

Ashu, saxophone

The young concert saxophonist Ashu has established an extraordinary ability to communicate with audiences through his charismatic and emotive performance style. He has defied conventions winning major international awards and competitions traditionally won by pianists and violinists. While his astonishing virtuosity thrills listeners, his artistry reaches far beyond this demonstrating a unique personality and musical voice. Critics have described him as "just as much fun to watch as to listen to" (*Dallas Morning News*) and "ready to cultivate the masses" (*Chicago Tribune*).



Born and raised in California, Ashu began playing the saxophone at age 10. After just a few years, he began entering competitions and found himself receiving a wide range of opportunities, including his recital debut, which took place at Carnegie Hall. Since then he has performed throughout the world. Ashu's concerto appearances last year included prominent halls throughout Russia, South Africa, Great Britain, Finland, Poland, Estonia, New Zealand, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Canada, and the USA. Other recent solo tours have taken him throughout Vienna, Lisbon, Munich, France, Switzerland, Norway, and the French West Indies.

Ashu's recent recital engagements in the USA include the Ravinia Festival, Kravis Center, La Jolla Music Society, Dumbarton Oaks, Rockefeller Series, Santa Fe Concert Association, and more. With a growing demand from major orchestras around the world, recent concerto engagements include the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Edmonton Symphony, Metropolitan Orchestra of Lisbon, St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic, Montreal Chamber Orchestra, Cape Town Philharmonic, Lapland Chamber Orchestra, and venues such as Carnegie Hall, Zurich Tonhalle, Vienna Konzerthaus, and NY Central Park.

Ashu was recently selected as winner of the prestigious "Audience Prize" at the renowned International Musical Olympus Festival in St. Petersburg, Russia. The festival's honorary committee included Claudio Abbado, Daniel Barenboim, Valery Gergiev, and Yo-Yo Ma. As a result, Ashu has been invited to perform concertos and recitals in a number of the most revered concert halls worldwide. Ashu has previously won First Prizes at competitions including the International Heida Hermanns Competition, Houston Symphony Concerto, International Kingsville Wind Instrumentalist, American Opera Society, Salon De Virtuosi Career Grant, National Midland-Odesa, National Lennox/RSO, National Federation of Music Clubs, National George S. Howard, National Alliance for Excellence, Northwestern University Concerto, and Houston Symphony Flores-Smith competitions.

While most audiences have never heard the saxophone in concert music, Ashu has begun to change this. With a dynamic style that captivates general as well as classical audiences, he has shown that the concert saxophone can reach beyond stylistic categorization and to a large diversity of people.

With an engaging personality, Ashu has been featured on NBC, CBS, NPR, and numerous other live TV and radio broadcasts. He received his Bachelor and Masters of Music degrees from Northwestern University under the guidance of renowned saxophone teacher Frederick Hemke, and he is currently based in the Chicago area.

ASHU, saxophone

The young concert saxophonist Ashu has continually defied conventions winning major international awards and competitions traditionally won by pianists and violinists. He made his recital debut at Carnegie Hall and, at age 16, made his concerto debut at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. Since then, solo performances have taken him throughout the world. Last year, Ashu's concerto and recital engagements included major halls throughout Russia, South Africa, Great Britain, Finland, Poland, Estonia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Singapore, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Canada, and the USA. Other recent solo tours have taken him throughout Vienna, Lisbon, Munich, France, Norway, and the French West Indies.

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With a growing demand from major orchestras around the world, Ashu's recent concerto engagements have included the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Edmonton Symphony, St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic, Montreal Chamber Orchestra, Cape Town Philharmonic, Metropolitan Orchestra of Lisbon, Lapland Chamber Orchestra, Tallinn Philharmonic Society and venues such as Carnegie Hall, NY Central Park, and the Vienna Konzerthaus. Recent US recital engagements include the Kravis Center, Ravinia Festival, La Jolla Music Society, Dumbarton Oaks, and Santa Fe Concert Association series.

