

SMF35 Blog- Morning has broken

June 2, 2019- Day One

The Packard Hall lobby was populated with bagels and boisterous sounds. There were musicians there too, ingesting fuel for what was going to be a marathon day one of the 35th Colorado College Summer Music Festival.

At 8:45 a.m., everyone poured into Packard Hall for the official kick-off to the 2019 festival: 17 festival artists (faculty) and some 50 festival fellows (students). For about a dozen fellows, this was a second or third return to Packard in June. The faculty who were able to be at this opening “general meeting” were going through what seemed like a family reunion.

Susan Grace stood in front and took everyone through the trenches and high notes of these 22 days. Fact is, Susan, Virginia (Ginny) Barron, and Assistant Director Gina Spiers have this down to a science. Still, it’s a tremendous amount of work to make sure all the ingredients are present and blended precisely. As Ginny, the associate director, confirmed later in the morning, there had been “no blips on the radar screen” up to that point. She knows they will come; they always do.

It’s a rigorous schedule for everyone. But guess what? Everyone here is doing what they love. Thus, the intense rehearsals, almost countless performances on and off campus, and the ongoing interactions are sweet nectar. In my numerous interviews with the faculty, three or four called this experience summer camp—for them and their students.

It’s a great mix. Working on chamber music for everyone, orchestral rehearsals for fellows, special faculty presentations (violist Philip Ying is amped up to talk about artistic vision in this era of intense divisiveness) balanced by a visit to Garden of the Gods, a pool party, and an ice cream social. It’s like I always say: no pain, no gain; no pleasure, no measure.

The rest of Sunday morning was taken up by the faculty taking a full accounting of their charges to determine where the fellows would sit in the orchestra, what chamber ensembles they would be assigned to, and who would be chosen for concerto readings. The string faculty held a fairly standard audition process for violins, violas, cellos, and double basses. Each was asked to play a solo excerpt of their choice, and

Scott Yoo, both a violinist and the conductor of the festival orchestra, called out pre-selected excerpts from this summer's repertoire for them to play.

We who love this festival are used to listening to the strings of the orchestra in wonderment for their sound and artistic expression. It was both a confirmation and a revelation to hear how truly fine each player sounded. All seemed worthy of being on the top of the mountain, but a few musicians were simply stunning. Ladies and gentleman, once again our orchestra is in good hands.

Pianists, winds, brass, and percussion had more informal meetings, although some choosing was going on (for instance, flutist Elizabeth Mann had to find the right player to render the iconic solo opening of Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of Faun*, the first work of the June 11 orchestra concert).

Having other commitments, I had to leave campus in the afternoon. The key activities for the rest of day one included the first orchestra rehearsal, the assignment of chamber-music repertoire, the ice cream social, and an initial tilling of the soil for the On the Fringe (Un)Common (En)Counterpoint multidiscipline presentation happening Friday, June 7.

Monday is a day for working on chamber music for faculty and students.



