

ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Today, Alexander Lenser is playing English horn.

ALEXANDER LENSER *English horn*

"I don't think success is measured by how well you do. For me, it is being able to play in a way that moves other people," says Aspen Music Festival and School student and English horn player Alexander Lenser.

With this philosophy, it's easy to pinpoint why Lenser decided to focus his studies on the specialty instrument. Jokingly referring to the English horn as the "anguished horn," he explains, "English horn solos are usually very emotionally moving—the tone quality lends itself to that." Think of the dark, heart-wrenching melody of the famous English horn solo from Dvořák's "New World" Symphony; in that moment, "the orchestra stops, and you're suspended in time before the English horn starts," says Lenser.

Lenser began his musical studies on piano and violin (the instruments his mom and dad play, respectively), but when he decided to pick up a third instrument, oboe was his choice. "I knew when I heard the sound, that was the sound I wanted to play," he says, referencing the first time he listened to his dad's old record of Mozart's Oboe Concerto.

Lenser's skill and commitment took him to the New England Conservatory to study with John Ferrillo, principal oboist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO). Upon completion of his undergraduate degree, Ferrillo encouraged Lenser to continue his studies on the English horn with fellow BSO musician Robert Sheena. "Studying with Mr. Sheena turned out to be the most important musical and personal experience I ever had. He is such a great musician, but it wasn't the thing that mattered the most to him," says Lenser. "I don't think I'd be the same person today if I didn't know him."

This summer marks Lenser's second studying and performing in Aspen. For the young musician, performing side by side with top oboe and English horn professionals in orchestra has made his experience at the AMFS especially fulfilling. He remembers the performance of Wagner's *Die Walküre* in last year's final Festival Orchestra concert as "by far the highlight of both of my summers here." Given the opportunity to play the English horn in an exposed duet with Elaine Douvas—longtime AMFS artist-faculty and principal oboist of The Metropolitan Opera Orchestra—he recalls the moment in awed disbelief: "What in the world am I doing on this stage with her?" Lenser was awarded the Aspen Festival Orchestra English horn fellowship this summer, granting him many more opportunities for transformative experiences that bridge the gap between his time as a student and as a professional.

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—ALEXANDER LENSER

ALEXANDER LENSER IS ONE OF 480 YOUNG ARTISTS STUDYING IN ASPEN THIS SUMMER.
HE IS A RECIPIENT OF THE HARRY AND EFFIE LERNER TRUST SCHOLARSHIP.