

CIPC for Young Artists: Semi-Final Chamber Round (July 28)

by Mike Telin

With the 2026 Cleveland International Piano Competition for Young Artists underway I took the opportunity to hear a most enjoyable Semi-Final Chamber Round on Tuesday, July 28 in Mixon Hall at CIM. The session featured contestants from the Rising Star (ages 10 to 12) and Senior divisions (ages 16 to 18).

The session included three performances of the opening movement — Molto allegro agitato — of Mendelssohn's *Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor* and two of the first movement — Allegro con brio - Tranquillo - In tempo ma sempre sostenuto — of Brahms' *Piano Trio No. 1 in B Minor* along with ENCORE Chamber Music Institute collaborators, violinist Jinjoo Cho and cellist Max Geissler.



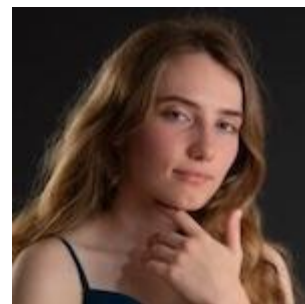
To begin the session, Khanh Nhi Luong — Third Prize Winner at the 2024 Cleveland International Piano Competition — joined Wilson Liu, age 12 (United States) for the first movement, Allegro, of Mozart's *Sonata for Four-Hands in C Major*. The magical performance featured wonderful unisons and smooth scale passages. Throughout Liu perfectly matched his partner's phrasing, articulations, and musical nuances.

Yurim Kim, age 17 (South Korea) joined Cho and Geissler in a lovely performance of the Mendelssohn, highlighted by well-matched musical lines and fine ensemble — never stepping on each others' shining moments. Kim made easy work of the many technical passages and her accompanying lines were always supportive of her colleagues.



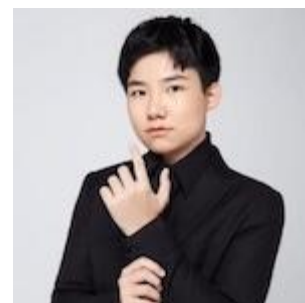
17-year-old Chenxu Han, (China) took over the bench for the first movement of the Brahms, creating a beautiful opening with Geissler. The trio achieved mature ensemble playing that was full of rich sounds, many mood, color and dynamic changes, and some attractive, intimate moments.

Spaniard Deva Mira Sperandio, 18, joined the ENCORE musicians for a spirited performance of the Mendelssohn. Sperandio's sound blended well with her colleagues as they made splendid transitions from one section to another. This was a performance with sensitive mood and dynamic shifts.



Guillermo Hernández Barrocal, 18, from Spain, supported Cho and Geissler in a grand opening of the Brahms with a full-bodied sound. Their terrific ensemble playing in this beautifully settled performance was full of color and dynamic changes.

The final performance of the Mendelssohn, and of the evening, came from 17-year-old Yu Qin Lu, China. Playing with incisive rhythm, Lu came to the fore at all the right moments in this well-balanced ensemble, as well as producing magical accompanying lines with Jinjoo Cho and Max Geissler.



Following the session, the jury, chaired by Olga Kern, narrowed the field down to three Junior Finalists and three Senior Finalists as well as awarding the following medals to contestants in the Rising Star Division:

First Place – Wilson Liu, 12, United States

Second Place – Khloe Wu, 11, Canada

Third Place – Ethan Wang, 11, Canada

Junior Division

Ryan Huang, 15, Canada / United States

Jueon Lee, 14, South Korea

Yixen Shen, 15, China

Senior Division

Chenxu Han, 17, China

Guillermo Hernández Barrocal, 18, Spain

Yurim Kim, 17, South Korea

The Junior and Senior Division Finalists now advance to the Final Round, taking place from today, July 29 through Friday, July 31 at the Cleveland Institute of Music's Kulas Hall.

CIPC for Young Artists continues through Sunday, August 2 To view a complete schedule, and to purchase tickets, click [here](#).

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