

News Release



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ROBERT SPANO NAMED MUSIC DIRECTOR OF THE ASPEN MUSIC FESTIVAL AND SCHOOL

*Appointment of this dynamic American conductor, educator, performer and composer
brings a new energy and a new era to the AMFS*

Spano becomes music director-designate immediately; assumes full title in 2012

ASPEN, Colo.—The Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS) today announced Robert Spano as the organization's music director. Spano will be in residence in Aspen for the 2011 summer season as music director-designate and will assume the full role of music director in 2012. Spano will also lead the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen (AACA), Aspen's renowned conducting program, as a co-director in 2011 and director from 2012 onward. His five-year contract begins immediately. He will be the fourth long-term music director and second AACA director in the AMFS' 63-year history.

Now in his 10th year as music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Maestro Spano, 49, has been called "a phenomenon" (*The New Yorker*) and "comprehensively gifted" (*The Boston Globe*). Devoted to both concertizing and teaching, he holds a position as professor of conducting at his alma mater, the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. In addition, Spano is an accomplished performing pianist, plays flute and violin and composes. He is also a tireless champion of living composers, notably his celebrated Atlanta School of composers which consists of Osvaldo Golijov, Jennifer Higdon, Christopher Theofanidis, Adam Schoenberg (an Aspen alumnus) and Michael Gandolfi, among others.



In the 2011 AMFS summer season, Spano leads four concerts, three on Sundays with the Aspen Festival Orchestra and one on a Friday with the Aspen Chamber Symphony: on July 3 in a program featuring Richard

Strauss' "Don Quixote" and Vladimir Feltsman as the soloist in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2; on July 15 with long-time collaborator Jean-Yves Thibaudet performing Ravel's Piano Concerto in G major; and on July 31 featuring Mahler's Symphony No. 5 and the Barber Violin Concerto with Robert McDuffie. On August 21, Spano closes the festival season, conducting Mahler's Symphony No. 2, "Resurrection," with vocalists Isabel Bayrakdarian and Sasha Cooke. During the summer, he co-directs the conducting program with colleagues Larry Rachleff and Hugh Wolff. In each subsequent summer Spano is slated to conduct concerts with the Aspen Festival Orchestra and the Aspen Chamber Symphony—ensembles that include professional principals—as well as, on occasion, opera productions and the all-student Aspen Concert Orchestra. He will also direct the AACAP program.

"This appointment heralds the beginning of a new era for the festival," says AMFS President and CEO Alan Fletcher. "Robert is known for his electrifying performances in the concert hall as well as a sincere dedication and devotion to teaching. Everything he does is informed by his formidable intellect, wit and passion for expressivity. From our first conversations about Aspen, Robert made it clear that his commitment to education and the future of music will enhance and expand the festival in all the best ways, focusing on the experience of each student while nurturing the living, breathing art form of classical music. It will be my honor and great pleasure to work closely with a leader who loves music so completely and communicates this love to others so profoundly."

Fletcher continues, "From the first meetings, the search committee was clear that it was looking for someone with a vision, not just for Aspen, but more broadly for classical music—someone who seeks to define and redefine a classical ideal for our time. It's what a music director does not just *for* Aspen but *with* Aspen that makes this post, and this festival, so exhilarating for students, faculty and patrons. Robert has such a vision, and thus meets that criterion supremely. He will bring a freshness, a vitality and an intellectual rigor to this institution that will bring it alive in new ways. In addition, I expect Robert will create a spectacular, and unique, musical identity for Aspen—just as he has at other institutions. It will be a joy to be a part of it."

"It is more than an honor to be asked to join the Aspen Music Festival and School," says Spano. "Over the last two decades, I have found my time in Aspen to be inspirational in every way. The faculty is extraordinary, and the wealth of experience and knowledge they bring to the Festival is an inestimable gift. The students seem to come from a limitless pool of talent. It is a joy to witness their musicality as it unfolds and transforms in such a concentrated environment. With its devotion to the nurturing of young talent, Aspen is central to the future of music. The extraordinary setting is such that many of the world's most prominent musicians are drawn to the festival out of a strong desire to be part of something both artistically satisfying and personally fulfilling. I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to become an integral part of such an institution."

Kay Bucksbaum, chair of the board of trustees of the AMFS, says, “I am delighted we have found such an elegant match as Mr. Spano for the position of music director at the Aspen Music Festival and School. Over the years I have witnessed the palpable excitement he brings to his performances, and I look forward to his impact on the growth and development of the festival and school. I’m especially pleased that he brings with him such a passion for teaching, as the students are truly the heart of our organization. My sincere thanks go to the board and faculty members who served on the search committee as well as to Alan Fletcher, who led the positive and successful search which resulted in such thrilling new artistic leadership.”

