

Destination:

Music

This page: The Pacific Symphony performs with Bruce Springsteen at a SummerFest concert at the Pacific Amphitheatre in Orange County. Opposite: A performance at Colorado's Bravo! Vail festival, with members of the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields led by Joshua Bell, the ensemble's music director.

Whether it's on a mountaintop, next to a lake or river, or in an amphitheater, experiencing music outside can make you hear music in a completely different way.

by Jonathan Williams

I t's summertime, and you're reclining on the grass, gazing at the towering Colorado Rockies, with a cool breeze wafting by, while listening to a symphony Dvořák wrote in 1889 at Vysoká u Příbramě, a summer resort in his native Bohemia. Or you could be on a hilltop next to a giant, Stonehenge-like sculpture in the wilderness of Montana's Big Sky country, headed to hear Bach and Beethoven—in a barn. You might be on your way to hear Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, carrying a picnic basket and walking across the famous lawn where Leonard Bernstein first studied as a young twentysomething phenom conductor. You could be rocking gently on

a steamboat, listening to a classical and jazz concert; or in the audience to hear a brand-new percussion piece, performed on the lush grounds of a former estate. You could even be right in the middle of a bustling metropolis, where the whoosh of city traffic provides an appropriate undercurrent to Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*.

The setting always plays a part in shaping the concert experience, but perhaps nowhere so dramatically as at a summer music festival, where the backdrop can be anything from a mountain, lake, or lawn to an outdoor park or sculpture center—and of course the interior of a concert hall. At the Tippet Rise festival in Fishtail, Mon-



Zach Mahone

tana, the dramatic Beartooth Mountains landscape combine with contemporary sculpture to provide a fresh perspective even to ears accustomed to hearing the chamber pieces on some of the concert programs there. At the Tanglewood Festival in the Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts, summer home to the Boston Symphony Orchestra since 1940, “There’s something about the clarity of the air, the sky, the peacefulness of the landscape,” says Anthony Fogg, the BSO’s artistic administrator and Tanglewood director. Adding to Tanglewood’s appeal are the iconic lawns and special vibe of history: stories abound, like the time a fourteen-year-old Midori broke two E-strings while playing Bernstein’s *Serenade after Plato’s Symposium*, conducted by the composer. At the Grant Park Music Festival, the architecture of Chicago and stunning Pritzker Pavilion spark the music choices themselves. “Our programming really does reflect the energy of the city—it has that steely edge,” says Paul Winberg, Grant Park’s president and CEO. Whether it’s Gershwin in downtown Chicago or a quartet playing next to an earth-inspired

outdoor sculpture in Montana, these moments make you hear the music and experience place in new ways.

TIPPET RISE: Sculpture, Vistas, Chamber Music **Fishtail, Montana**

In 2016, a new chamber music festival was launched in Montana’s Big Sky country. For co-founders Peter and Cathy Halstead, the rugged landscape of the Beartooth Mountains in Fishtail, Montana, presented a “clarity and sense of space,” says Peter Halstead. Inspired by Storm King, the center for outdoor sculpture 60 miles north of New York City, the couple bought a 10,260-acre ranch to create their own sculpture center, which would also include a summer music festival. Musicians play near outsized outdoor contemporary art sculptures like Mark di Suvero’s hulking steel “Beethoven’s Quartet” and Ensemble Studio’s rock-like “Domo,” which looks like part of the set for Stanley Kubrick’s *2001*, or perhaps a *Doctor Who* episode on a barren foreign planet. Having concerts next to these sculptures creates a close relationship between musicians and the

audience, or as Peter Halstead describes the experience, “We are participating together in this extraordinary landscape.” The musicians enjoy the ranch setting of Tippet Rise, too. Pianist Lucas DeBargue, who placed fourth in the International Tchaikovsky Competition in 2015, played at Tippet Rise in 2016 and told the Halsteads, “I want to play the land. I want to have that as part of what I’m saying.” Peter says that musicians have a sensibility that allows them to feel “not only the notes” but the space they are playing in as well. Tippet Rise also has a concert barn, its floorplan modelled on the Haydnsaal at Austria’s Esterhazy Palace, where Franz Josef Haydn was court musician in the 1700s.

