

# ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Today, Gisel Dominguez is assistant principal in the double bass section.

## GISEL DOMINGUEZ *Double bass*

One day in an elementary school orchestra rehearsal, Gisel Dominguez's teacher asked if anyone would be willing to play the double bass. At first, no one volunteered. Then, Dominguez—a violinist since age 4, concertmaster of the school orchestra, and the star student—raised her hand. She recalls thinking, "I don't know what [the bass] is, but I'll give it a shot." After the first rehearsal, she stuck with it. "I had no clue what I was doing, but it was a lot of fun for me," she says. "I liked the sound of it and that no one else was playing it." Dominguez switched her attention to the bass completely when she entered middle school. She's stuck with it for almost a decade and Dominguez is now pursuing a bachelor's in double bass performance at the Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM).

When she turned 16, Dominguez knew she wanted to pursue music professionally. "For my birthday, I got to travel to Chicago and see the Chicago Symphony play Beethoven's Third Symphony. That was one of my first experiences hearing a professional symphony live. That piece is super meaningful to me, and I thought, 'if I could make other people feel like that by performing, then I would love to do that.' It was very inspiring."

An avid orchestral musician, the now 19-year-old Dominguez particularly loves the role the bass plays in the orchestra. "We don't always get the melody or have all the fun, exciting stuff, but I like the feeling of supporting the rest of the sections and providing that foundation. And when we do get the melody, that's awesome." On this week's Aspen Festival Orchestra concert, she is stand partners with artist-faculty member Christopher Hanulik. "I've heard he's a monster bassist. He's insanely good. I'm excited to meet him," she says. She enjoys the side-by-side aspect of orchestra at the Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS), saying that playing alongside artist-faculty members in orchestra allows her to learn "how to lead a section and communicate well."

Dominguez is especially excited for the repertoire on this concert—all of which is new to her. She enjoys learning new works by listening to and playing along with recordings. The first piece, *A Midnight Hour*, by Anne Clyne, is particularly resonant. While Dominguez doesn't always listen to contemporary music as her first choice, she advocates for its place on the classical music stage. "Programming contemporary music is really important, as well as music by underrepresented voices—contemporary and throughout history—that have sort of been forgotten." Dominguez also enjoys the opportunity to perform on Ravel's *Piano Concerto in G* alongside piano virtuoso Inon Barnatan. "There's a lot to learn from [a professional soloist's] artistry," she says.

This is Dominguez's first year at the AMFS, and in the first few weeks of the Festival, she has already begun to approach her craft with a new mindset. "Being here is so refreshing, musically and personally too," she says. "I hope it kick-starts my junior year [of college] and I can ride that momentum going forward."

*Dominguez is one of the 480 young talents studying at the AMFS this summer.*

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—GISEL DOMINGUEZ