



PRESS RELEASE

ASPEN MUSIC FESTIVAL AND SCHOOL
ANNOUNCES ALBUM OF
CONTEMPORARY WORKS

FEATURING MUSIC BY SARAH GIBSON,
LOTTA WENNÄKOSKI, SAMUEL ADAMS
AND CHRISTOPHER STARK



Contemporary Voices
(ARR0005 / Arlos Records)
Out 21 August 2026

Aspen, CO (29 July, 2026)—The Aspen Music Festival and School presents a vibrant portrait of today's compositional voices in a new album highlighting the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble and recorded during the 2025 Festival.

Featuring works by Sarah Gibson, Lotta Wennäkoski, Samuel Adams, and Christopher Stark, the selections reflect Aspen's commitment to expanding the boundaries of the classical repertoire. The album includes two AMFS co-commissions and world premieres—Adams' *First Work* and Stark's *Prehistoric Songs and Dances That Never Existed*—alongside Gibson's *Soak Stain* and Wennäkoski's *Hele*.

Captured live in Aspen's Harris Concert Hall, this album offers a rare opportunity to experience bold contemporary works that are seldom recorded, embodying the Festival's dedication to fostering new music and amplifying the voices shaping the future of classical music.

This project is made possible with support from the Sidney E. Frank Foundation.

[Listen to the album](#) | [Download press kit](#)

ABOUT SARAH GIBSON

Sarah Gibson is a Los Angeles based composer and pianist whose works draw on her breadth of experience as a collaborative performer. Her compositions reflect her deep interest in the creative process across various artistic mediums—especially from the female perspective. She has received a Copland House Residency and commissions from the League of American Orchestras and the Toulmin Foundation, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Tanglewood Music Center, Aspen Music Festival and School, Grossman Ensemble, and Seattle Symphony, among others. Gibson's music has been described as “expansive” (*LA Times*) and has been performed by the BBC & Los Angeles Philharmonics, Atlanta, Seattle, and New Jersey Symphonies, Jennifer Koh, Departure Duo, HOCKET, and at various venues across the United States and in Europe.

ABOUT LOTTA WENNÄKOSKI

Lotta Wennäkoski (born 1970) is a composer based in Helsinki, Finland. Her output consists of orchestral, chamber, and vocal works, and her pieces are frequently performed worldwide. In 2017 BBC commissioned Wennäkoski an orchestral work *Flounce*, the premier of which was at the Last Night of the Proms in 2017. Among later commissions are the string quartet *Pige* (2022) for the Danish String Quartet, the violin concerto *Prosoidia* (2022-23) for Ilya Gringolts and BBC Symphony Orchestra, and the recorder concerto *Vents et lyres* (2024-25) for Lucie Horsch and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Her latest orchestral work, *Zelo*, was commissioned by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and maestro Robin Ticciati and was premiered on March 25th, 2026 at the Royal Festival Hall in London. Wennäkoski has been awarded Finland's State Prize of Music in 2020.

ABOUT SAMUEL ADAMS

Samuel Adams (b. 1985) is an American composer. *Gramophone* Magazine praised Adams as “among the most interesting composers of the millennial generation in his negotiation of the tensions that shape and define his musical narratives: between directness and implication, silence and resonance, emotion and its aftermath” and Joshua Kosman (*SF Chronicle*, *On a Pacific Aisle*) called Adams “a creator of deep originality operating at the highest levels of inventiveness.” Adams’s music has been hailed as “mesmerizing” by *The New York Times* and *The San Francisco Chronicle*, “transcendent” by *The Chicago Tribune*, and “beguiling” by *The Strad* magazine. He has been commissioned by a number of major ensembles, including the San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New World Symphony, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and The Living Earth Show. He has also collaborated with many of today's leading artists, such as conductors Esa-Pekka Salonen, Michael Tilson Thomas, Karina Canellakis, and David Robertson; pianists Conor Hanick, Emanuel Ax, Sarah Cahill, and Joyce Yang; and violinists Karen Gomyo, Anthony Marwood, and Jennifer Koh.

ABOUT CHRISTOPHER STARK

Christopher Stark (b. 1980, St. Ignatius, MT) is a composer of contemporary classical music deeply rooted in the American West. Having spent his formative years in rural western Montana, his music is always seeking to capture the expansive energy of this quintessential American landscape. Stark, whose music *The New York Times* has called, “fetching and colorful,” has been awarded prizes from the American Academy in Rome, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Fromm Foundation at Harvard, Chamber Music America, ASCAP, and the Barlow Endowment. Named a 2017 “Rising Star” by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, his music has been performed by such ensembles as Alarm Will Sound, Los Angeles Philharmonic, American Composers Orchestra, BIT20 Ensemble, Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, Momenta Quartet, Unheard-of//Ensemble, No Exit New Music Ensemble, and New Morse Code.

ABOUT ASPEN MUSIC FESTIVAL AND SCHOOL

The AMFS is the United States’ premier classical music center for performance and education, presenting more than 400 musical events during its eight-week summer season in Aspen. Under the leadership of President and CEO Alan Fletcher and Music Director Robert Spano, the organization draws top classical musicians from around the world for a rich combination of performances of orchestral works, opera, chamber music, recitals, contemporary music, works by new or previously unrecognized voices, popular genres, family events, and talks, competitions, and classes.

