

SUMMER SOUNDS

There's a wealth of activity for string music lovers during this year's festival season. DAVID KETTLE rounds up some of the highlights from around the world

AUSTRALIA

Australian Festival of Chamber Music

1-9 AUGUST
WWW.AFCM.COM.AU

Among the artists enjoying the tropical winter weather in north Queensland's Townsville-based chamber gathering are violinist Tasmin Little, cellist Alexander Baillie and the Goldner and New Zealand quartets. Music ranges from J.S. and C.P.E. Bach to Lutoslawski and Peter Maxwell Davies, and there are concerts and other events throughout the day and evening.

AUSTRIA

Grafenegg Festival

14 AUGUST-7 SEPTEMBER
WWW.GRAFENEGG.COM/PROGRAMME/FESTIVAL

A spectacular, gleaming open-air stage is the main venue for concerts in the summer festival at Grafenegg Castle,

close to Vienna. It attracts international orchestras from far and wide – visitors this year include the Seoul, Czech and Vienna philharmonics as well as the London and Toronto symphony orchestras. Nikolaj Znaider is the soloist in the Sibelius Violin Concerto with Vienna's Tonkünstler Orchestra, and he also gives a recital of Beethoven violin sonatas; and artist-in-residence (as composer and clarinetist) Jörg Widmann plays the Mozart and Brahms quintets with the Minetti Quartet.

CANADA

Montreal Chamber Music Festival

8-31 MAY
WWW.FESTIVALMONTREAL.ORG

Canadian musicians feature strongly in Montreal's four-week chamber explorations, and there's a substantial

Israeli contingent too, with performances from violinists Itamar Zorman and Giora Schmidt in music by Prokofiev and Sarasate. Two Banff International String Quartet Competition winners, the Dover and Cecilia quartets, come together for Mendelssohn's Octet; festival soloists gather in a string orchestra for *The Four Seasons* (both the Vivaldi and Piazzolla versions); and the Los Angeles-based Calidore Quartet is joined by festival players in sextets by Strauss and Brahms. For an epic conclusion to the event, violinist Cho-Liang Lin joins a festival chamber orchestra in all five Mozart violin concertos back to back.

DENMARK

Thy Chamber Music Festival

10-25 AUGUST
HTTP://THYCHAMBERMUSICFESTIVAL.DK

Combining a high-level music course and a public music festival, Thy brings together emerging professionals with established musicians for informal chamber music recitals in picturesque northern Denmark. Ensembles will be finalised nearer the time of the festival, but the repertoire ranges from Mozart and Beethoven to Danish composers Nielsen, Holmboe and Lorentzen.



LISA-MARIE MAZZUCCO

EXCEPTIONAL PICTURES



The striking open-air stage at the Grafenegg Festival in Austria

FINLAND

Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival

13–26 JULY
WWW.KUHMOFESTIVAL.FI

'Seven cities, seven art forms' is the eclectic theme for Finland's premier chamber festival this year – and there's everything from dance to theatre and gastronomy in events looking from Vienna to Paris, St Petersburg to Hollywood. There's plenty of music too, and a strong line-up of performers – including the Danel, Meta4 and Enesco quartets, violinists Ilya Gringolts, Pekka Kuusisto and Alexander Sitkovetsky, and cellists David Cohen and Tomas Djupsjöbacka, among many others. Music ranges from Dowland and Rameau to Terry Riley and John Zorn.

FRANCE

Aix-en-Provence Festival

7 JUNE–24 JULY
WWW.FESTIVAL-AIX.COM

The exquisite historic buildings of Aix play host to a wealth of outdoor opera

and orchestral concerts – with plenty for those in search of string treats. Cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras is in the spotlight, in a solo performance of Bach, Saariaho and Kurtág, a recital of Marais, Bach and Brahms with pianist Alexandre Tharaud, and even an improvisation around Iranian, Turkish and Greek music. Elsewhere, the Béla Quartet performs Bartók and a new work by Jérôme Combier, and violinist Gottfried von der Goltz leads the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra in Bach, Haydn and Mozart.

Musique Cordiale

3–16 AUGUST
WWW.MUSIQUE-CORDIALE.COM

Professional and amateur players come together in three Provence villages around Seillans to put on performances of orchestral and chamber music, and even opera. Music ranges from Bach to Stravinsky, by way of chamber and orchestral works by Schumann, Haydn and Beethoven.

