



Road Trips

Summer music festivals: a drive-by, divided into five excursions.

by Keith Powers

Summer road trips by car bring a whiff of nostalgia, and a sense of adventure. And for a classical-music lover, what better way to experience the country's many summer music festivals than to cruise the countryside, enjoying the daytime drive—maybe blasting some Beethoven or Mahler or Bernstein along the way—as much as the nights of music?

There are huge numbers of summer music festivals to choose from, and we've dreamed up some two-week excursions—some more challenging than others—plotted out to land in as many of them as possible. Our East Coast trip—Asheville, North Carolina to Bar Harbor, Maine—is

dotted with festivals in just about every hamlet. The Midwest trip isn't quite as plentiful, but quite artistically adventurous. The Rockies abound with prestigious musical guests in the summer. The Pacific Northwest has its own spectacular mountains—and the ocean. And Southern California—didn't they invent driving there?

From a practical standpoint, a summer vacation by car offers not just the appeal of the open road but also the most practical option, the flexibility to hit a lot of festivals, not to mention avoiding headaches of air travel such as security lines and flight delays. Perhaps the real question is what kind of car to drive. Whichever vehicle you



choose, it won't be easy to do it all—you can't, not in one summer, at least. Whatever you miss goes on next year's summer-music bucket list. I'll be in the Rockies this summer. See you there, or send me a note on your own travels. But first, pick out the driving machine.

Southern California Dreaming

La Jolla has to be excited. This season the American/Israeli pianist Inon Barnatan takes over the La Jolla Music Society's chamber-focused SummerFest in August, after eighteen years of growth under violin-



Musacchio and Iannello / Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia

Oh, Ojai: Conductor and soprano Barbara Hannigan will be curator for this June's Ojai Music Festival in southern California.

ist Cho-Liang Lin. And a new venue, the Conrad Prebys Performing Arts Center, opens—it already has a nickname, the Conrad—designed by Epstein Joslin Architects, who have helped create performance spaces such as the Koka Booth Amphitheater in Cary, North Carolina, summer stage for the North Carolina Symphony, and the Strathmore Music Center in Bethesda, Maryland,

one of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's two regular performance venues. The Conrad's seating curves like a horseshoe, so the audience is always close to the action. "I call it a cocoon of wood that embraces the stage and the audience," architect Alan Joslin says.

Before you travel to La Jolla, spend a thought-provoking weekend at Ojai. The Ojai Music Festival may not last long (June 6-9), but everyone seems to be there. The Thomas Fire in 2017 miraculously spared the village of Ojai—if you can call being surrounded by fire and smoke "spared"—and the festival as well. The list of Ojai Music Festival's guest music directors since it began 75 years ago impresses: recently Vijay Iyer, Jeremy Denk, and Dawn Upshaw have created programs, and eminent artists like Boulez, Copland, Foss, Harbison, and Tilson Thomas have led the festival in the past. The guest leadership position this season will be filled by the versatile conductor/soprano Barbara Hannigan, and June 2019 also marks Artistic Director Thomas W. Morris's last of sixteen seasons. Under his watch, Ojai Music Festival has morphed into something like Germany's Darmstadt Music Festival, or the Venice Biennale. "The world of music is so different than it was sixteen years ago," Thomas says. "The appetite on the part of audiences for more intense, distinctive musical experiences is increasing. Those forces that have propelled the music director appointments over the years."

