

ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Simon Bakos plays the clarinet in the Aspen Festival Orchestra.

SIMON BAKOS *Clarinet*

Hailing from Mason, Ohio, 20-year-old Simon Bakos began playing the clarinet in fourth grade. After switching schools and a brief foray into trumpet, he returned to the clarinet with renewed passion. Seventh grade is when Bakos says he started studying the clarinet in earnest, finding that being a musician in school gave him “a place to belong,” Bakos remembers. “It felt like it was the first activity I did at school that I felt very passionate about, and it was something that I realized, if I continued with it, I could gain recognition, and I could really connect with others through that.”

Although he already knew he was passionate about music by the age of 12, it wasn’t until his junior year of high school that Bakos considered pursuing it as a career. (Until then, dentistry was his plan.) He couldn’t decide which career path to pursue, but the minute he visited the Curtis Institute of Music—his top music school choice—he made his decision. “I just knew when I went to Curtis, that’s where I wanted to be,” Bakos says.

Bakos’s favorite part about music is its social element. “There’s a real camaraderie that comes with playing in an orchestra. I think that’s something you get in very few other careers—just being able to make music with your friends every day.”

Studying at the Aspen Music Festival and School has long been a goal for Bakos. Due to COVID, however, this is the first summer that he has had the opportunity to attend and he is already particularly impressed by the fast pace. “Learning a new program every week, each with a new conductor, is something I really don’t get at my school or in any other program I’m involved in,” Bakos says. “It’s something that a student can really only get at a summer festival like this.” But Bakos, who is studying with Michael Rusinek, principal clarinetist of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, doesn’t find the breakneck pace overwhelming. “I really enjoy it,” Bakos says. “I feel like I learn so much that way. To constantly be exposed to, and have to perform, new repertoire every week, to keep up with that fast pace has really challenged me.”

Bakos has already been exposed to the world of professional symphonies. He made his professional debut as a last-minute substitute with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at Carnegie Hall under Vasily Petrenko, a familiar guest conductor in Aspen. “It was such an incredible experience,” Bakos says. “Since I was called the day of, I didn’t have time to be nervous or doubt myself, I just had to go and do it.” This summer, Bakos is most looking forward to performing with Petrenko again when he conducts the August 7 concert with the Aspen Festival Orchestra, featuring Rachmaninoff’s Second Piano Concerto, excerpts from Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* and Skryabin’s *Poem of Ecstasy*.

While Bakos’s goals for the future aren’t yet concrete, he hopes to follow the example of the role models he looked up to as a young musician. “There were always musicians who inspired me; they were the people I looked up to and who I wanted to be. I think my biggest career goal is to give someone else that little bit of inspiration. Whether I’m playing music as a professional, or as a successful hobbyist, I just want to be a figure who gets somebody else into music.”

Simon Bakos is a recipient of the Gordon and Lillian Hardy Scholarship

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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

