

ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Today, Jensen Bocco is the second bassoon on stage.

JENSEN BOCCO *Bassoon*

Twenty-three-year-old Jensen Bocco was first introduced to the bassoon in middle school when there was a bassoon musician shortage. While his band director actually chose the instrument for him, “I’ve been hooked on playing the bassoon ever since,” Bocco says. “Before I started playing the bassoon, I had never even heard of a bassoon before.”

After graduating in 2020 from the New England Conservatory where he studied with Richard Ranti of the Boston Symphony, Bocco will be moving to New York City this fall to study with William Short of the Metropolitan Opera at the Manhattan School of Music. This is Bocco’s third summer attending the Festival and he is studying with Nancy Goeres. In previous summers he studied with Per Hannevold.

The most appealing thing about the bassoon to Bocco is all the different characters and styles it can portray in the orchestra. “The instrument is capable of playing things as goofy as the Grandpa from Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf*, to something as incredibly mystical as the solo from Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade*,” Bocco explains. “My personal favorite piece written for the bassoon is Shostakovich’s Tenth Symphony. The symphony is full of haunting, electrifying, and lamenting solos that really show off the bassoon’s ability to sing.”

Bocco’s teacher once told him, “The most accurate bassoonist I’ve ever known would say ‘If I can do it 30 times in a row exactly the way I like, I figure I have a chance.’ This is not an exaggeration. There is no shortcut.” This quote really stuck with Bocco and he found this to be extremely motivating. “I loved this quote because it really puts into perspective the kind of work ethic it takes to perform at the highest level.”

In the future, Bocco hopes to be a principal bassoonist of a major symphony orchestra. “I’ve been set on this goal ever since I was young and couldn’t imagine myself doing something else,” Bocco says. “Being surrounded by talented musicians and having the ability to convey a wide range of emotions is extremely fulfilling for me. I love being exposed to new repertoire and having the opportunity to tell other people’s stories through music.”

Bocco loves rotating throughout all of the Festival orchestras and he thinks that is the greatest benefit of studying in Aspen. “I’m most excited about playing in the upcoming performance of *The Magic Flute*. Due to social distancing restrictions, we’re going to be using a reduced orchestration that is not often played. It’s going to be a more intimate ensemble, which will be a great new experience.”

While Bocco was sad that last year’s Festival was unable to take place, he is ecstatic to be back this summer. “I chose to study in Aspen because I get the opportunity to play next to faculty whom I look up to for inspiration,” Bocco says. “I also enjoy being surrounded by wildlife and having access to the many hiking trails the valley has to offer. Much of the repertoire we play is inspired by nature and being able to experience that first-hand makes the performing process more exciting.”

Jensen Bocco is a recipient of the Anne and Chris Reyes Scholarship

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— JENSEN BOCCO