Ashu has been featured in interview and solo performance on NBC, CBS, NPR, and numerous other live TV and radio broadcasts worldwide. He received his Bachelor and Master of Music Performance degrees from Northwestern University, and he is currently based in the Chicago area. To learn more about Ashu, please visit his website at ashuonline.com.

Reviews

From critics and internationally recognized musicians

"The ultimate show-and-tell artist...he's the sizzle and the steak. In an era when concerts are too likely to be low-protein, one young American artist is offering generous double portions...Ashu charmed the audience with chatty comments, music full of bold, colorful personality, and an overwhelmingly beautiful sound. A human mobile, Ashu moves constantly as he plays...set in motion by a melody or rhythm or just getting carried away...Ashu created not just environments but also entire worlds."

- *Palm Beach Post*

"...just as much fun to watch him as it is to listen to him."

- *Dallas Morning News*

"The one to watch...ready to cultivate the masses."

- *Chicago Tribune*

"...he turned on the showmanship, darting his body left and right to the music, beseeching the heavens with tear-bright eyes and emoting like a pro. Ashu's clear pleasure in performing was infectious...it was a treat to hear Ashu...Ibert's "Concertino da Camera" was a playful, light-filled joy to hear, and the soaring exuberance of Paul Creston's Sonata was so powerful it practically knocked you out of your chair...Ashu milked every last drop of feeling out of the music. There was never any doubt about Ashu's remarkable virtuosity or his easy, natural sense of phrasing, both displayed to perfection."

- *Washington Post*

"In addition to Ashu's phenomenal technique on the saxophone, he possesses a deep musicality which pours through his playing and hooks the audience...the audience has lobbied for a return engagement on the series. He's a very engaging player - as much fun to watch as to listen to."

- *Chicago Tribune*

"...played so lovingly...indeed a terrific player, wonderful artist, and virtuoso...a pleasure to hear music so well played...glorious!"

- *John Corigliano, Oscar and Pulitzer Prize winning composer*

"Riveting...Brilliant...Pizzazz to burn!"

- *National Public Radio "Performance Today" commentator*

"Ashu is a bright young man musically mature well beyond his years...he has a heart for music and a soul filled with passion...his music was brilliant, flawless and inspiring. As he concluded his performance, you could see in his eyes and you could hear through his saxophone the true nature of this bright and shining star...he is musical passion personified."

- *Vision Magazine*

"a remarkable saxophone virtuoso...he is in perpetual motion on stage and has an ability to keep an audience totally enthralled, as he certainly did at Steinway Hall."

- Robert Sherman, *WQXR - Classical Radio for the NY Times*

"Ashu is a charm, his soul and body perform when he plays saxophone, with fantastic energetics and shining in his eyes. He impresses even those who may be skeptical... transmitting the music itself."

- *Playbill Arts*

"Irresistible, sublimely beautiful and mesmerizing, wrapped in a confident stage presence that demanded your attention and convinced you that the saxophone had every right to share the stage with instruments that predate it by centuries. Ashu produced alternately silky and buttery tones. His sax sounded more like a voice than an instrument, reciting its own poetry...a passionate performance...a powerful voice in classical music."

- *Arizona Daily Star*

"...A brilliant saxophone soloist, Ashu, a 25-year-old already known worldwide. Ashu's lithe body movements and dramatic facial expressions evoked the suspense of the [work]...He demonstrated how sweet an alto sax can sound...The audience's response was overwhelming in its approval...Ashu's lyrical solo sparkled with romantic flourishes, glissandos, technical brilliance and tonal perfection."

- *Charlotte Sun*

"Ashu performed to a sell-out crowd...From the standing ovation, to the shouts of appreciation, he wowed the crowd. Ashu played with the intensity and focus of a marathon runner. His feet never stopped moving throughout the show. Often, his eyes would close and seemingly take him to a far off place where only his music existed. Ashu's interpretations were lyrical and other times danceable -- and always with great emotion....the music he played seemed to defy definition."

- *The Herald-Dispatch*

"If listening to this doesn't take your breath away, somebody needs to take your temperature."