GERMANY

Beethovenfest Bonn

6 SEPTEMBER–3 OCTOBER
HTTP://EN.BEETHOVENFEST.DE

'The divine spark' is the theme for this year's exploration of the relationship between a piece of music and its audience – with visiting orchestras including the City of Birmingham and London symphony orchestras, the Munich Philharmonic and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. As you might expect, there's plenty of Beethoven: Isabelle Faust and Jean-Guihen Queyras are two of the soloists in the 'Triple' Concerto with the Rotterdam Philharmonic; and there's chamber music from the Borodin Quartet. Among the other string visitors are Gautier Capuçon and Thomas Zehetmair.

Herrenchiemsee Festival

15–27 JULY
WWW.HERRENCHIEMSEE-FESTSPIELE.DE

The 'German Versailles', built in 1884 by King Ludwig II on an island >

in Bavaria's largest lake, this year takes *son et lumière* as its festival theme, with descriptive music (Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony and Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*, for example) topping the bill. There's a lot for string enthusiasts too: Giuliano Carmignola is the soloist in a selection of Vivaldi violin concertos with the Venice Baroque Orchestra, and Alexander Janiczek plays Bach's A minor Violin Concerto with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Elsewhere, there's night music from Boccherini to Holliger from the Zehetmair Quartet, and violist and early music expert Jordi Savall directs Le Concert des Nations in tempestuous music by Locke, Marais and Rameau.

IRELAND West Cork Chamber Music Festival

27 JUNE–5 JULY
WWW.WESTCORKMUSIC.IE

There's plenty for lovers of string music packed into Ireland's fine chamber music festival based at Bantry House on the country's west coast. There are concerts from elevenses until late into the night, and often several of the festival's resident performers sharing a concert's bill. The opening event, for example, features the Danish, Doric and Vanbrugh quartets in Abrahamsen, Janáček and Debussy, and elsewhere Carolin Widmann plays Bartók, Alina Ibragimova and Alban Gerhardt team up for Ravel, and Lawrence Power performs a Brahms marathon. All this plus masterclasses, competitions and talks – including luthiers Mick de Hoog and Patrick Robin on the art of violin making.



The picturesque Bantry House is the location of the West Cork Chamber Music Festival

COURTESY WEST CORK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL



KNJUD ERIK JENSEN/THY CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

A group of students performs at the 2013 Thy Chamber Music Festival

NETHERLANDS Holland Festival

1–29 JUNE
WWW.HOLLANDFESTIVAL.NL

The Netherlands' major festival of cutting-edge art brings theatre, dance, exhibitions and more to venues in Amsterdam and around. String highlights include the Kronos Quartet in a collaboration with Nederlands Dans Theater, and violinist Irvine Arditti performing the experimental *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura* by featured composer Luigi Nono.

NORWAY Bergen International Festival

21 MAY–4 JUNE
WWW.FIB.NO

Alongside dance, circus and theatre, as well as a visit from Steve Reich, the string highlights in western Norway's historic fjord city this year include performances by the Engegård and Navarra quartets, Isabelle Faust giving an all-Beethoven recital, and cellist Natalie Clein contrasting Bach, Kurtág and Kodály. Elsewhere, the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra gives large-scale renderings of Janáček's two string quartets, and the Sitkovetsky Piano Trio plays Ravel and Dvořák.

International Chamber Music Festival Stavanger

11–17 AUGUST
WWW.ICMF.NO

Southern Norway's prestigious week-long chamber festival is still finalising its programme, but there's an impressive roster of string soloists flocking to the city, including violinists Pekka Kuusisto, Henning Kraggerud and Viviane Hagner, violist Maxim Rysanov and cellists Christian Poltéra, Torleif Thedéen and Nicolas Altstaedt, as well as the Van Kuijk Quartet. Grieg's famous *Holberg Suite* gets a concert all to itself – in its original piano version, in Grieg's string ensemble arrangement (performed by local ensemble 1B1 drawn from the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra) and in a jazz version for piano and strings.

SWITZERLAND Menuhin Festival Gstaad

17 JULY–6 SEPTEMBER
WWW.MENUHINFESTIVALGSTAAD.CH

Baiba Skride, Sol Gabetta, Isabelle Faust, Valery Sokolov, Christophe Coin, Ilya Gringolts and Patricia Kopatchinskaja are some of the string soloists making appearances at the festival founded by Yehudi Menuhin in 1957. There are chamber music sessions, orchestral concerts, recitals by young players from the Menuhin School, flamenco, dance, and even a mountaintop recital from cellist Nicolas Altstaedt at 3,000m.