Several spots north of Los Angeles are an easy road trip from Ojai. For eight weeks, the Music Academy of the West summer festival trains young professional musicians and presents hundreds of concerts on its campus in Montecito and in Santa Barbara; the Academy in recent years has included partnerships with the New York Philharmonic and London Symphony Orchestra. And Festival Mosaic—with a mix of chamber, orchestra, and "unclassical" crossover concerts—spreads out over multiple venues in San Luis Obispo County. Conductor Scott Yoo directs that festival, which takes place in late July and August. In Los Angeles, the Hollywood Bowl, summer home of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, is open for sym-



Hooray for Hollywood: The Hollywood Bowl, summer home of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, hosts a busy calendar of symphonic and pops concerts every year.

phonic and pops events all summer long. But also head south, where conductor Michael Francis's *Mainly Mozart* in San Diego brings a little bit of Salzburg to the restored Balboa Theatre in June. The *Mainly Mozart* summer opens with pianist Jeremy Denk, and also features violinist Augustin Hadelich playing the Beethoven concerto with the festival orchestra. Then cap it all off with La Jolla.

Pacific Overtures

"It's not rocket science," says clarinetist David Shifrin about running Chamber Music Northwest in Portland, Oregon. "It is labor-intensive, and it's about partnerships—between musicians and music lov-



Western Lights: Music Academy of the West's Hind Hall teaching studio building (above), opened in 2017. The festival trains young professional musicians and presents hundreds of concerts in Montecito and Santa Barbara, California.



ers.” Shifrin has led the festival as artistic director since 1981—that’s a long time in musician years. “I came to Chamber Music Northwest in the earliest stages,” he says. “It was just two or three concerts in a city that did not have that much music going on. But it became like *Field of Dreams*: if you build it, they will come. Now we have tens of thousands of people coming every year. A budget that was about ten thousand dollars is now probably something like a couple million.” The 2019 summer kicks off with three clarinetists playing Mozart (Shifrin is in charge, after all). The Rolston, Calidore, and Miró string quartets all make appearances as well. This season marks Shifrin’s 39th and final season, and stay alert for next year’s celebrations, when the festival turns 50 and the husband-and-wife team of violinist Soovin

Wine Country: Music in the Vineyards, in its 25th year this summer, presents chamber concerts at multiple California wineries, such as this one at Harvest Inn in St. Helena.



Kim and pianist Gloria Chien become the festival’s next artistic directors to succeed Shifrin.

Driving north, in July you can find the Seattle Chamber Music Society settled into Benaroya Hall, the Seattle Symphony’s home and a beautiful destination after a scenic drive up the Pacific Coast. And with live concert broadcasts in four parks around the city—the Music under the Stars program—you don’t even have to get a ticket. Violinist James Ehnes directs. Oregon makes some beautiful music in the summer, and you could easily spend some happy time driving around the Oregon Cascades. Teddy Abrams directs the Britt Orchestra in the tiny town of Jacksonville; the Britt festival is named after Peter Britt, a pioneer and owner of the land now used for Britt Park, and performances take place in July and August. Sunriver Music Festival at the Sunriver Resort and in Bend, about three hours southeast of Portland, features classical and pops concerts, masterclasses, and open rehearsals. Among the many fine younger players in its August series, will be Van Cliburn Competition silver medalist Kenny Broberg in several appearances.

Traveling south to California’s wine country, Music in the Vineyards makes pairings all over the area, from the wineries of Charles Krug to Mondavi to Beringer. This August, Music in the Vineyards celebrates its 25th anniversary. Driving out to the peninsula, the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, now directed by Cristian Macelaru, brings contemporary orchestral music to Santa



Lisa Marie Maszucco

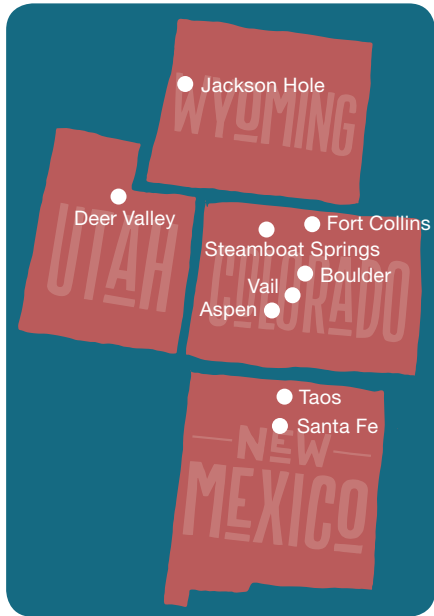
Bay Area Sounds: California’s Music@Menlo chamber music festival and teaching institute is curated by husband-and-wife team of pianist Wu Han and cellist David Finckel.

