

PianoCleveland: CIPC for Young Artists Chamber Music Final Round (July 13)

by Daniel Hathaway



The six pianists who advanced to the final round of Piano Cleveland's International Competition for Young Artists cleared the first hurdle on their way to winning first, second, and third place prizes with performances in the Chamber Music Round on Thursday evening in Mixon Hall at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Demonstrating how well they can play with others, the finalists performed single movements of piano trios with members of The Cleveland Orchestra, collaborations that couldn't help but inspire them to new heights.

For this round, the Juniors enjoyed the expertise of violinist Yun-Ting Lee and cellist Martha Baldwin, cello, while the Seniors joined forces with violinist Jessica Lee and cellist Dane Johansen.

JUNIORS

Zhonghua Wei, 14 (China), delivered an exciting reading of the opening movement of Mendelssohn's Trio No. 2 in c Minor, Op. 66, maintaining constant eye contact with Lee and Baldwin. His tendency to push the tempo toward important cadences and to grandify the scale of Mendelssohn's writing were small criticisms in the face of an engaging, liquescent performance.

Elisey Mysin, 12 (Russia), tiny in stature but musically mighty, never once looked at his colleagues, yet joined them in faultless ensemble playing in Mendelssohn No. 2. He coaxed dark, expressive timbres and subtle details from the Steinway, making him a young pianist to watch.

Qinyaoyao Ji, 13 (China), delivered a poised, elegant account of the opening movement of Beethoven's No. 1 that to achieve its full effect should sound a bit more in your face. These trios are the work of a young, hotshot Beethoven unabashedly introducing himself to Vienna in a burst of virtuosity.



SENIORS

Yanyan Bao, 16 (China), produced a thoughtful, studied reading of Mendelssohn No. 1, perhaps the musical equivalent of an illustrated lecture that points out details of its structure without dwelling on them. Her technique is assured, she just needs to tweak her skills of communication.

Saehyun Kim, 16 (South Korea), chose Brahms' Trio No. 1, playing with sensitivity and insight, but giving little attention to putting the structure of the piece across (Brahms didn't help him much by clearly indicating where he was going with the material). Kim's engaging tone and sense of scale worked in his (and Brahms') favor.

Ryan Wang, 15 (Canada) had ideas about Mendelssohn No. 1 and shared them generously with his listeners. Getting under the composer's skin, he teased out special moments and found colors and textures to emphasize, giving an extra sheen of understanding to his playing. He's also a pianist to watch.

It will be interesting to hear how these personal traits carry over into the players' interpretation of concerto movements on Saturday evening.



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