This year, the festival will feature a commissioned world premiere: Aaron Jay Kernis’s String Quartet No. 4, performed by the Borromeo String Quartet. Other performers include the St. Luke’s Chamber Ensemble and the Calidore, Dover, and Escher string quartets. Chamber programs will feature music by Bach, Gershwin, Barber, Cage, Glass, Ned Rorem, Gabriel Kahane, and Timo Andres, and a special focus on Chopin and Robert and



Ivett Bañan

Pianist Jenny Chen performs next to the outdoor sculpture “Domo” at the Tippet Rise Festival in Fishtail, Montana.

Clara Schumann’s connections to nature. Weather also plays a role in the Tippet Rise experience. One year, says Cathy Halstead, “There was this unbelievable storm. We all ran and got in our cars. And then the air just turned purple all around us. It wasn’t just like the sunset was purple. Every bit of the air was purple. When you walked through and breathed the air, it was purple.”

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL:
Estate setting, mix of new and old music
Katonah, New York

The onetime Westchester County estate of Lucy and Walter Rosen has been home to the Caramoor Festival since 1945, providing outdoor concerts in the open-air Venetian Theater, Spanish Courtyard, and expansive gardens. “It very much feels when you enter it and drive onto the property that you are coming to a home, as opposed to a sort of purpose-built festival venue,” says Kathy Schuman, Caramoor’s vice president of artistic programming and executive producer. Caramoor CEO Jeffrey Haydon agrees: “The setting is one of the most important ingredients of Caramoor.” Haydon says that artists and audiences enjoy the mix of formal and informal concerts under a tent or by a tree in the garden. Visitors can see and hear what the festival terms Sound Art sculptures, which are placed throughout the estate. This year will feature works by Walter Kitundu, Paula Matthusen, and Ranjit Bhatnagar. The artwork “encourages peo-

ple to come here not just for a concert but a couple hours early,” says Schuman. “It can be a much fuller experience than just hearing a concert.” Caramoor always includes standard repertoire, but this year the festival is adding music by 22 living composers, including world premieres: a new work by Julia Adolphe, performed by the Verona Quartet, and Vijay Iyer’s *Mallet Quartet*, featuring Sō Percussion. Schuman says she feels passionately that “music is not a museum, and we have to be sure to present the composers who are living.”

TANGLEWOOD FESTIVAL:
Berkshires, Boston Symphony, Bernstein
Lenox, Massachusetts

Nestled in the Berkshire Hills in western Massachusetts, the Tanglewood Festival, the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, is one of the country’s best-known outdoor spaces for classical music. In 1936, Mrs. Gorham Brooks and Miss Mary Aspinwall Tappan offered Tanglewood, the 210-acre Tappan family estate, as a gift to conductor Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, setting the wheels in motion for the opening of the festival in 1937. “Tanglewood has this incredible relationship between the landscape and music, and somehow one’s senses become all that



Gabe Palazzo

At the Caramoor Festival in Westchester County, performances take place in the Spanish Courtyard, the gardens, and open-air Venetian Theater.



Henry Scott

Music Director Andris Nelsons leads the Boston Symphony Orchestra at the Tanglewood Festival.

more acute,” says BSO Artistic Administrator Anthony Fogg, who also serves as the festival’s director. With Tanglewood, the Boston Symphony Orchestra took an already beautiful place and put it on the map of destinations to hear music and experience the environment. At the semi-outdoor Koussevitzky Music Shed, audiences get to experience the setting and music simultaneously. Tanglewood isn’t the area’s only cultural attraction: renowned theater and dance presenters like the Berkshire Theatre Group and Jacob’s Pillow as well as the Norman Rockwell and Chesterwood museums are nearby. There’s also a bird sanctuary and hiking trails.

This season, Fogg says he’s most excited about the festival’s celebration of the Leonard Bernstein Centennial—Bernstein himself was in the first Tanglewood Music Center class in 1940. The Boston Symphony Orchestra and Boston Ballet will collaborate on Bernstein’s *Fancy Free*; also planned are Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti*, *On the Town*, and *Candide*. As usual, Tanglewood will host a weeklong Festival of Contemporary Music, performed mostly by the student musicians of the Tanglewood Music Center. Hollywood composer John Williams will be on hand to lead the popular annual *Film Night*; there will be pops performers including James Taylor, Roger Daltrey, and Peter Frampton; and plenty of chamber

music. Currently under construction on the Tanglewood campus is a four-building complex set to open in 2019, to house rehearsals, performances, and a new education and enrichment center.