Cruz in July and August. And the adventurously themed Music @ Menlo—run for years by the husband-and-wife team of cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han—brings performers, scholars, and a well-schooled audience to concerts in the Atherton area. This year’s theme: Incredible Decades, focusing on seven periods from Bach to the present that helped propel music’s evolution.

Mountain and Desert Treks

“I think you have to foster a genuine interest in the whole gamut of music,” says Mark Neikrug, artistic director of the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. “Audiences will always run away faster than you can chase them,” he jokes. Neikrug has led the downtown festival in the artsy high-desert locale since 1998, so he knows what he’s talking about. The festival’s user-friendly schedule—most concerts at noon, or early evening—completes the laid-back vibe of the series. Complemented by the sumptuous Santa Fe Opera season—just a few miles up Rte. 84/285—Santa Fe feels like a musical place to be in July and August.

Further north, a couple hours drive into the mountains, is gorgeous Music From Angel Fire, a chamber music festival near Taos that has been bringing distinguished musicians to the community for 35 years. Violinist Ida Kavafian directs, and she recruits a roster of esteemed colleagues like cellist Peter Wiley and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. Continuing north, deeper into the Rockies, the four orchestras at Bravo! Vail are waiting to greet you. In 2019, Chamber Orchestra Vienna–Berlin—a chamber group of musicians from the Vienna and Berlin philharmonics—



joins the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic at the skiing retreat, with each doing a one-week residency.

There are plenty of great summertime vistas on the road in the Rockies, and plenty of rewards for music lovers. Robert Spano serves as music director for this season's "Being American" themed programs at Colorado's Aspen Music Festival—only 100 curvy, mountainous miles from Vail.



Desert Dvořák: The Lensic Theater in Santa Fe, New Mexico, built in 1931 as a vaudeville and movie house, is now one of the spaces where Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival concerts take place.



Eric Beffin

Mountain Music: For six weeks every summer, the Colorado Music Festival takes place at the historic Chautauqua Auditorium in Boulder.

The Strings Music Festival in Steamboat Springs celebrates its 30th anniversary this season, under the direction of Michael Sachs, the Cleveland Orchestra's principal trumpet. The Off the Hook Arts festival in Fort Collins, run by composer Bruce Adolphe, brings neuroscientists, cognitive psychologists, and, of course, musicians for an exploration of human perception (and deception, and illusion). It's fun, and certainly one-of-a-kind. The Colorado Music Festival just named conductor Peter Oundjian as permanent director, and focuses its attention on Beethoven with its stellar list of soloists for its six-week season in Boulder. It's a long poke from there to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, but little Teton Village hosts one of the most dynamic orchestral festivals anywhere—and has since 1962. Donald Runnicles runs the Grand Teton Music Festival, with the music resonating in the all-wooden Walk Hall. Deer Valley, tucked away in Utah's Wasatch Mountains, isn't exactly close. But nothing is close out west. Summer home of the Utah Symphony, the resort town hosts the orchestra's summer pops/classical series beginning in late June.

Chi-Town Loops—and Beyond

Like most great cities with a lot going on, you can leave Chicago in the summer—or you can stay put. The Grant Park Music Festival serves as home to dozens of events, many of them free, from June to August in Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park right in the center of town. Carlos Kalmar serves as principal conductor, and

Gabriel Kahane as composer-in-residence this summer. Just north, the Ravinia Festival hosts the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and other groups, and provides a gateway to points even further north, and much more countrified.