Verbier Festival

18 JULY–3 AUGUST
WWW.VERBIERFESTIVAL.COM

Combining an academy for emerging soloists, an amateur week for chamber enthusiasts and – of course – a music festival in spectacular surroundings, Verbier this year brings together a host of string players including >



Artists from the Russian National Orchestra perform at the 2013 Napa Valley Festival del Sole in California, US

COURTESY NAPA VALLEY FESTIVAL DEL SOLE

Arabella Steinbacher, Daniel Hope, Mischa Maisky, Ray Chen and Renaud Capuçon (among a host of others) for chamber and orchestral music, often in ensembles you'll never hear anywhere else. Among the highlights, Pinchas Zukerman directs the Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra from the violin in Beethoven's Violin Concerto, Lawrence Power and Frans Helmerson join the Ébène Quartet in Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, and there's a piano trio recital from Joshua Bell, Steven Isserlis and pianist Menahem Pressler.

TURKEY

Istanbul Music Festival

31 MAY–27 JUNE

[HTTP://MUZIK.IKSV.ORG/EN](http://muzik.iksv.org/en)

Turkish music is high on the agenda in Istanbul, with music from the nation's top composers as well as its soloists, both young and well established. But there are plenty of international string names, too: Steven Isserlis performs the Dvořák Cello Concerto with the Milli Reasürans Chamber Orchestra, and Yuri Bashmet gives the Turkish premiere of Alexander Raskatov's Viola Concerto with Sinfonia Varsovia. Julian Rachlin joins the same ensemble in the Beethoven Violin Concerto, and there's an epic recital of the complete Brahms piano quartets from an ensemble featuring Daishin Kashimoto (violin), Lise Berthaud (viola) and François Salque (cello).

UK

Aldeburgh Festival

13–29 JUNE

[WWW.ALDEBURGH.CO.UK](http://www.aldeburgh.co.uk)

There's a distinct central European feel to the eminent Suffolk festival this year, with Smetana and Janáček from the Pavel Haas Quartet across a pair of concerts, Thomas Zehetmair performing the Janáček Violin Concerto with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and festival artistic director Pierre-Laurent Aimard joining soloists from the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in Janáček's *Concertino*. Elsewhere, there's plenty of Britten, and the Arcanto Quartet invites other top string soloists to join them in the two Brahms string sextets, alongside music by Schumann, Schoenberg and Mozart.

East Neuk Festival

27 JUNE–6 JULY

[WWW.EASTNEUKFESTIVAL.COM](http://www.eastneukfestival.com)

Fife's flagship festival has been bringing top-notch classical performances to the region's charming coastal villages for a decade now, and it's celebrating with plenty of string chamber music. The Gould Piano Trio, Belcea Quartet and soloists take part in an all-Schubert day, and the Belceas join the Elias Quartet players for Brahms and Strauss. The Ébène Quartet gives two concerts – one all-Beethoven, the other Mozart and Ravel – and the Gould Piano Trio returns for the Scottish premiere of James MacMillan's new Piano Trio, co-commissioned by the festival.

Edinburgh International Festival

8–31 AUGUST

[WWW.EIF.CO.UK](http://www.eif.co.uk)

Jordi Savall, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Truls Mørk, Alban Gerhardt, Leonidas Kavakos, the Arditti, Takács and Pavel Haas quartets, and Nicola Benedetti are among the eminent string players who gather as Scotland's capital gives itself up to another August of festival fever.

Lake District Summer Music International Festival

2–16 AUGUST

[WWW.LDSM.ORG.UK](http://www.ldsm.org.uk)

Celebrating its 30th anniversary, Lake District Summer Music has a wealth of themes this year – from Shakespeare to Strauss, the First World War to C.P.E. Bach. Across three concerts, the Chilingirian, Vogler and Fine Arts quartets are joined by additional eminent chamber musicians in quintets, sextets and octets; the Pether Trio performs Dmitry Sitkovetsky's string arrangement of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*; and violinist Kazuki Sawa performs Schubert, Strauss and Brahms. All this plus masterclasses and five string concerts from students on the fortnight's Music Academy.

Music at Paxton

18–27 JULY

[WWW.MUSICATPAXTON.CO.UK](http://www.musicatpaxton.co.uk)

There's plenty of string activity over the ten days of concerts in the beautiful

picture gallery at historic Paxton House, overlooking the River Tweed in the Scottish Borders. Violinist Katharine Gowers and cellist Adrian Brendel play sonatas by Fauré, Elgar, Kodály, Janáček and Rachmaninoff, and Alina Ibragimova's Chiaroscuro Quartet performs music by Mozart and Haydn. The Edinburgh Quartet is joined by clarinetist Maximiliano Martín in the Brahms Clarinet Quintet, and the festival ends with the all-string Scottish Ensemble in Strauss and Puccini.

