

# ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Today, Rebecca is sitting assistant principal in the second violin section.

## REBECCA VILLALTA *Violin*

Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS) student Rebecca Villalta, 21, doesn't come from a musical background, but that hasn't stopped her from pursuing the violin at a high level. In fact, she believes her non-traditional route has informed her musicianship and helped her to be successful. "I've been able to bring a lot of [things from] the rest of my life into my music. I have more to say than if I had only been concentrated on music from the very beginning," says Villalta.

Hoping to get her involved in a new extracurricular activity, Villalta's mom encouraged her to pick an instrument to study at age eight. She loved the sound of the violin, and thus began Villalta's violin studies, first at a local music school, then with a university teacher as she got more serious. Pursuing classical music was a fairly uncommon path in her hometown of San José, Costa Rica, so she began attending various summer festivals in the U.S. and received a scholarship to study at the Interlochen Arts Academy for her last couple years of high school. The transition was difficult at first, but having these new experiences also contributed to her growth as a musician. Says Villalta, "I had to live in two very different environments and cultures, which I think adds to what I can say through music."

Last year she attended the AMFS as an Aspen Conducting Academy Orchestra fellow and returned this year as part of the second violin assistant principal pool for the Aspen Festival Orchestra. There are countless things that brought her back this summer, she says, citing the level of excellence of the orchestra, the scholarship support, the beautiful environment, and the artist-faculty members she studies and performs with as just a few.

This summer, she split her private studies between Kathleen Winkler and Alexander Kerr, noting that she was excited to receive a variety of feedback and experience multiple styles of teaching as she prepares for her upcoming master's program auditions. Performing alongside artist-faculty member Renata Arado, who is principal second violin in the AFO, has also been "really amazing," she says. "Being in the front, it's very important to know what you're doing," she says, adding that she's "learned so much about leading [a section]—like how much to move and what to say."

Villalta is now entering her final year of undergraduate studies at the Eastman School of Music in upstate New York, with sights set on a master's degree in violin and ultimately landing a position in a professional orchestra. But, it is more than just a career path—Villalta's favorite thing about the violin is how it allows her to communicate. "You can't really express as much with words. It's so easy to transmit exactly what you're feeling, and the technique that you're taught helps you better convey those emotions," she says.

*Villalta is one of the 480 young talents studying at the AMFS this summer.*

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—REBECCA VILLALTA