- John Farrer, *The Californian*

"...a brilliant musician. His control over the instrument, his intensity, his clear ability to 'feel' the composer's emotional intent, all kept the full attention of the audience. Ashu was one with his instrument. The young artist then took the microphone to express his appreciation...his delightful personality captivated the audience. The next selection lent strength to the genius of the artist. At the conclusion, the audience was quick to rise in a standing ovation."

- *Roswell Daily Record*

"The audience in Ainay, France had the great pleasure of hearing Ashu in a fully packed hall. One was immediately struck by his brilliant tone...He plays with a sound and sensitivity which emanates freely from his body, as if in a perpetual movement. It is truly a joy to watch and his eclectic program warmed the heart."

- *Le Berry Républicain*

"Ashu dazzled the audience...with his ability to make the alto sax fall into soft, soft whispers, then weave quixotically around a bed of string instruments, and then suggest rather firmly that you listen to its emotional outbreaks. Ashu, a top-caliber saxophonist with plenty of stage presence to boot, boasts a decidedly rich, wonderful tone. Beyond that very buttery sound, Ashu shows a spectacular range, hitting that seemingly unreachable high note...and then bringing the instrument down to a whisper...as his fingers flew over the keys for both pieces."

- *Times Record News*

"Ashu was the shining star...the varying moods and tempos of this complex piece clearly represented Ashu's exceptional musical abilities. Only 24, Ashu has a resume that could make a concert saxophonist twice his age envious... "

- *Herald-Tribune*

"The highlight of the evening was saxophonist Ashu...he performed with emotional fire and was a true showman."

- *Lapin Kansa Newspaper*

"The audience was ecstatic. Ashu made the classical music loving audience cry...After the performance, the artist received a standing ovation."

- *The Expert Kyrgyzstane*

"Ashu beguiled a large audience with a remarkable display of virtuosity and versatility. Ashu is a showman, but he is also an unusually gifted musician. Brilliant, lyrical, expressive, romantic...Ashu gave a totally compelling performance...playing with great verve and physical energy..."

- *IOL Independent Online*

"...a really sensational musician."

- *Christopher Rouse, Pulitzer Prize winning composer*

"Ashu plays with great technical skill and irresistible verve. He has a delightfully flamboyant and uninhibited stage presence. At times he looked as if he might break into a dance...[Ashu] gripped the orchestra and the audience. At the end there were whoops of joy and foot stamping from the delighted audience."

- *ArtSmart (South Africa)*

"...the American Ashu thrilled the jam-packed hall..."

- *Der Tagesspiegel*

"Very impressive and artistic - a real virtuoso"

- *Leonard Hokanson*, internationally recognized concert pianist,
recordings on EMI, RCA, DG, Sony

"Very poised...remarkable technique...a fine musician."

- *Henry Charles Smith, Minnesota SO resident conductor*

Awards and Competition Wins

(partial list)

Winner	International Musical Olympus Festival "Audience Award" (St. Petersburg, Russia)
Winner	International Salon de Virtuosi Career Grant (New York City)
1st Prize	International Heida Hermanns Competition
1st Prize	International Kingsville Wind Instrumentalist Competition
1st Prize	American Opera Society Competition
1st Prize	National Midland-Odesa Concerto Competition
1st Prize	National Federation of Music Clubs Competition
1st Prize	KSO Concerto Competition
1st Prize	Skokie Valley Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition
Winner	Houston Symphony Concerto Competition
Winner	National Alliance for Excellence Performing Arts Competition
Winner	Northwestern University Concerto Competition
Winner	Northwestern University Research Study Grant
Winner	E.M.C. Young Artist Competition
Winner	North Shore Musicians Club Competition
Winner	Elsie Eckstein Music Scholarship
Winner	Woodlands Living Arts Competition
Grand Prize	Houston Symphony Alice Flores-Smith Competition
1st Prize	National Lennox Concerto Competition
1st Prize	W.A.F.A. Concerto Competition
1st Prize	National Col. George S. Howard Concerto Competition
Winner	Interlochen Governor's Scholarship
Winner	Brian Liford Outstanding Musician Memorial Award
Winner	Outstanding Soloist Award, TSSE Competition