

Aspen Chamber Symphony: Bartók's Viola Concerto

6 pm, July 20, at the
Benedict Music Tent

Violist Lawrence Power presents Bartók's pioneering Viola Concerto and will solo in Esa-Pekka Salonen's technically challenging Pentatonic Étude. The Aspen Chamber Symphony program also includes Bartók's spirited Romanian Folk Dances and Schumann's triumphant Symphony No. 2.

Opera Gala: *The Barber of Seville* in Aspen

Monday, July 16, at
the Caribou Club

Aspen's only black-tie gala features an exclusive dinner at the Caribou Club and a full performance of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. For details, contact Darian Oliva at 970 205 5063.

Hadelich plays Mendelssohn, contemporary recital

AMY HEGARTY
Festival Focus Writer

Multiple award-winning violinist Augustin Hadelich offers two programs this week that demonstrate two sides of this musical powerhouse.

A recital, on July 18, shows his passion for "modern virtuosic" music, such as the fiendish Ligeti Violin Concerto, and his appearance with the Aspen Festival Orchestra on July 22 shows his depth with one of the most popular works in the Romantic repertoire: the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto.

"The Aspen Music Festival and School helped introduce Augustin to the American audience, and he's now a superstar," says President and CEO Alan Fletcher. "We're proud of that, and we're delighted that he continues to come to Aspen. He's doing really interesting things [with the music he's performing here this week]."

While the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto is one of the best-known and most beloved works in the violin repertoire, the Ligeti—written in 1990, revised in 1992, and performed here in a recital conducted by David Robertson—is much less known, although no less formidable.

"It's one of the most extraordinary and difficult works ever written for the violin," says Hadelich, *Musical America's* 2018 Instrumentalist of the Year. "The concerto is by turns beautiful, frightening, joyous,

painful, and virtuosic. Performing it is exhilarating and feels a bit like walking on a tightrope!"

Ligeti, a Hungarian-Austrian composer who was born in 1923 and died in 2006, was known for his progressive, avant-garde style. In his later works, however, "compositional avant-garde techniques are never employed for their own sake, but always to express sincere and intense emotion," Hadelich says.

That emotion is evident throughout the five-movement concerto, from its very first notes to its cadenza, which was written by Thomas Adès and premiered by Hadelich in January, when he performed the Ligeti with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, led by Adès.

"The concerto's fast first movement starts with open strings creating an ethereal and otherworldly sound, in perpetual motion," Hadelich says. "The second movement is a beautiful and serene chant, almost medieval in nature, which is interrupted by a chorus of ocarinas! During the final movement, the music becomes more and more agitated, culminating in the frantic cadenza, in which the violinist explores musical material from all five movements as the music accelerates toward the end of the concerto like a meteorite crashing down to earth."

Hadelich's recital includes three other



German violinist Augustin Hadelich performs Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto with the Aspen Festival Orchestra on July 22. On July 18, he presents a recital of challenging contemporary works in Harris Concert Hall.

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Ehnes embarks on three-year Beethoven violin sonata cycle



On July 21, James Ehnes begins a three-year journey to perform all of the Beethoven Violin Sonatas.

JESSICA CABE
Festival Focus Writer

As one Beethoven cycle in Aspen ends, another begins—concert series that offer audience members a lens on both Beethoven's artistic arc and the performing artist's depth.

Violinist James Ehnes will kick off a three-year cycle of the complete Beethoven violin sonatas at his Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS) recital on July 21 in Harris Concert Hall—just weeks before pianist Jonathan Biss wraps up his three-year project performing the complete Beethoven piano sonatas.

"Now that we're finishing up the Beethoven piano sonata cycle with Jonathan Biss, it just seemed like a beautiful idea to start the violin sonata cycle," said AMFS President and CEO Alan Fletcher. "Beethoven

wrote violin sonatas, piano sonatas, and string quartets in every period of his life, and that isn't necessarily true of other kinds of works. When you hear the cycle and you're hearing Beethoven as he grew throughout his career, it makes it really profound to hear all of them in sequence."

Ehnes, who is one of the foremost violinists of his generation, will perform Beethoven's third, fourth, eighth, and tenth sonatas at his recital this year, giving audiences a glimpse into the composer's evolution by programming these beloved works roughly chronologically.

"Beethoven lived long enough to be able to have an early, middle, and late period; we distinguish his output by those three eras," said Asadour Santourian, AMFS

See **Ehnes**, Festival Focus page 3

Masterful violinist Hope performs Fletcher Violin Concerto

JESSICA CABE
Festival Focus Writer

Violinist Daniel Hope has made a name for himself as both a master of classical favorites and a champion of brilliant new works, and on July 17, Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS) audiences will get a taste of all of the above during his recital in Harris Concert Hall.

