

# ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Wentao Jiang plays the oboe and English horn in the Aspen Festival Orchestra.

## WENTAO JIANG *Oboe, English horn*

Wentao Jiang, who hails from Qingdao, China, began playing the oboe when he was 13 or 14. As he puts it: “My parents just wanted to give me something to do.” By chance, after he got his oboe, his school organized a field trip to an orchestra concert. The featured piece: Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake*, which is known for its iconic oboe theme.

From that moment, his pursuit of a career in oboe performance began in earnest. After moving to the United States, Jiang graduated from Interlochen Arts Academy and attended the San Francisco Conservatory of Music for both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Jiang currently works as a teacher and freelancer in the San Francisco Bay area. He also spends his time preparing for orchestra auditions whenever they come up. He already has experience with major orchestras on his resumé, as he’s worked as a substitute musician for the San Francisco Symphony and Opera.

This is Jiang’s third summer studying at the Aspen Music Festival and School—the second in person. Jiang’s first summer in Aspen—2020—was completely remote, so he never got to experience the mountains or scenery. Still, that summer he received online lessons from his teachers, Elaine Douvas and Mingjia Liu. Now practically a Festival veteran, Jiang says, “I came back because of the world-renowned artists, faculty, and talented musicians. Everyone is so supportive here and I am learning every day from everyone around me.”

Another important part of the Aspen experience, Jiang says, is performing alongside his teachers. “In our weekly lessons and studio classes, our teachers offer suggestions to improve our playing and to bring us to the next level—but more importantly, we get to play with the best musician faculty in the orchestra on a regular basis,” Jiang says. “I hear and see examples of what my teachers are telling me in my lessons.”

Douvas, principal oboe of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Jiang’s longtime Aspen teacher, has been an especially important figure in Jiang’s festival life. “She is one of the most inspirational teachers that I have ever met in my life,” Jiang says. “Her passion for music performance and teaching as well as her positive attitudes in life really changed and inspired me as a person and musician.”

Musically, Jiang says he is drawn to the sound of the oboe, and especially its cousin, the English horn, which he describes as having a “deeper, soulful sound.” The instrument is known for its similarity to a human voice, which Jiang enjoys. “I just love the physical sensation of feeling like I’m singing on the instrument,” Jiang says.

The English horn’s timbre makes it a favorite—if not stereotype—for melancholic moments. “If you go see a movie from pretty much any category, whenever there is a terrible scene, or if a character dies, an English horn solo usually accompanies the scene. People usually refer to it as the ‘Anguish horn,’” Jiang says.

So far this summer, Jiang has enjoyed playing familiar pieces with an orchestra for the first time. Rossini’s *Overture to William Tell* and Ravel’s *Rapsodie espagnole* stand out above the rest. “I’ve played these pieces many times in my lessons, master classes, and auditions,” Jiang says. “Being able to play these pieces with an orchestra for the first time was an unforgettable memory.”

*Wentao Jiang is the English horn fellow and recipient of the Bowers Noyce Oboe Fellowship*

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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

