

# ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Jackson Charles Prasifka plays the French horn in the Aspen Festival Orchestra.

## JACKSON CHARLES PRASIFKA

### *French horn*

Jackson Charles Prasifka's musical journey started from a young age. The 21-year-old native of Austin, Texas, grew up surrounded by music—his father is a high school band director and music teacher. He spent a few years playing piano, but sixth grade was where his journey as a French hornist began proper. Prasifka chose the instrument more or less on a whim. While he started playing the horn just for fun, as a competitive kid, he quickly picked up steam. "I practiced a lot; I always wanted to impress teachers or my friends," Prasifka says. "At the beginning I didn't really know what I was getting into, I just knew I wanted to try really hard and be as good as I could."

After he performed especially well at a regional music competition in seventh grade, he set more ambitious goals. "If I keep working, I can be really good at this," Prasifka remembers himself thinking.

His goals—make All-State in Texas and join the Greater Dallas Youth Orchestra—came and went with growing success. "It was very rewarding, and it motivated me—I was like, I want to just keep this feeling going," Prasifka says.

Prasifka kept moving up. He performed at Carnegie Hall and toured European cities with the 2019 National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America; he started his studies at the Colburn School Conservatory in 2019; and in the summer of 2021, he won the Concerto Competition at the Brevard Music Festival.

One memory he looks back on with special fondness is a rehearsal he had at Colburn with Gustavo Dudamel, the music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Prasifka said the rehearsal helped shape how he thinks about music. "Dudamel talked about how orchestras need to try to get the idea of perfection out of their brain. Not chase perfection, just chase the music and create something beautiful," Prasifka says.

Now, nearing the highest levels of music performance, Prasifka has internalized that message. Those imperfections motivate him to continue studying and improving. "The idea that I'll never really be perfect at playing or I'll never be completely done, I love that," Prasifka says. "I like that there will always be things I can keep getting better at. It wouldn't be worth doing if it was just easy and perfect every time I played."

The most recent stop on Prasifka's journey: the Aspen Music Festival and School. He heard about the Festival through various sources, including Andrew Bain, a horn professor at Colburn and the principal French horn of the Los Angeles Philharmonic with whom he is studying in Aspen. Other students who attended in previous years also described their experiences to him. "My friends told me it was the most beautiful and amazing musical experience," Prasifka says. "I've wanted to come here so badly ever since."

Now that he has achieved that milestone as well, Prasifka looks forward to continuing his studies with Bain and playing in the Aspen Festival Orchestra. And, as always, chasing the next goal.

*Jackson Charles Prasifka is a recipient of the New Horizons Fellowship*

*"The idea that I'll never really be perfect at playing or I'll never be completely done, I love that. I like that there will always be things I can keep getting better at. It wouldn't be worth doing if it was just easy and perfect every time I played."*

— JACKSON CHARLES PRASIFKA

# DID YOU KNOW?

**The Aspen Music Festival and School** is one of the world's leading training institutions for emerging young musicians. The talented students perform side-by-side with our artist-faculty to make up the Festival's summer orchestras and ensembles, including the one performing for you today.

The AMFS's diverse body of **470** students hails from the world's top conservatories and schools of music. While the average age of students is **23**, many have already started promising careers and return to Aspen for further professional development with sought-after mentors from the world of classical music.

Artist-faculty members for the 2022 season, numbering more than **100**, are the leading performers and teachers in the field today, coming to Aspen from **31 major orchestras**, **9 opera houses**, and **49 music schools and conservatories worldwide**, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony, the Metropolitan Opera orchestra, The Juilliard School, the Shepherd School at Rice University, and the Houston Grand Opera.

## 2022 STUDENT SNAPSHOT

**470**  
TALENTED  
STUDENTS

*Nearly*  
**1 1/2** RECEIVE  
FELLOWSHIP  
SUPPORT

*From*  
**31**  
COUNTRIES  
*and*  
**40**  
STATES

*More than*  
**\$3.1 million**  
IN FINANCIAL AID