Hope will tackle Shostakovich/Barshai's Chamber Symphony in C minor and selections from Satie/Debussy's *Gymnopédies* before rounding out the evening with Alan Fletcher's Violin Concerto.

Fletcher, who is also president and CEO of the AMFS, was commissioned by Hope for the New Century Chamber Orchestra, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, and the Savannah Music Festival, all organizations at which Hope holds posts. Hope premiered the work in September in Berkeley, California, with the New Century Chamber Orchestra, to rave reviews.

In *San Francisco Classical Voice* the reviewer wrote, "In a vernacular that reflects his American musical upbringing, Fletcher draws broad soundscapes, with long melodic lines and evocative musical images, plus a dark, brooding solo part that received an intense, very personal interpretation by Daniel Hope and his gorgeous-sounding Guarneri del Gesù."

A *SFist* reviewer wrote, "The world premiere of the violin concerto by Alan Fletcher...conjured watery ripple

textures in the outside movements, enhanced with an eerie breathiness."

Fletcher says the work is for virtuoso ensemble in that every string part is unique, which creates a delightfully rich, textured sound.

"There are no first violins and second violins, and all the string players are just 23 different players doing different things," Fletcher said. "It makes for a very complex texture. Because I was thinking a lot about Zurich when I wrote it, it's full of imagery of the lake at night, moonlight on the lake, and the mountains around the lake. I hope that it comes across as beautiful as the lake in Zurich."

The setting could not be better, as Aspen is a natural paradise in its own right. Asadour Santourian, AMFS vice president for artistic administration and artistic advisor, said Fletcher's concerto unfolds like a flower.

"Alan is a lyricist; he writes lyrical works, and he's written beautifully here for the violin and the orchestra," Santourian said. "All the parts are very original. The piece starts with an idea that Alan manages to make blossom onto the entire ensemble. Yes, it's a violin concerto, but with this number of original parts, suddenly, it's this beautiful unfolding of the idea over many players."

Hope is one of the most prolific musicians in the world, with a packed roster of performance and speaking engagements. He also adds writer, radio host, and filmmaker to his resume.



Violinist Daniel Hope performs a recital featuring works by Shostakovich/Barshai and AMFS President and CEO Alan Fletcher on July 17.

"Even thinking of the amazing performers we have throughout the season, I think Daniel is one of the busiest performers in the world," Fletcher said. "He is everywhere all the time playing every kind of repertoire—chamber music, big solo music, brand new pieces he commissions, just many, many works. He's just a force of nature in our world."

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HADELICH: Ligeti, 'groundbreaking' Mendelssohn

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works written in the twentieth or twenty-first century: Francisco Coll's *Hyperlude V* for solo violin, Stephen Hartke's *Netsuke* for violin and piano, and Takemitsu's *Waterways* for piano and clarinet. When choosing his repertoire, Hadelich says, "the idea was to start with solo violin, then violin and piano, then small ensemble, and then, finally, the Ligeti concerto. I like the thought of the ensemble gradually becoming larger and more complicated, depicting the dramatic arc of the program and keeping an eye toward variety."

Hartke is a Grammy Award-winning composer who also serves on the Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS) faculty. His 2011 work *Netsuke*, which features Hadelich and pianist Conor Hanick, "is beautiful and also very funny in places," Hadelich says. *Netsuke*'s musical references, Hadelich notes, "range from classical avant-garde to jazz to imitating Japanese instruments.

For his July 22 program with the Aspen Festival Orchestra—which is conducted by Christian Arming and includes the U.S. premiere of Anders Hillborg's *Homage to Stravinsky* and R. Strauss's *Don Quixote*, with cellist Joshua Roman in his Aspen

debut—Hadelich switches gears to perform Mendelssohn's 1844 Violin Concerto.

"Augustin has a certain proclivity for fast fingers and fast bow action," says Asadour Santourian, AMFS's vice president for artistic administration and artistic advisor. "The Mendelssohn will show us his other side—the great melodist and the great lyrical player."

Because the Mendelssohn is "extremely well written for the instrument and exhibits its capabilities to full effect,

it's sometimes considered an easier work," Hadelich says. "However, the musical challenges of this piece are significant. While it's not difficult to play the notes," he adds, "the music is so transparent and needs to be played with precision and

lightness and full of character. The work was quite groundbreaking at the time, and many later composers were deeply influenced by its innovations with regard to violin concerto form."

"Augustin has a certain proclivity for fast fingers and fast bow action. The Mendelssohn will show us his other side—the great melodist and the great lyrical player."

