

# THE ASPEN TIMES

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## Hickenlooper says he's sticking it out

Former Colorado governor speaks at Aspen art gallery, aims to focus on Iowa in Democratic primary

**Rick Carroll**  
The Aspen Times

Speaking to a quaint crowd assembled at a downtown Aspen art gallery Saturday, John Hickenlooper said he will keep fighting to stay in the presidential race by focusing on Iowa in the coming months.

"We are 100% focused on the presidency right now," the former Colorado governor and ex-Denver mayor told a gathering at Skye Gallery Aspen. "We're leaving here for Iowa. I'm going to be camped out in Iowa."

Hickenlooper's remarks came as his campaign is struggling to remain viable while 25 candidates seek the 2020 Democratic nomination. His campaign staff had a major shake-up early last week, and Hickenlooper is tasked with lining up individual donors to qualify for the democratic primary debates in the fall.

"I'm not giving up," he told the roughly two dozen people gathered at the gallery, where admission was free.

The New York Times reported Wednesday that Hickenlooper will likely qualify for the next round of Democratic debates set for July 30 and 31 in Detroit, where 20 candidates will participate — 10 each night. Hickenlooper's acceptance will be based on his receiving at least 1% support in a minimum of three qualifying polls. The other criteria to get in the debate is to have donations from at



JEREMY WALLACE/THE ASPEN TIMES

**HICKENLOOPER, A8** John Hickenlooper addresses a crowd at a meet and greet at Skye Gallery on Saturday.

## Young and old and 'Beautiful' moves together at Aspen Santa Fe Ballet

**Andrew Travers**  
The Aspen Times

Choreographer Nicolo Fonte gave the dancers of Aspen Santa Fe Ballet a rarely heard rehearsal prompt in the studio last week: It's OK to cry.

"At the end, it has that impact, you're going to want to bawl," he told the company while running through the powerhouse finale of his "Beautiful Decay," which opens Tuesday at the Aspen District Theatre. "In rehearsal, I need you to start to feel that."

The piece, which debuted in 2013 at BalletX in Philadelphia, is a two-act exploration of the cycle of life, the inevitability of aging, and time's whittling away of youth. It calls for two older dancers — in this production they are longtime Aspen dance instructor Hilary Cartwright and

Oregon dancer Gregg Bielemier, both in their 70s — to perform alongside the younger company cast, providing contrast between the youthful vigor of professional dancers in their prime and a pair decades older.

It is the first full-length ballet — other than the annual "Nutcracker" production — in the 23-year history of Aspen Santa Fe, which normally stages triple-bill programs.

Fonte has been in the Colorado Mountain College studio with the company dancers since May. The preparation has been emotional as well as physical, as he pushed dancers to communicate the emotional depths of the work.

"When I say 'Do it,' I mean do it on a cellular level," he said after a recent rehearsal. "So that every cell in your body is committed to that one moment and the next moment, and the one after

### IF YOU GO ...

**What:** "Beautiful Decay," presented by Aspen Santa Fe Ballet

**Where:** Aspen District Theatre

**When:** Tuesday, 8 p.m.; also July 19 and Aug. 24

**How much:** \$36 to \$94

**Tickets:** Wheeler Opera House box office; [aspenshowtix.com](http://aspenshowtix.com)

that. That's a long, grueling process."

The result, he hopes, is a direct emotional connection with the audience. He wants viewers to see themselves in the performers, young and old.

"You're not going to see yourself in them hoisting their legs in the air and doing the incredible things they can do," he explained. "But you

**'BEAUTIFUL DECAY,' A8**

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#### 1893 in symphony

Tim Willoughby looks back at how Aspen's concerts in 1893 resonate with the music of today. More on **PAGE A6**



#### Gentlemen defeat Vail

Aspen rugby squad overcomes Vail 46-43 to stay undefeated. **PAGE A13**

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HICKENLOOPER

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least 65,000 people. Candidates can meet either criteria to get in the Detroit debates. Hickenlooper, 67, said he has received donations from 13,000 people.

Eligibility requirements to the September debates get more difficult; candidates will need a minimum of 130,000 donors while garnering at least 2% support in at least four qualifying polls.

Hickenlooper, who announced his candidacy in early March, made a plea to people to visit his website and make a contribution, of any amount, to build up his stable of donors.

“Try to email out to get your friends, get 10 or 15 friends to also give a buck,” he said, saying there’s still time to build momentum.

Asked if he would consider the race for Senate, where first-term officeholder Cory Gardner, a Republican, is up for re-election, Hickenlooper said his focus is on the Oval Office.

“We are 100% focused on winning the White House, and we rebooted the campaign (last) week, brought in some new staff and some new ideas,” he said.

