

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Staunton Music Festival: Artistry, Passion & International Verve

Staunton, VA, July 27, 2026 – The Staunton Music Festival, hailed as one of the most distinctive classical music events on the East Coast, is gearing up for its highly anticipated summer festival that begins on August 14 and runs through August 23. Close to 100 acclaimed musicians from Europe and the United States will gather in this historic Blue Ridge Mountain town for the event.

As one of Virginia's signature cultural experiences, the festival is testament to the enduring power of music to inspire, challenge, and connect. Every year, the performances race boldly across styles and eras, with everything from historically-informed concerts, to new interpretations of beloved masterworks, to newly commissioned music representing our present era.

Some of the highlights for the ten-day festival include a grand Bach-themed program on opening night; Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as finale; performances and works by bandoneon virtuoso JP Jofre; and musical dramas by Benjamin Britten, Leah Reid, and Jake Heggie. From Monteverdi to Mozart's "Jupiter" Symphony, from Purcell to Palestrina, and from Biber to Bernstein — Staunton in August is shaping up to be a magical mecca of music.

What Makes the Staunton Music Festival So Unusual?

- **Dynamic Program Spans Centuries, Beyond Traditional Repertoire:** Unlike many festivals that segregate new music, Staunton Music Festival masterfully weaves together works spanning many centuries, often on the same program. During the course of ten days and nights, audiences will take in 1,000 years of music—from medieval and Renaissance works, to Baroque and Classical repertoire, and even contemporary compositions including world premieres. This richness of exposure creates a vibrant and engaging dialogue between historical masterpieces and modern treasures.
- **Expect the Unexpected:** In Staunton, daring programming meets superlative artistry. Pairing Bach with Brazilian jazz, a new arrangement of Stravinsky's *Firebird*, Benjamin Britten's chamber opera *The Turn of the Screw*, based on the 1898 story by Henry James, a day of music "in C" (from Palestrina to Terry Riley), and a moving chamber opera by Jake Heggie.
- **Global Top Talent:** The roster of performers radiates with international talent, including Finnish powerhouse violinists Minna Pensola and Antti Tikkanen, Berlin-based harpist Sivan Magen, Argentinian bandoneon virtuoso J. P. Jofre, Vienna flautist Charles Brink, British violinist Freya Creech, and British violinist Benjamin Gilmore (concertmaster of the London Symphony Orchestra) to name a few.
- **Just as the Composer Intended:** The festival is a rare gem in its dedication to performing music composed before 1850 on authentic period instruments. This commitment provides audiences with an unparalleled opportunity to hear works as they would have sounded centuries ago, offering a rich and historically informed listening experience. From Baroque opera to early chamber music, the instruments themselves become storytellers, revealing nuances often lost on modern instruments.
- **Intimate, Charming Venues:** These world-class musicians perform in intimate historic venues throughout downtown Staunton, chosen for their superlative acoustics and charm.

This close-up experience fosters a powerful connection between performers and audience, allowing for a truly personal musical encounter.

- **Immersive Experience:** Beyond the evening's ticketed performances, the festival offers free midday concerts, wine-fueled late-night cabaret performances, pre-concert talks by noted scholars and performers, surprise pop-up performances in downtown locations, and plenty of opportunities to interact with composers-in-residence. These elements provide context and deeper understanding, enriching the overall festival experience for both seasoned classical music lovers and newcomers.

"In Staunton, we're committed to presenting music in a way that focuses on the live experience. It's all about the music. Of course, we honor the composers and their eras – and that plays out in our use of period instruments – yet we are not afraid to innovate in how we present the performances. Many of our musicians are drawn to Staunton specifically because of the variety and risk-taking of the programs that [Artistic Director] Carsten Schmidt creates" says Jason Stell, Executive Director.

Although the rehearsal and performance schedule can be demanding, artists derive a great amount of joy and satisfaction from the rare pieces they get to play, and the audience response.

More than just a series of concerts, Staunton Music Festival stands apart for its unique blend of historical accuracy, innovative programming, and deep commitment to both the familiar and the cutting-edge. Don't miss this opportunity to witness musical history come alive and discover the future of classical performance.

"We invite audiences to discover the timeless power, surprising relevance, and the sheer thrill of what classical music can be," says Stell. Single-event tickets and festival passes are available. Noon concerts are free. Visit www.stauntonmusicfestival.org for a full schedule and ticket information.

About the Staunton Music Festival

Renowned for its commitment to historical performance on period instruments and its innovative programming that juxtaposes old and new works, Staunton Music Festival offers outstanding classical musical performances by acclaimed artists from around the world. Acclaimed as "Virginia's world-class music festival" (*Travel + Leisure*), it is a European-style music festival spanning ten consecutive days and nights of eclectic chamber, vocal, and symphonic music.

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