Edward Berkeley, longtime director of the Aspen Opera Theater Center, artist-faculty member and chair of the AMFS Music Committee comments that Spano will bring an important energy and vitality to the festival. He says, “Every time I’ve worked with Robert—in Aspen, in Brooklyn, in Atlanta, in Chicago—there’s been the thrill of being absolutely in the moment of the music and the drama. Robert brings a sense of discovery to everything he does: this is something which will be fantastic for the students. They will be part of imagining, and reimagining, constantly.” Of Spano’s approach to teaching, Berkeley adds, “Robert is an excellent mentor, very direct, very honest, very inspiring. He speaks to students as artists, and his approach is to find and bring out the art that’s within them.”

Spano first conducted in Aspen in 1993, leading the Aspen Festival Orchestra in a program on July 4 with pianist Wu Han as soloist. Since then, he has returned for eight seasons, conducting more than a dozen programs and classes including both professional/student orchestras (Aspen Festival Orchestra and Aspen Chamber Symphony), two all-student orchestras (Aspen Concert Orchestra and the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen Orchestra), operas, opera scenes master classes and repertoire readings with the American Academy of Conducting in Aspen. He has performed as pianist on the chamber music series (Busoni Violin Sonata No. 2 with violinist Laura Park on August 16, 1997).

Spano succeeds David Zinman, who served as music director from 1998 to 2010, and who founded the American Academy of Conducting in 2000. Before Zinman, Aspen’s long-term music directors were Lawrence Foster (1990-1996) and Jorge Mester (1970-1990).

The Aspen Music Festival and School’s search committee, an advisory body, has been working on this appointment since June 2010. The members of the group were Thomas Baer, Kay Bucksbaum, Vinson Cole, John Donnell, Gerald Eberhardt, David Halen, Alan Fletcher, Joan Harris, Yoheved Kaplinsky, Masao Kawasaki, Ray Mase, Michael Murray, Stephanie Naidoff, Asadour Santourian and Joaquin Valdepeñas.

Robert Spano Biography

Robert Spano is recognized as one of the brightest and most imaginative conductors of his generation. Now in his tenth season as music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, he has enriched and expanded its repertoire, and elevated the ensemble to new levels of international prominence and acclaim.

In his distinguished career, Spano has conducted the greatest orchestras of North America, including those in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Montreal, New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco. Abroad, he has led the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala (Milan), Czech Philharmonic, Berlin Radio Sinfonie Orchestra, BBC Scottish and BBC Symphony Orchestras, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, New Japan Philharmonic and Oslo Philharmonic, among others.

Equally accomplished as an operatic conductor, he has appeared with the opera companies of Chicago, Houston and Cincinnati, as well as at the Santa Fe Opera, Royal Opera at Covent Garden and Welsh National Opera. In 2005 and 2009, he conducted internationally renowned casts in three cycles of Wagner's monumental "Der Ring des Nibelungen" at the Seattle Opera, drawing raves from *The Seattle Times*: "Loud roars of approval greeted each act when conductor Robert Spano entered the orchestra pit, where he continues to work magic."

The 2010–2011 season marks not just Spano's 10th as music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, but the 10th anniversary of the Atlanta School of composers as well. The school grew out of Spano's and the orchestra's commitment to nurture and champion a new generation of American composers. To celebrate this milestone, the ASO commissioned 10 fanfares from 10 composers to be premiered throughout the season. The first fanfare, composed by Christopher Theofanidis, received its world premiere at the season-opening performances. Other contributors include Atlanta School members Jennifer Higdon, Michael Gandolfi and Adam Schoenberg (an Aspen alumnus), as well as Alvin Singleton, Spano himself and prospective composers on the horizon. In addition to the 10 fanfares, Spano will lead the ASO in the world premiere of James Oliverio's Double Timpani Concerto in May 2011.

Spano made his fifth Carnegie Hall appearance with the ASO in October 2010, leading Janáček's masterwork "Glagolitic Mass," Ligeti's "Atmosphères" and Bartók's "The Miraculous Mandarin: Suite." Spano returned to Carnegie Hall in February 2011 with ASO Choral Director Norman Mackenzie to conduct the 20th anniversary of the world-renowned Carnegie Hall Choral Workshop, titled "ROBERT SPANO AND THE BERLIOZ REQUIEM: CHORAL WORKSHOP AND FESTIVAL." In partnership with the National High School Choir Festival, the workshop included rehearsals, master classes and score preparation sessions with Mackenzie and Spano, culminating in a performance of the Requiem with the Orchestra of St. Luke's and tenor Thomas Cooley.

Spano's guest engagements in 2010-2011 include appearances with the orchestras of Seattle, Philadelphia, Montreal and Indianapolis. Spring 2011 marks the second year of Spano's three-year residency at Emory University, in which he spends three weeks each year leading intensive seminars, lecturing and presenting programs on science, math, philosophy, literature and musicology throughout the university's campus. In its 165-year history, Emory University has honored only seven other individuals with such expansive residencies, including the Dalai Lama, President Jimmy Carter and author Salman Rushdie.