The top names so far in the race for the Democratic nomination are former Obama diplomat Daniel Baer, former state senator Mike Johnston, former state house Democratic Alice Madden, former state house speaker Andrew Romanoff and former Colorado U.S. Attorney John Walsh.

Hickenlooper did not hold any fundraisers in Aspen this weekend, he said.

His campaign announced Thursday he would be in Aspen for two events discussing “the intersection of government with the arts and outdoors industries,” including a panel discussion Saturday at the Skye Gallery. He also spoke Friday at R. Carter Gallery in Aspen.

There was no panel discussion Saturday, however, because a panel could not be put together at the last minute, according to Hickenlooper campaign aide Hayden Cleverly. Hickenlooper was a bit late for the Saturday event, scheduled for 12:30 p.m.



JEREMY WALLACE/THE ASPEN TIMES

John Hickenlooper addresses a crowd at a meet and greet at Skye Gallery on Saturday.

The reason: He said it was difficult to find parking.

Another presidential hopeful in town last week was Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey, who held a private fundraiser at the home of Howard and Betty Wallach

on Wednesday, the eve of the Fourth of July. Howard Wallach is chair of the Pitkin County Democrats, which cannot endorse a candidate at this time per party rules.

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‘BEAUTIFUL DECAY’

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might be able to transfer your emotions to them — you might be able to recognize you’ve felt that or experienced that.

“That’s super important. Otherwise it’s just some kind of aerobic exercise that might be impressive, but it’s an empty gesture.”

With original set design by Tony Award winner Mimi Lien, and set to Vivaldi’s “Four Seasons” and Max Richter’s reinterpretations, the company will give encore performances of “Beautiful Decay” on July 19 and Aug. 24 following Tuesday’s premiere.

Watching the ballet with audiences, Fonte has found that as soon as the older dancers enter, all eyes focus on them. We’re used to watching perfect young dancers soar across a stage, but the 70-something dancer doing so is something rare.

“There is something beautiful in experiencing 40 years of experience on stage, where physical prowess morphs into something else and becomes much more of an emotional, reflective way of moving,” Fonte said.

His original inspiration for the concept was inspired by a 3-D photo exhibition in Portland, Oregon, which brought viewers inside of nearly dead flowers.

“It touched me in my core,” Fonte said. “Something about it was so powerful, and the element of 3-D you were inside the flower petals. These decaying flowers retained so much of their flower-ness. It was this undeniable identity screaming at me: ‘I was once a flower!’ My heart was racing.



JEREMY WALLACE/THE ASPEN TIMES

Aspen Santa Fe Ballet performers rehearse “Beautiful Decay.”

And that’s really where the idea came from.”

With six years’ distance from its premiere, Fonte is seeing the physical movements and the emotional intentions of “Beautiful Decay” with new clarity in Aspen.

“Revisiting it, especially with a group like these dancers — who are extremely skilled and expert at this kind of dance specifically — I’m able to see things that I didn’t even see when I was making it,” Fonte said.

“Beautiful Decay” is the 10th ballet that Fonte has staged with the company, including eight original creations, over the past

19 years. His aesthetic has helped define Aspen Santa Fe, while the company also has pushed Fonte to some of the definitive creations of his globally acclaimed career.

He describes Aspen Santa Fe artistic director Tom Mossbrucker as a collaborator, whose ideas in the studio have helped shape Fonte’s work over the years. And Fonte pointed to his 2003 Aspen Santa Fe creation, “Left Unsaid,” as a breakthrough in his creative life. It’s gone on to become one of his most successful works, performed by seven companies since its Aspen premiere. Fonte recalled how he knew

he would set it to Bach violin music, but how he created the work without music in rehearsals.

“I created almost the entire piece in silence before I put the music on,” he said. “Of course it was running in my head the whole time, but not in the dancers’ heads. So we were creating true human interaction that wasn’t dictated by the music.”

That deeply felt humanity has become a driving force in his work since then. The supportive environment here and the bond between Fonte, the company leadership and its dancers let him take that creative leap.

“I think it had to do with the fact that I was here and I trusted them and they trusted me,” he said, adding that it had been his fourth time making something in Aspen, pushing him to stretch beyond the familiar. “I was forced to figure something out in that creation process. It was kismet. It had to happen here, based on the repetition of creations that I was making for them.”

He first sent a video of “Beautiful Decay” to Mossbrucker five years ago. So when the company decided it was ready to produce a full-length ballet, Fonte’s meditation of age and time was an ideal fit.

“I feel honored and touched that they trust me and that they believe in the work,” Fonte said. “I think it has relevance everywhere, but I thought it would have real relevance here where there is a substantial segment of the community that is getting up there and we’re living in this ageist society.”

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