**GRANT PARK MUSIC FESTIVAL:
Iconic architecture, large-scale works, heart of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois**

For Chicago’s Grant Park Music Festival, the life of the city influences the music, and the music reflects the city. The Frank Gehry-designed Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park, completed in 2004, is the festival’s home. “We play really in the heart

of downtown Chicago,” says Paul Winberg, Grant Park’s president and CEO. “In many ways we’re in a quintessential American city.” Led by Music Director Carlos Kalmar, the festival ranges from Tchaikovsky, Debussy, and Wagner to Broadway programs, with an emphasis on large-scale presentations. American composers are always included—this year will feature music by Copland, Williams, and Sousa, as well as pieces by Sean Shepherd and William Bolcom. Chicago is “home to modern architecture,” says Winberg. Architects like Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe all made their marks on the city’s skyline, as does the Pritzker Pavilion itself.

Concerts in Grant Park are not the only place festival musicians appear. The Grant Park Orchestra also performs in city neighborhoods, at the South Shore Cultural Center, and at Columbus Park on Chicago’s West Side. The orchestra works with young musicians underrepresented in the field, through its Project Inclusion Professional Development Program in collaboration with Chicago Sinfonietta. Winberg says the orchestra has a large repertoire, but that some pieces are “too delicate” for its outdoor concert environment. “One of the things about being in downtown Chicago is that there’s traffic noise and sirens and fire trucks that are going by,” says Winberg. But that’s part of the whole experience for the audience. Every summer, the orchestra performs several large-scale works with the Grant Park Chorus; this summer will include Orff’s *Carmina Burana*, Haydn’s



Grant Park Music Festival

The Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Chicago’s Millennium Park, completed in 2004 and designed by Frank Gehry, is home to the Grant Park Music Festival and a landmark destination for modern design and music in the heart of the city.

Mass in B-flat (“Theresienmesse”) and Walton’s *Belshazzar’s Feast*. Winberg says, “When you have that much energy coming off the stage, in this giant outdoor space, it’s pretty remarkable.”

BOSTON LANDMARKS ORCHESTRA: Urban setting, community connection
Boston, Massachusetts

Since 2001, Wednesday evenings in July and August in Boston have meant free concerts by the Boston Landmarks Orchestra at the Hatch Shell along the Charles River Esplanade. Music Director Christopher Wilkins says the orchestra considers the city itself an inspiration for the orchestra’s programming: “The environment influences your experience of the music, and the music influences your experience of the environment.” In 2016, Boston Landmarks presented a bird-themed program in collaboration with the Massachusetts Audubon Society, featuring Ralph Vaughan Williams’s “The Wasps” Overture, Tan Dun’s *Passacaglia: Secret of Wind and Birds*, and Michael Gandolfi’s *The Garden of Cosmic Speculation Part I*. Boston Landmarks created an interactive video about endangered birds for audiences to watch on their phones as they listened to the music at the bird-themed concert. This year, the orchestra will premiere a commissioned piece by Stella Sung, *Oceana*, about the sounds of the sea, focusing on animal sounds and human impact, in collaboration with the New England Aquarium.

The orchestra also partners with Camp Harbor View for at-risk children in Boston neighborhoods during the summer. “We hire local composers to write very simple pieces that these kids can learn, usually drumming pieces, and have them perform with us in a fully orchestrated version of what they learned,” says Arthur Rishi, Boston Landmarks’ artistic administrator. Last summer the orchestra performed Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, Sibelius’s *Finlandia*, and Dvořák’s Symphony No. 8. Wilkins notes that he programs concerts with the outdoors in mind, and often opts for large-scale pieces, which work especially well when performing outdoors. “There’s no question that, in some ways, bigger is better,” says Wilkins.

Music Director Christopher Wilkins, at center, conducts the Boston Landmarks Orchestra at the Hatch Shell on the Charles River Esplanade.



BRAVO! VAIL: Colorado Rockies, four resident orchestras
Vail, Colorado

When Artistic Director Anne-Marie McDermott first came to play at the Bravo! Vail festival, she says she had to pull off to the side of the road when the breathtaking size and beauty of the Colorado Rockies came into view. “You have all this sky and all these Aspen trees and the mountains that you’re looking at,” she says. “Hearing a Mahler Symphony outdoors in this environment really makes you hear the music in a whole different way.” In addition to other presentations, the festival typically features three or four orchestras in residence. For 2018, the New York Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, and the U.K.-based Academy of St Martin in the Fields will appear. This year, the festival has commissioned Gabriella Smith to write a work for the Dover String Quartet and vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth, which specializes in contemporary music and extended techniques. “The new score is all about extinction of certain animal species,” McDermott says. “It’s two years in a row now we’re getting commissioned works that are all about nature and the outdoors and wildlife.” Last year, David Ludwig wrote a piece for strings and piano titled *Pangea*, about tectonic plates and the changing planet. Executive Director Jennifer Teisinger says she sees the location of the amphitheater and the sur-