More than 450 music students from 40 U.S. states and 40 countries come each summer to play in four orchestras, sing, conduct, compose and study with more than 100 artist-faculty members who come from the orchestras of Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Dallas, the Metropolitan Orchestra, and the leading conservatories and music schools like The Juilliard School, The Shepherd School of Music at

Rice University, and The Colburn School. Students represent the field's best talent; many have already begun their professional careers, and others are on the cusp.

The AMFS is deeply committed to community and many events are free. Seating outside the Music Tent on the David Karetsky Music Lawn and in the Kaye Music Garden is always free. Regular livestreams are free anywhere in the world. The AMFS also runs popular music programs in-school and after-school at most schools in Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley.

Renowned alumni include violinists Joshua Bell, Sarah Chang, Midori, Gil Shaham, and Robert McDuffie; pianists Joyce Yang, Orli Shaham, Conrad Tao, Yuja Wang, and Wu Han; conductors Marin Alsop, James Conlon, Leonard Slatkin and Joshua Weilerstein; composers William Bolcom, Philip Glass, David Lang, Augusta Read Thomas, Bright Sheng and Joan Tower; singers Isabel Leonard, Jamie Barton, Sasha Cooke, Danielle de Niese, Renée Fleming, Dawn Upshaw and Tamara Wilson; cellist Alisa Weilerstein; guitarist Sharon Isbin; bassist Edgar Meyer; and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

2026 Festival

The [Aspen Music Festival and School \(AMFS\)](#) celebrates 77 years of performance and mentorship this summer, when more than **450 young artists** from around the world come together, with **artist-faculty and guests** from the foremost orchestras and music schools nationwide, for **almost 200 public events**.

Titled "**For All**" in a nod to the closing words of the Pledge of Allegiance, the 2026 Festival commemorates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In celebration of this historic milestone, the season's repertoire will include classic and contemporary works by American composers, as well as significant works celebrating the contributions of visitors and new arrivals from all over the world to the American sound, and an Aspen signature mix of both much loved and rarely performed works from the full breadth of the classical repertoire. As in previous seasons, these events will all be presented over eight weeks in Aspen's spectacular mountain setting (**July 1–Aug 23**).

Aspen Contemporary Ensemble

The Aspen Contemporary Ensemble (ACE) is an elite group that appears regularly throughout the summer at the Aspen Music Festival and School playing the energetic and challenging new chamber music of the world's leading artists. The ensemble also provides concert performances of new works composed in Aspen by young artists enrolled in the Susan and Ford Schumann Center for Composition Studies. These performances are an essential element in the training of composers, who must experience their compositions firsthand with a live ensemble to complete the act of creation.

Timothy Weiss, conductor, directs the ACE ensemble and program and is a professor and director of the Contemporary Music Ensemble at Oberlin. He is the 2025 recipient of the Ditson Conductor's Award in recognition of his exceptional commitment to the performance of works by American

composers. In 2024, his premiere recording of the orchestral works of Missy Mazzoli with the Arctic Philharmonic earned a GRAMMY nomination. Weiss has gained critical acclaim for his performances and brave, adventurous programming throughout the U.S. and abroad. His repertoire in contemporary music is vast and fearless, including masterworks, recent compositions, and an impressive number of premieres and commissions. Recently, he was the recipient of the Adventurous Programming Award from the American Symphony Orchestra League. In his twenty-four years as music director of the Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble, he has brought the group to a level of artistry and virtuosity in performance that rivals the finest new music groups. During his tenure with the CME, he has helped launch the ensembles eighth blackbird and ICE, as well as many other leading performers of contemporary music. As a committed educator, he is professor of conducting and Chair of the Division of Contemporary Music at Oberlin. He holds degrees from the Royal Conservatory in Brussels, Belgium, Northwestern University, and the University of Michigan.

Donald Crockett, ACE conductor, is the recipient in 2013 of an Arts and Letters Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters for outstanding artistic achievement, as well as a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2006. Crockett has been very active over the years as a composer and conductor with the venerable and famed Monday Evening Concerts in Los Angeles. As conductor of the USC Thornton Symphony's annual New Music for Orchestra series, Crockett has premiered over 125 new orchestral works by outstanding Thornton student composers. Crockett is professor and chair of the composition program, director of Thornton Edge new music ensemble and assistant dean for faculty affairs at the USC Thornton School of Music, as well as senior composer-in-residence with the Bennington Chamber Music Conference.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Contemporary Voices will be released on **Friday 21 August 2026** via all major streaming and download services.

The album will be available to pre-order from **Friday 31 July**, and track from the album (Samuel Adams: First Work, II. The First Word) will be released as a single to coincide.

Track List

1. Sarah Gibson | Soak Stain

Donald Crocket, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble

2. Lotta Wennäkoski | Hele

Timothy Weiss, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble

Samuel Adams | First Work

Timothy Weiss, Melanie Spector, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble

3. I. Makebelieve

4. II. The First Word

5. III. The Universe as Primal Scream

Christopher Stark | Prehistoric Songs and Dances That Never Existed

Timothy Weiss, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble

6. I. Counting Dance

7. II. Drought Song

8. III. Warning Dance

9. IV. Healing Song

10. V. Resurrection Dance



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