same time. “I don’t have to just be one thing. All my life I was convinced that I had to choose just one of those paths, but there are tons of ways to do all of those things in my career,” Kastner said. “I can be an orchestral musician, start a string quartet and perform as a soloist all at the same time! I have to put all my heart and soul into music, work hard and all of these things are possible.”

Kastner once dedicated an entire summer at AMFS to a piece called “The Last Rose of Summer” by Heinrich Ernst. “I have always loved that piece and it has always intimidated me,” Kastner said. Seeing as how it was her mother’s favorite piece and her mother had always dreamed of her daughter performing it one day, Kastner was determined to make it happen—despite how much it scared her. “I spent the entire summer working on this incredibly difficult ten-minute piece,” Kastner said. One of Kastner’s best moments in her life as a musician was the day that Kastner played this piece in her String Showcase. “I felt so supported, because this piece is truly terrifying. This performance was probably one of my greatest accomplishments.”

When talking about Kastner’s instrument, the excitement shines through and it’s easy to see how passionate Kastner is about the violin. “The violin holds a very special place in my heart. My instrument has always felt like a missing limb from the day I tried it for the first time. It has always been a way for me to fully express myself,” Kastner said. “It not only has a gorgeous depth of sound but it’s also a powerhouse of an instrument.” As the recent winner of the Aspen Conducting Academy violin competition, Kastner will perform Sibelius Violin Concerto in D minor as the soloist with ACA next Tuesday at 4 pm. Kastner is also a recipient of a Dorothy Richard Starling Foundation Scholarship.

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