Jeremy Pound admires both the mountains and the plains as he explores the various delights of this year’s Colorado Music Festival.
Local heroes
The Takács Quartet

Though the Takács Quartet (above) first got together in Budapest, Hungary, in 1975, the group has been based in Boulder for most of its life. In 1983, they were offered the post of quartet-in-residence at the Boulder-based University of Colorado and, eyeing a move to the US, promptly accepted. Though the line-up has changed – only cellist András Fejér remains of the original foursome – the Takács continue to combine global touring with playing an active part in their local music scene, and this year performed two concerts at the Colorado Music Festival as artists-in-residence.

‘Chautauqua creates such an atmosphere, and people really love coming into it.’

Face east, and the landscape is flat, flat and flat again, as far as the eye can see – though just to the right, the skyscrapers of Denver promise a fun day out. Spin round 180 degrees and you have the Rockies. A couple of hours on the road in this direction and you’re in ski resort territory. As for the city itself, the regular wafts of cannabis will tell you it has a distinctly hippy vibe, though it is also something of an academic powerhouse. Musically, too, it punches above its weight – outside festival time, the Boulder Philharmonic gives regular concerts, as does the lovingly run Boulder Bach organisation.

Beyond music, visitors shouldn’t miss the new Museum of Boulder, which impressively details the area’s Arapaho Indian heritage. The shops on Pearl Street are good too. As pianist Gabriela Montero, one of this year’s festival performers, Tweets, ‘I love Boulder, the festival and the relaxed people and vibe here.’ I agree.

‘A festival like this needs to be quite eclectic,’ Oundjian tells me, ‘and it also needs to have some element of risk and to stand for something. It’s always interesting to find something to celebrate – this year it’s been Vaughan Williams’s 150th anniversary, and next year we will be marking Rachmaninov’s 150th with pieces he composed in the US. But one of the things that makes the festival so extraordinary is Chautauqua. It’s a space that conjures up such an atmosphere, and people really love coming into it.’

Geographically, Boulder is a city of two tales, depending on which way you turn. Face east, and the landscape is flat, flat and flat again, as far as the eye can see – though just to the right, the skyscrapers of Denver promise a fun day out. Spin round 180 degrees and you have the Rockies. A couple of hours on the road in this direction and you’re in ski resort territory. As for the city itself, the regular wafts of cannabis will tell you it has a distinctly hippy vibe, though it is also something of an academic powerhouse. Musically, too, it punches above its weight – outside festival time, the Boulder Philharmonic gives regular concerts, as does the lovingly run Boulder Bach organisation.

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