

ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Helen Yu plays the violin in the Aspen Festival Orchestra.

HELEN YU *Violin*

It wasn't a heart-wrenching sonata or beautiful concerto that first inspired Helen Yu to pick up a violin. Rather, her inspiration came from a more unassuming source: *The Pink Panther*—a favorite cartoon of the then five-year-old. "I was just watching an episode of him playing the violin and I thought it was so cool," Yu says. Thus, her journey began.

Hailing from Hong Kong, Yu studied at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) since she began violin at the young age of five. She recalls the moment that she first discovered her passion for performing on stage—after performing as a soloist in a concerto competition with her school orchestra. It was then that she realized she had a future as a musician.

Since that realization, Yu has found success as a soloist in violin concertos. While pursuing her bachelor's degree, she won the HKAPA concerto competition twice, once playing the Sibelius Violin Concerto and the second time, the Brahms Violin Concerto—an accomplishment of which she is especially proud. Now 23, Yu graduated from the HKAPA with a bachelor's degree in violin performance.

This summer is Yu's second at the Aspen Music Festival and School. When she attended last summer, she felt the experience was so formative that she had to return. "I met really good friends here," Yu said, "and I improved so much in my violin performance. I decided to apply again, and am so grateful to have been awarded a fellowship."

While Yu attended the Festival last season, she is still surprised by how quickly the summer progresses—and how high the quality remains. "We only have three rehearsals and one dress rehearsal and we are constantly learning and performing the new orchestra repertoire throughout the summer," Yu says. "Still, we are all capable of performing a great concert every week, which is amazing."

The classical music celebrities that Aspen attracts are also exciting for Yu. She remembers a particularly thrilling encounter from the summer. "Having a conversation with Gil Shaham after a dress rehearsal was so cool," Yu says. "He is really nice and it felt amazing meeting him in person."

This summer, Yu has most enjoyed getting to work with her teacher, Kathleen Winkler. "In my one-on-one lessons, I always learn so much," Yu said. "I am always looking forward to learning more from her every week." Winkler also gave Yu advice she finds especially important. "Focus on searching for the beautiful sound that you want, then you will be great," she remembers Winkler saying.

Yu is most excited to participate in Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto, her favorite piano piece. "I wish he wrote a violin concerto," Yu says.

After Aspen, Yu is heading to the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston for her master's degree, where she will study with former AMFS artist-faculty member Donald Weilerstein. Yu said that getting accepted to his studio is one of the achievements of which she is most proud.

Looking forward, Yu's goals are simple: to become a great violinist and educate future generations of violinists. Perhaps one day, she will be another's inspiration. Unless, of course, the Pink Panther gets there first.

Helen Yu is the recipient of the Dorothy Richard Starling Foundation 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

