

ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Lauren Decker, mezzo-soprano soloist.

LAUREN DECKER *voice*

It's interesting to think about the moments that stick with us—the things we remember and the things we don't. The words of advice that we receive along the way that never seem to leave us. Thirty-one-year-old voice student Lauren Decker recalls notable advice that she'll never forget: "The most memorable thing I've ever been told by a teacher is that when it's right, it's because we are in touch with our truest essence. It reminds me that I am an artist not because of a degree or a contract, but because I simply show up to create."

Decker is a voice student studying with Stephen King and Renée Fleming in the Aspen Opera Theater and VocalARTS Program this summer and is singing with the Aspen Festival Orchestra today. Prior to Aspen, Decker spent four years as a member of the Ryan Opera Center at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. She also holds her BFA in vocal performance from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee.

It was actually Decker's piano teacher at the age of five who recognized that she had a knack for singing along while she played the piano. Initially, she started singing in middle school productions and choirs, and it was eventually Decker's high school teacher who encouraged her to pursue classical music. "Music is nature at its finest," Decker says. "It's organic, it's within every aspect of the universe and I feel most connected to the world when performing or listening to music."

Attending the Aspen Music Festival and School for the first time this summer, Decker will also appear in *The Magic Flute* and *Rodelinda*. "After a year-and-a-half of little to no performance opportunities, I am looking forward to every chance I get to collaborate," Decker says. "I am thrilled to share the stage with the other soloists, Maestro Spano, the chorus, and the orchestra in the Beethoven Nine. There is nothing so incredible as when so many people are working together towards a common goal."

Decker explains that she feels like singing is the most human form of art. "We all sing from a young age," Decker notes. "We hear our parents' voices humming to us long before we are born. I love the challenge of honing a craft that is reliant on me and only me. And then pouring into collaboration with other voices and instruments to create something bigger than myself."

Decker shares that her favorite piece to perform is Elgar's *Sea Pictures*. "The music feels so innate to me from the swelling of the orchestration to the sometimes delicate and sometimes heroic vocal line," Decker says. "Every time I have the opportunity to perform it, I feel a profound sense of home."

Decker intends to use music as a work of service throughout her lifetime. "I believe that, as artists, our use is not simply entertainment but serving the people in every way we can," Decker explains. "In the future, I hope to be performing impactful works that speak to how human music is and using my voice to create community."

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