With a discography of 16 critically acclaimed recordings for Telarc and Deutsche Grammophon recorded over nine years, Spano has garnered six Grammy Awards with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. September 2010 saw the release of Jennifer Higdon's "The Singing Rooms," Alvin Singleton's "PraiseMaker"—both world premiere recordings—and Scriabin's "Poème de l'extase." Spano is also featured on Deutsche Grammophon's March 2010 DVD release of Golijov's "La Pasión según San Marcos," conducting a live version of the work at the Holland Festival. Other recent recordings include John Adams' "Transmigration," Michael Gandolfi's "The Garden of Cosmic Speculation," Brahms's Requiem, a live concert recording of Puccini's "La Bohème"—the first American recording of the opera since 1956—and Golijov's "Oceana" and "Ainadamar" (Grammy winner for Best Opera Recording and Best Contemporary Classical Composition).

Since Spano's arrival at the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the orchestra has reported increased single ticket and subscription sales, while the number of its donors has risen by more than 40 percent. In addition to standard repertoire, he regularly programs and performs music of the 20th and 21st centuries, as well as world premieres of ASO-commissioned works. He maintains a strong community presence by appearing in recitals and chamber music performances with ASO musicians throughout the city.

Spano served as director of the prestigious Festival of Contemporary Music at the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Tanglewood Music Center in 2003 and 2004, and from 1996 to 2004 was the music director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic—a period marked by significant artistic growth and critical acclaim. During his eight-year tenure he brought the ensemble to international attention through thematic programming and special projects, including Thomas Adès' "Powder Her Face," John Adams' "Nixon in China" and "The Death of Klinghoffer," world premieres by Michael Hersch, Bright Sheng, Philip Glass and Christopher Theofanidis, and more than 40 New York premieres. *The New York Times* remarked that "Robert Spano's innovative programming has turned the Brooklyn Philharmonic from a respected ensemble in an outer borough into an essential contributor to the cultural life of greater New York."

A strong and passionate advocate for music education, Spano was head of the Conducting Fellowship Program at the Tanglewood Music Center from 1998 to 2002, and is a professor of conducting at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. In January of 2007, Spano brought the Oberlin Student Orchestra to Carnegie Hall with a critically acclaimed performance of music by Jennifer Higdon, Mozart and Bartók. He was music director of the 2006 Ojai Festival, has appeared frequently at the Aspen and Tanglewood music festivals and often conducts the Curtis Symphony Orchestra and the Juilliard Orchestra. He has received honorary doctorates from Bowling Green State University, the Curtis Institute of Music, Emory University and, most recently, Oberlin. In May 2009 Spano was awarded Columbia University's Ditson Conductor's Award for the advancement of American music.

An accomplished pianist, Spano performs chamber music with many of his colleagues from the Atlanta Symphony and has also collaborated with members of the Boston Symphony, the Brooklyn Philharmonic

and the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. Born in 1961 in Conneaut, Ohio, and raised in Elkhart, Indiana, he grew up in a musical family, composing and playing flute, violin and piano. He is a graduate of Oberlin, where he studied conducting with Robert Baustian, and continued his studies at the Curtis Institute of Music with the late Max Rudolf. In 2004 at the Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music, Spano performed “under water,” a work for solo piano he composed based on Debussy’s “Engulfed Cathedral.” *The New York Times* praised it as “a cohesive and often lovely solo piano work.” He has been featured on CBS’s “Late Night with David Letterman,” “CBS Sunday Morning,” A&E’s “Breakfast with the Arts” and PBS’s “City Arts.” Spano was named Musical America’s 2008 Conductor of the Year. He makes his home in Atlanta.

About the Aspen Music Festival and School

The Aspen Music Festival and School is the United States’ premier classical music festival and training ground for the world’s next generation of professional musicians. The institution presents more than 300 musical events during its eight-week summer season in Aspen and draws top classical musicians from around the world to this Colorado mountain retreat for an unparalleled combination of performances and music education. More than 25 percent of events are free and seating on the grass around the open-air Music Tent is always free.

Every summer the AMFS creates an intense musical world of its own with four performing orchestras; educational programs that include orchestral, opera, conducting, composition, piano and guitar; 630 accomplished students from 40 countries and every major conservatory; and 130 distinguished artist-faculty 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, Yuja Wang, Wu Han and Joyce Yang; conductors Marin Alsop, James Conlon, James Levine and Leonard Slatkin; composers William Bolcom, Philip Glass, Augusta Read Thomas, Bright Sheng and Joan Tower; vocalists Jamie Barton, Danielle de Niese, Sasha Cooke, Renée Fleming, Susanne Mentzer and Dawn Upshaw; cellists Lynn Harrell and Alisa Weilerstein; performer Peter Schickele; guitarist Sharon Isbin; and bassist Edgar Meyer.

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Digital photos from 3/12 announcement to AMFS board of trustees available upon request.

Fact sheet on Aspen Music Festival and School to follow.

Robert Spano photo (above) credit: Andrew Eccles