rounding mountains, trees, and flowers as a big part of attending a Bravo! performance. “You’re going to feel the wind across your face, you might feel the sun on the back of your neck, you might hear birds chirping,” she says. Squirrels have been known to scamper across the stage during a performance. Musicians and audiences also take advantage of the area to go hiking, biking, golfing, and rafting. Teisinger says that for both musicians and audiences, “This is a summer playland.”

STRINGS MUSIC FESTIVAL: Outdoor recreation destination, pavilion performances
Steamboat Springs, Colorado

In Steamboat Springs, Colorado, where skiing and outdoor recreation are king, place is a vital part of Strings Music Festival’s identity. “We’re a destination resort,” says Executive Director and CEO Elissa Greene. The festival orchestra plays in a 2008 purpose-built pavilion that seats 589 people and features glass walls that open out so musicians and audiences alike can hear the music while looking out at the trees and mountains. Greene says that when the pavilion was being designed, the festival wanted to remove the dividing barrier they feel a traditional wall represents: “We don’t want people to feel like they are going indoors on a beautiful summer day to enjoy beautiful music. They can kind of seamlessly go from one to the other.” In

addition to pavilion performances, the orchestra performs at the Steamboat Ski Resort on Mount Werner and at the Yampa River Botanic Park in Steamboat Springs. The festival also holds events combining yoga and classical music outdoors. Led by Music Director Michael Sachs, principal trumpet of the Cleveland Orchestra, festival presentations range in 2018 from a Fourth of July “Celebrate America” show to a “Water Colors”-themed concert of Takemitsu and Ravel, with harpist Yolanda Kondonassis, and American dance music from the ragtime era. Kristine Kilbourne, the festival’s advertising and marketing director, emphasizes Strings Music Festival’s informality, with musicians and audiences mingling: “I think part of the fun is that concertgoers are running into musicians at lunch or at their favorite restaurant downtown. They’re crossing paths on the mountain biking trail.”

LAKE GEORGE MUSIC FESTIVAL: Many venues, classic Adirondacks setting Lake George, New York

At Lake George in upstate New York, the beauty of the lake and towering Adirondack Mountains transform the concert experience. Now in its eighth season, the festival performs a mix of new and experimental chamber music and traditional orchestral works. But what makes the festival really stand out are the fourteen dif-

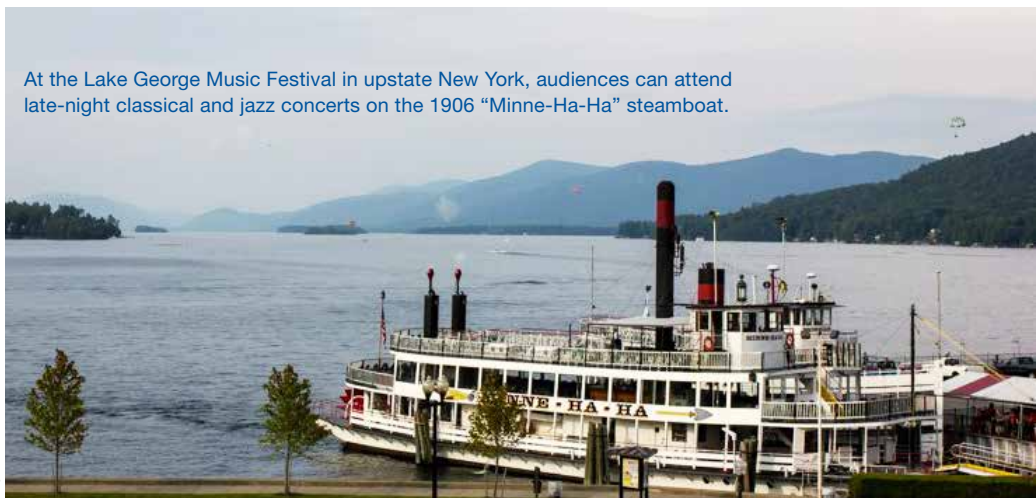
ferent Lake George venues where concerts are performed, including a steamboat, an amphitheater, bars, restaurants, and a yacht club. Each summer, the festival programs a Sounds of Our Time concert, focusing on new music, which typically attracts a younger crowd. This year the Brooklyn-based PROJECT Trio—bassist Peter Seymour, flutist Greg Pattillo, and cellist Eric Stephenson—will be featured. The festival encompasses thirteen chamber concerts, children’s concerts, a concert by the full festival orchestra, and a late-night concert on the 1906 “Minne-Ha-Ha” steamboat with contemporary classical and jazz music. Musicians in the festival are young professionals who enjoy playing chamber music, says Alexander Lombard, the festival’s president and CEO. Concertgoers tell him that the intimate atmosphere of the concerts and the relationships between