Northern Chords

26–30 MAY
WWW.NORTHERNCHORDS.COM

A week of chamber and orchestral concerts in the north-east of England brings together emerging and established artists in venues both ancient and modern. Performers taking part include violinists Benjamin Baker and Mathieu van Bellen, cellist Guy Johnston and the Busch Ensemble. The festival's 1914 theme covers music by Ysaÿe, Poulenc, Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Elgar, Ives and Gershwin.

USA

Alaska

Sitka Summer Music Festival

31 MAY–29 JUNE
WWW.SITKAMUSICFESTIVAL.ORG

Alongside crab feed picnics, ice cream socials, chamber music cruises and musical movie nights, Sitka in southern Alaska welcomes string players including violinist Benjamin Breen, violist Marcus Thompson, cellist Melissa Kraut and the Cypress and Catalyst quartets for a month of weekend evening concerts.

California

Music@Menlo

18 JULY–9 AUGUST
WWW.MUSICATMENLO.ORG

Based in the San Francisco Bay Area and founded by cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han, Music@Menlo brings together a chamber music institute for young musicians with themed concerts from world-class players. This year's festival takes Dvořák as a starting point for an exploration of Eastern European music, with performers including David Finckel, violinists Benjamin Beilman,

Sunmi Chang, Alexander Sitkovetsky and Jorja Fleezanis, violist Paul Neubauer, and the Danish and Escher quartets.

Napa Valley Festival del Sole

11–20 JULY
WWW.FESTIVALDELSOLE.ORG

Music mingles with wine and food for ten days of indulgent events in one of the US's vinicultural hotspots. The Sphinx Symphony Orchestra is in residence, Joshua Bell gives an outdoor recital in a winery, and Pinchas Zukerman gives three performances.

Colorado

Aspen Music Festival and School

26 JUNE–14 AUGUST
WWW.ASPENMUSICFESTIVAL.COM

Romanticism in its very widest sense is the theme of Aspen's 65th festival, with music from Tchaikovsky, Strauss and Grieg right through to Schnittke, John Adams and Philip Glass. Among the roster of starry performers are Joshua Bell, Sarah Chang, Midori, Lynn Harrell and the Emerson and Pacifica quartets, many of whom are also on hand to coach young performers in the concurrent music school.

Connecticut

Music Mountain

7 JUNE–14 SEPTEMBER
HTTP://MUSICMOUNTAIN.ORG

Alongside jazz, big-band and country music, 16 chamber concerts make up Music Mountain's long summer festival programme in Falls Village, northern Connecticut. And there are big-name visitors: the Emerson Quartet plays Schubert's 'Death and the Maiden'; the Juilliard Quartet performs Beethoven and Berg; and the Shanghai Quartet takes on Beethoven and Brahms. Among the many other performers are the Dover, Orion, Penderecki and St Petersburg quartets.

Maine

Portland Chamber Music Festival

14–23 AUGUST
WWW.PCMF.ORG

The chamber event at the University of Southern Maine's Portland campus

aims for an unstuffy, informal atmosphere, with plenty of concert introductions from players and a broad range of repertoire, including several world premieres. Performers – including cellist Marc Johnson, violinist Frank Huang and violist Jessica Thompson – take time out from their regular orchestral or chamber groups to come together in fresh ensembles, for music by Stravinsky, Tchaikovsky, Debussy, Elgar, Vivaldi and others.

New Mexico

Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival

20 JULY–25 AUGUST
WWW.SANTAFECHAMBERMUSIC.COM

Composer Marc Neikrug's Santa Fe chamber fiesta brings together some eminent soloists in chamber ensembles especially for the event, with music ranging from the early Baroque to the present day. There's a new work for the Orion Quartet from Brett Dean, and a world premiere by Julian Anderson for the Flux Quartet, which also gives a concert of music by young local composers. Mark O'Connor brings his string quartet along for his own Third Quartet, among other American music, and elsewhere soloists include violinists Jennifer Frautschi and William Preucil, violist Steven Tenenbom and cellists Eric Kim, Timothy Eddy and Mark Kosower.

Oregon

Chamber Music Northwest

23 JUNE–27 JULY
WWW.CMNW.ORG

Violinists Leila Josefowicz, bassist Edgar Meyer and the Emerson and Dover quartets are among the string performers taking part in Portland's intensive month of chamber music. Among the highlights, Benjamin Beilman plays the Debussy Violin Sonata in an all-Debussy concert; the Emersons play Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Shostakovich; and an ensemble featuring Bella Hristova, Ani Kavafian, Nokuthula Ngwenyama and Fred Sherry gathers to contrast Schubert's Octet with David Del Tredici's *Bullycide*, a co-commission by the festival. ■