Case in point: Token Creek, a small one-week Wisconsin festival in late August notable for its co-artistic director—composer John Harbison, who runs the festival together with his wife, violinist Rose Mary Harbison. The Pulitzer/Mac-



Arthur awardee celebrates his 80th birthday this season, as Token Creek, just north of Madison, marks its 30th anniversary. Harbison's music has been the focus of orchestras and ensembles across the country this year—and deservedly so. Heading deeper north into Wisconsin is tempting.



City Vibes: In downtown Chicago, the Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park is home to the Grant Park Music Festival. Carlos Kalmar is principal conductor, and this summer Gabriel Kahane will be composer in residence.

Peninsula Music Festival in Fish Creek, under Victor Yampolsky's direction, hosts an orchestral series in August (it's a long drive, an hour past Green Bay). An even longer drive to another little bit of summer heaven is Madeline Island Chamber Music, in Lake Superior off the northwest tip of Wisconsin, which has some impressive residencies this summer—the Dover, St. Lawrence, Arianna, and American string quartets.

lent chorus and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. The Cincinnati Symphony also plays throughout the summer at Cincinnati's Riverbend Music Center. Further south, in Fayetteville, Arkansas, conductor Corrado Rovaris directs Artosphere during the month of June, a mashup of art, music, and nature with many family- and pocketbook-friendly performances and experiences. A variety of artistic approaches—musical and otherwise—will focus



Rustic Splendor: Performances take place in a barn at the Token Creek Chamber Music Festival, just north of Madison, Wisconsin. Composer John Harbison (in photo) and his wife, violinist Rose Mary Harbison, run the festival, celebrating its 30th anniversary this August.

And then we could head south from Chicago. If you're getting an early start to the summer, the young musicians participating in the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition in South Bend, Indiana in May provide a look at the future. If you do, make a detour southeast to Cincinnati's May Festival, with director Juanjo Mena, worth a trip for the excel-

this year's festival on sustainability and environmental awareness. Hot Springs Music Festival, also in June and close by, is an orchestral mentorship program under the direction of conductor Peter Bay, music director of the Austin Symphony Orchestra in Texas, with a busy daytime-teaching and nighttime-performance schedule. Opera in the Ozarks, nestled in Inspiration



Point a few hundred miles north, "a mountainous place not too many miles from Heaven," as the festival describes it, makes for a musical change of pace, rotating half a dozen productions in June and July.

East Coast Wanderings

The plentiful summer choices along the East Coast are the biggest challenge for our road trip. Up and down the coast, it seems like every small town hosts a chamber series, or some work-vacationing city orchestra.

Starting in the Appalachian Mountains in North Carolina, the beginnings of the Asheville Chamber Music Series certainly sound idyllic: in 1952 founder Joe Vandewart set up a table in a hotel lobby, convinced 800 people to subscribe to "an unspecified number of concerts" (for \$4), and that was it. Almost seven decades later they're still making music—although the program details are a little more precise. The Brevard Music Center, about an hour southwest of Asheville, features ten weeks of symphonic and chamber music and is home to a long-running summer institute for young musicians, currently Keith Lockhart, principal conductor of the Boston Pops. Drive another 400 or so miles north, and if the timing is right, enjoy the 20th anniversary of Virginia's Charlottesville Chamber Music Festival (in September). Spectacular Wolf Trap, with hundreds of events throughout the year, is only a couple hours away in Vienna, Virginia, and if you

need a piano break, the Kapell International Piano Competition takes place in College Park, Maryland, just 25 miles from there.

