

ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Today, Carson Rick is the assistant principal viola.

CARSON RICK *Viola*

Like most string players, Carson Rick began his musical journey at an early age. As a matter of fact, he went to his first lesson in a car seat. Following in his violinist brother's footsteps, Rick said, "Like most younger siblings, I wanted to do what [he] was doing but do it better." After a few years of violin lessons, Rick's teacher insisted that he learn viola. Eventually achieving fluency in both instruments, he was assigned more and more viola parts until that was the only part he performed. Proving to be for the best, Rick said, "I knew then that it was the role I most enjoyed playing."

Years later, Rick attended The Royal Conservatory of Music's Glenn Gould School, where he utilized his self-determination to navigate the challenges of a professional music career path. Rick said, "There are so many distractions and stressors in the life of a young musician, and [my teacher helped me] put my focus onto things that are within my control." For Rick, time holds the top priority. Still adhering to this principle today, he adds, "At the Aspen Music Festival and School, there are inspiring performance opportunities, great concerts, but most importantly time—time to really digest everything that is being thrown at you and discover new ways to play."

During his first AMFS season in 2019, Rick was a violist for the Aspen Conducting Academy Orchestra. Remembering that summer with fondness, he said, "The conductors all came to the Festival as development artists, so it was an invigorating experience to see each of them improve as we did. I decided to come back because my first summer raised the level of my playing and understanding of music to a remarkable degree."

Now 28 years old and a member of the Aspen Festival Orchestra, Rick says, "I cannot even describe the depth of eye-opening education I feel sitting next to some of the great violists of our time." Performing diverse pieces alongside his teachers, AMFS artist-faculty members Choong-Jin (C.J.) Chang and James Dunham, Rick has developed his appreciation for musical styles and time periods throughout classical history. When it comes to choosing a favorite, he says, "I tend to shy away from picking favorites because as soon as I pick one, there are three or four more pieces that I feel guilty for neglecting." Still, Rick believes there are some composers to whom violists owe an incredible debt—one of them being J.S. Bach.

"Bach's Brandenburg Concertos are pieces that I've loved since I was a child but have only ever played the two that string players most commonly play (the Third and the Sixth)," he said. In July, Rick finally had the opportunity to play the remaining four concertos during A Baroque Evening with Nicholas McGegan. The highlight of his summer, Rick said, "That concert I will not forget any time soon!"

Though the 2021 AMFS season must come to an end, Rick looks forward to advancing his career as a well-rounded musician in the fall, by continuing to teach, freelance, and audition in the Los Angeles area. "Someone once called me greedy because I enjoy doing all things music-related. I think the most fulfilled that I could possibly be in this life would involve me doing a little bit of everything at the highest possible level I can achieve," he said. Rick can't wait to showcase all that he's learned this summer at today's Aspen Festival Orchestra season finale.

Carson Rick is a recipient of the Wonderful Scholarship

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