

ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Today, Graham Lovely is playing third French horn.

GRAHAM LOVELY *French horn*

For Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS) student Graham Lovely, musical talent runs in the family. His parents met at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University Bloomington and his dad played tuba in the United States Army Band “Pershing’s Own” for 20 years. Lovely’s musical training began when his parents enrolled him in an early childhood music education program called Kindermusik and the Maryland State Boychoir before he picked up the French horn in late elementary school.

Lovely was drawn to the brass instruments when he attended an instrument try out day and the horn’s unique tone color appealed to him the most. “It’s just a sound that’s not replicable by any other instrument in the orchestra. It adds another layer of emotional depth. It’s my favorite instrument to listen to and a privilege to play it as well,” he says. Lovely never felt pressure to follow his parents’ footsteps and pursue a career in music, but when he did decide to, their personal experience in the field was invaluable. “There’s a lot of support from my parents,” he says. “They can advise me and help me understand the long-game” for a career in music since they’ve already done it.

Now entering the final year of his bachelor’s degree at the New England Conservatory, Lovely received a fellowship to play third horn in the Aspen Festival Orchestra this summer. “The third horn is kind of known as the workhorse,” says Lovely. Most third horn parts are written in the upper register, which takes a lot of stamina, especially for long orchestral pieces like the main piece on today’s concert, Mahler’s over 100-minute Third Symphony. This symphony presents a unique challenge: “There’s a moment in the fourth movement with just first and third horn, string harmonics, and the vocal soloist. After you’ve already played an hour of music, you have to play some of the softest music you’ll ever play. That’s very challenging to manage,” says Lovely.

Lovely’s first summer at the AMFS has already provided invaluable experience as he pursues an orchestral career: studying with artist-faculty members Andrew Bain and Kevin Rivard, two of today’s leading horn players, and namely, the opportunity to play large orchestral works from which audition excerpts are drawn. Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks, Wagner’s *Ring* cycle, Mahler’s Third, *The Rite of Spring*, *La mer*, and *The Firebird* are just a few works from this summer that contain major horn audition excerpts. “When you play [an excerpt] in orchestra, you learn how everything fits together. It’s very important because in an audition situation, you’re expected to know what’s happening. To play the excerpt in context with everything else is helpful,” says Lovely.

Reflecting on his musical studies thus far, Lovely sees the French horn as a life-long pursuit. “The best thing a teacher can teach you is how to teach yourself. In two to three year’s time, I’ll probably be out of school and won’t have a teacher. Even when I’m employed in an orchestra, or otherwise performing professionally, I’m still going to want to be improving. It’s not a journey that ends when school ends,” he says.

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

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—GRAHAM LOVELY