Keep driving north along the northeast D.C.-N.Y.C.-Boston-Maine corridor. Although some people might want to skip big cities during the summer months, one good reason to stop in New York City is June's Chelsea Music Festival, hosted by conductor Ken-David Masur—recently named music director of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra—and his wife, Melinda Lee Masur, which focuses as much on food as it does on music. Another good reason to stop by the Big Apple in summertime is Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival, but that doesn't happen until July and August. The Caramoor Music Festival, summer home to opera, chamber music, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's, makes a good hub for the New England part of the trip, nestled north of New York City in a former estate in Katonah, in Westchester County. Take a breather for a few days, and you're ready to fire up the chariot again. The Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, operated by the Yale School of Music, hosts the Yalies and their musical



courtesy of Platt Architecture, PA

Appalachian Airs: The 1,800-seat Whittington-Pfohl Auditorium is the main performance venue of the Brevard Music Center in western North Carolina. The festival offers ten weeks of symphonic and chamber music concerts every summer, and the Music Center also hosts a long-running summer institute for young classical musicians.

friends in northwestern Connecticut, on the way to the Boston Symphony Orchestra's storied summer home, Tanglewood.

The big news at Tanglewood is the new education and performance center, known as the Tanglewood Learning Institute, situated near Ozawa Hall and set to open this summer—yet another reason to visit idyllic Lenox. Pianist Emmanuel Ax joins the BSO for the festival's opening night, and the summer also includes Wagner's *Die Walküre*, split over two days of performances. An August appearance by the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra—traditional Chinese instrumentalists, set in Western configuration—figures to be a highlight.

Tanglewood can be hard to leave—there's just so much going on. Musicians and staff of the Boston Symphony Orchestra decamp here from Boston, a hundred miles away, for a solid two months. But drive southeast to Rhode Island, where pianist Natalie Zhu runs the Kingston Chamber Music Festival, and where nearby Newport Music Festival has been reborn under Executive Director Pamela A. Pantos's direction. The Cape Cod Chamber Music Festival blankets the Cape with classical and contemporary music in August, and Boston, relatively quiet in the summer, has Boston Landmarks Orchestra performing *al fresco* every week in the Hatch Shell on the Esplanade.

On Boston's North Shore, the Rock-



Marco Borggreve

The Shed, and More: The iconic Shed at Tanglewood, longtime summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. This summer, the Tanglewood campus will expand with the opening of the new, year-round Linde Center for Music and Learning. In summer, the space will host the Tanglewood Learning Institute; in the fall, it opens for use by the BSO, Berkshire community, and more.



Vienna, Virginia? The Filene Center at Wolf Trap presents the National Symphony Orchestra, Wolf Trap Opera, American Ballet Theater, and more every summer. Wolf Trap, set on 117 acres about fifteen miles from Washington, D.C., is operated in partnership with the National Park Service.

port Chamber Music Festival cannot be missed—gaze out the glass window behind the stage into Rockport Harbor, and you can get a day at the beach and some Brentano Quartet at the same time. Violinist Barry Shiffman, formerly of the St. Lawrence String Quartet, took over as

Rockport’s artistic director last summer, and the results—focusing on new music, and unusual presentations—were profound. “With St. Lawrence, I experienced the direct impact that visceral presentations of new music can have on a career,” Shiffman says. “It was very important to us. We need to normalize new music and not make it a special event all the time. At the same time, you have to create a festival that both challenges and

comforts—that goes between the two.” In his first season Shiffman did just that, with an array of presentations ranging from theater to film to late-night cabaret—and great chamber music.

If it seems like classical music happens in each little town in Vermont,

New Hampshire, and Maine, well, yeah. From Yellow Barn to Marlboro (both in Vermont) to Halcyon Music Festival (Portsmouth, New Hampshire) to Apple Hill (Keene, New Hampshire) all the way up Maine, park the car in just about any village and you can find a program. Maine in particular becomes a chamber music paradise in the summer: Bar Harbor Music Festival, Salt Bay Chamberfest (Damariscotta), Seal Bay Festival of American Chamber Music (held in museums and galleries in multiple Maine locations), Portland Chamber Music School and Festival (Blue Hill)—it’s a wonderful place to explore by car, and the best time of year to do it. From Boston to Blue Hill is only a five-hour drive, but it seems like every chamber musician in the world passes through each summer. **S**

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