



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 13, 2026

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ASPEN MUSIC FESTIVAL AND SCHOOL LAUNCHES COLLECTIVE COMPOSITION WORKSHOP FOR YOUTH IN PARTNERSHIP WITH TACAW

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WORLD PREMIERE PUBLIC PERFORMANCES PLANNED FOR APRIL, AUGUST

ASPEN, COLORADO — The Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS) launches its first-ever Collective Composition Workshop—an innovative new education and community initiative presented in partnership with The Arts Campus at Willits (TACAW). Designed for young musicians in grades 4–12, the workshop offers an exciting opportunity for Roaring Fork Valley students to create, collaborate, and perform an original musical work under the guidance of nationally-renowned artists.

TACAW will host the Collective Composition Workshop after school April 6–10, 2026. No prior composition experience is required to participate in this dynamic, student-centered experience in which participants will work together to compose a brand-new piece of music from start to finish.

Supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the workshop’s creative process is inspired by the America250 youth essay prompt: “What does America mean to you?”. In addition to AMFS and TACAW Education staff, leadership includes Daniel Trahey, co-founder of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra’s nationally acclaimed OrchKids program and Creative Director of the Collective Conservatory, alongside accomplished faculty including percussionist Pete Tashjian, violinist Natalie Frakes, hip-hop artist Aja Black, and clarinetist/saxophonist Mollie Westbrook, all of whom bring extensive experience in music education and performance.

“This workshop puts our valley youth at the center of the creative process and allows their voices to be heard,” says Heather Stanton, Vice President of Education and Community at the Aspen Music Festival and School. “By working alongside extraordinary teaching artists and their peers,

students will experience what it truly means to create their own music by listening, experimenting, taking risks, and building something meaningful together.”

The workshop will culminate in a free, public world premiere of the final composition on Friday, April 10, 2026, at TACAW, followed by a reprise performance during the Aspen Music Festival and School’s summer season on Saturday, August 1, 2026, in Harris Concert Hall. The final composition will reflect the voices and influences of its student creators and weave together elements of classical music, jazz, popular styles, and improvisation. Says Stanton, “We are pleased to reprise this program on the 2026 summer season as part of our Aspen Sounds initiative, during which valley students and their original work will be celebrated alongside the preeminent American composers of today.”

The program is open to students in or near Colorado’s Roaring Fork Valley with at least one year of experience on their instrument or in vocal study. The AMFS and TACAW welcome participants affiliated with all youth-serving arts organizations like Jazz Aspen Snowmass, the Roaring Fork Youth Orchestra, Rock and Roll Academy, Bravo! Vail, local in-school music programs, homeschool communities, and private music studios.

Tuition for the workshop is \$100, with partial and full scholarships available for students with financial need. Enrollment for the April workshop is limited to 50 students; registration is currently open. For more information or to register, visit <https://bit.ly/collectivecompositionworkshop> or contact [education@aspenmusic.org](mailto:education@aspenmusic.org).

“At TACAW, we believe in the power of the arts to bring young people together through joyful, inspiring experiences,” said Anna Feiss, Education Manager at TACAW. “We also believe deeply in partnering with local nonprofits– by sharing expertise and resources, we can create something even stronger. Above all, we’re proud to celebrate America 250 with a program that honors the voices and experiences of ALL young people.”

*Support for this project comes from the National Endowment for the Arts, with space generously provided in partnership with TACAW (The Arts Campus at Willits).*

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Collective Composition: A Student-Led Work  
Friday, April 10 | 6:00 PM  
TACAW

Program Info:

A world premiere performance that features an original musical work created entirely by local student musicians. Inspired by the America250 youth essay prompt, “*What does America mean to you?*”, the piece is the culmination of the Aspen Music Festival and School and TACAW’s first Collective Composition Workshop. In addition to the premiere performance, participants and facilitators will share insights into the creative process and shaping of the final work.

<https://tacaw.org/calendar/collective-composition-a-student-led-work/>

Collective Composition: A Student-Led Work

*Saturday, August 1 | 4:30 PM*

*Harris Concert Hall, Aspen Music Festival and School*

Program Info:

This performance presents the second iteration of an original musical work created entirely by local student musicians, reprised in Aspen with creative direction from nationally recognized teaching artists. Inspired by the America250 youth essay prompt, “*What does America mean to you?*”, participating students and facilitators will perform the newly revised piece and present on the composition process. The work, which features the ideas and voices of local youth, is featured alongside today’s leading American voices in composition as part of the AMFS’s Aspen Sounds initiative, supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

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## **ABOUT THE ASPEN MUSIC FESTIVAL AND SCHOOL**

The AMFS is the United States’ premier classical music festival, in normal years presenting more than 400 musical events during its eight-week summer season in Aspen. The organization draws top classical musicians from around the world to this Colorado mountain retreat for an unparalleled combination of performances and music education. Many events are free.

About 400 music students from 40 U.S. states and 40 countries come during a normal summer to play in four orchestras, sing, conduct, compose and study with 200 renowned artist-faculty members. Outside of the summer season, the AMFS presents recitals and robust music education programs for local youth (ages K-12), families, and community members.

Renowned alumni include violinists Joshua Bell, Sarah Chang, Cho-Liang Lin, Robert McDuffie, Midori, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg and Gil Shaham; pianists Ingrid Fliter, Orli Shaham, Conrad Tao, Yuja Wang, Wu Han and Joyce Yang; conductors Marin Alsop, James Conlon, James Levine, Leonard Slatkin and Joshua Weilerstein; composers William Bolcom, Philip Glass, David Lang, Augusta Read Thomas, Bright Sheng and Joan Tower; vocalists Jamie Barton, Sasha Cooke, Renée

Fleming, Dawn Upshaw and Tamara Wilson; cellists Lynn Harrell and Alisa Weilerstein; guitarist Sharon Isbin; performer Peter Schickele; and bassist Edgar Meyer. Learn more at [aspenmusicfestival.com](http://aspenmusicfestival.com).

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#### **ABOUT TACAW:**

The mission of The Arts Campus at Willits is to present exceptional performing arts, cultural events, and thought-provoking programming that sustain a connected, engaged, and inspired community. The nation's first net-zero, all-electric performing arts facility that functions using at or near net-zero energy usage throughout the year, TACAW features music, theater, comedy, film, lecture series dialogues and more. Learn more at <https://tacaw.org/> or by calling 970-510-5365.

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#### **ABOUT THE COLLECTIVE CONSERVATORY**

The Collective Conservatory is an initiative to facilitate meaningful, active, and immersive music-making experiences for communities, inspired by the philosophy of nurturing and inspiring the whole person. Experienced teaching artists work alongside volunteer professional musicians and other cultural ambassadors to curate dynamic offerings, addressing community needs for social connectivity, wellness, creative expression, and independent learning. Led by Creative Director, Dan Trahey, and Music Director, Pete Tashjian, the Collective Conservatory offers curated experiences like the Collective Composition Workshop to community music schools and programs across the nation.