Asadour Santourian

AMFS Vice President for Artistic Administration and Artistic Advisor

When comparing the Mendelssohn and the Ligeti, Hadelich, who learned the former when he was eight years old, says, "I've performed the Mendelssohn much more often, so it feels very familiar. It's also a work that many in the audience will already know. But I love both works very much, and I

particularly love switching between these styles. I don't think I would be happy if I had to perform the Mendelssohn or the Ligeti twenty times in a row. When there's enough variety in my repertoire, I'm always excited about what I'm playing."

ASPEN MUSIC FESTIVAL AND SCHOOL BOX OFFICE HOURS

Harris Concert Hall: 9 am through the intermission of the evening concert, daily.
Wheeler Opera House: 9 am–5 pm daily.

American Brass Quintet leads new program

LAURA SMITH
Festival Focus Writer

The members of the American Brass Quintet (ABQ) are perhaps *the* living authorities on brass chamber music—which is why when the group announced the launch of a new brass chamber music training program in Aspen this summer, young brass players around the world took notice.

"We hoped for two ensembles applying, to start," says ABQ's longtime bass trombonist John Rojak, "but instead we received twelve. Twelve *outstanding* ensembles. Right from the start everything is exceeding our expectations."

Brass quintets applied to the inaugural program, called American Brass Quintet Seminar @Aspen, from all over, including one creatively expanded to a sextet, and one from Sydney, Australia, which raised funds to come to Aspen through a government grant program.

The four accepted ensembles arrived in Aspen June 20 and are in the midst of perhaps the most rigorous musical training of their lives. They participate in private lessons, ensemble coachings, seminars, demonstrations, and public performances, learning musical skills that, says Rojak, not only "will make them highly successful in all musical endeavors, as chamber music does" but will also "bring them the art of listening, the art of communication, and teach them lessons that will translate to any life situation they might find themselves in."

Besides the traditional teaching and coaching, the members of ABQ make themselves available to their students for wide-open, flexible time. Says Rojak, "we've built in some flextime where the students can ask any of us to meet with them about anything." He adds, "so far, that's been really good."

With an intensive program like this, in just four weeks, what can be accomplished? "By the end of the summer," says Rojak, "we hope they have taken from it how to be fine collaborative musicians—and how to be excellent citizens. It's important. Many



The American Brass Quintet leads a new brass seminar in Aspen, and performs in recital July 19.

people can play an instrument. One just needs to have a good sound, play in tune, in time, and musically. All it takes is practice. But then to be a good person on top of it, to know how to collaborate, how to make things better? There's a reason there is music."

The American Brass Quintet was formed in 1960 and Rojak joined in 1991. The group has been recognized for decades as one of the world's premier chamber music ensembles. They play all over the world and are leading commissioners and developers of new brass repertoire.

All this experience, as well as the deep commitment to the repertoire and to creating a legacy for brass players, has given ABQ members a highly specific body of knowledge.

Says Rojak, "The intimacy of the new program is excellent. Having so much contact is wonderful." He continues, "We've learned so much in our time, and I think it's an obligation to pass it on."

"And," he says with a smile, "it's easier to pass it on if you see someone every day because if you forgot to tell them something yesterday, you can say it today." *ABQ and student ensembles perform in recital July 19.*

EHNES: Sonatas show evolution of Beethoven

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vice president for artistic administration and artistic advisor. "A handful of the violin sonatas on this program come from early and another handful from the middle period. By mixing them, you can fashion programs where you can see Beethoven's evolution as a composer, but they're purely enjoyable, too. One doesn't have to pay attention to any of the musicological underpinning to enjoy it."

And audiences seem likely to enjoy this recital, not least because of the performer Ehnés is. The violinist has recorded Beethoven's sonatas to great acclaim, with *Gramophone* calling his playing "stunningly responsive, with a sense of propulsion, yet without overlooking moments of delicacy."

The works on the program have a little something for everyone. The Fourth Sonata was Beethoven's first that met critical acclaim upon its premiere and remains a favorite today among early-period fanatics. The Eighth Sonata features the composer's early adventures in syncopation and unconventional rhythms for the times. And the Tenth Sonata is often described today as Beethoven's loveliest.

"James is great at everything, really," Fletcher said. "I wouldn't single out his Beethoven the way Jonathan Biss has become world-famous as a Beethoven interpreter, but I would say James's sense of architecture is very superior, and that is what you most want in a Beethoven cycle."

It has been some time since the masterful musician has performed in Aspen, so the opportunity to have him back—for three seasons in a row, no less—is an exciting one.

"We're thrilled about James coming back to us," Fletcher said. "Since he became music director of the Seattle Chamber Music Society, it's hard for him to tour much in the summer. And he is just a masterful player."

"He is one of the preeminent violinists on the planet, along with a handful of others," Santourian agreed. "This is a great way to herald him to Aspen and bring attention to his artistry."