the musicians and audience are what keep them coming back. What defines a Lake George concert experience? “Being up close and personal with the musicians,” says Lombard.

PACIFIC SYMPHONY: Classical, film, and pops music in an amphitheater Orange County, California

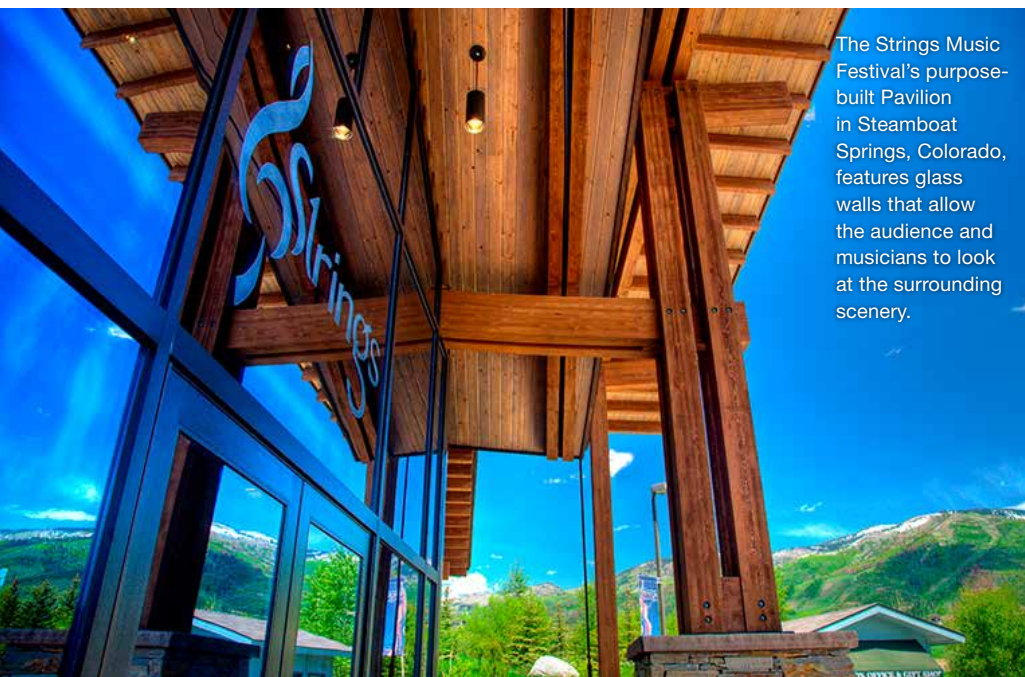
Since last summer, the Pacific Amphitheatre at the Orange County Fair has been the summer home of the Pacific Symphony, following the 2016 closing of the Irvine Meadows amphitheater. The orchestra’s SummerFest three-concert series this year will include a Fourth of July tribute to the band Chicago, John Williams’s film score to *E.T.*, with the film shown during the concert, and a Tchaikovsky concert. Pacific Symphony President John Forsyte says the summer concerts typically attract a wide demographic and lots of kids. “It’s a much longer experience with a highly social aspect,” he says, because audiences can arrive at 6 p.m., enjoy a picnic, and mingle before the concert starts. Forsyte says the orchestra has identified a group of attendees that they have dubbed “Social Serenity Seekers,” who come to the outdoor concerts mainly “to relax and socialize.” The Orange County Amphitheater seats 8,000 people, which gives events an arena-concert feel. “It almost feels like a rock show,” Forsyte says. “The kind of cheering and intensity of enthusiasm really excites the musicians.” **S**

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At the Lake George Music Festival in upstate New York, audiences can attend late-night classical and jazz concerts on the 1906 “Minne-Ha-Ha” steamboat.

Rogers Divertrik



The Strings Music Festival’s purpose-built Pavilion in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, features glass walls that allow the audience and musicians to look at the surrounding scenery.

Strings Music Festival