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Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota Announces Winners of the 2017 National Piano Competition \$21,600 Awarded to Eight Contestants

Eight young and gifted pianists from around the country won prestigious recognition and thousands of dollars in prize money in this annual competition.

(Sarasota-Manatee) Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota announces the winners of the 2017 National Piano Competition. The competition rotates each year between, piano, voice and string instruments and is open to talented young musicians who are residents of the United States. The finals were held April 29 at the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center in Sarasota. A total of \$21,600 was awarded to eight contestants.

This year, eight young pianists, ages 18-25, competed in the semi-final round. Of these, four were chosen to continue to the final round. The finalists were then presented in an evening public performance that was judged by a panel of distinguished musicians and educators. This year's finalist judges included three internationally acclaimed pianists and pedagogues: Korean pianist **Tong-II Han**, recipient of the Order of Moran, Korea's highest civil service award; **Julian Martin**, who has won numerous awards and been on the faculty of such prestigious schools as Oberlin Conservatory, Peabody Institute and Juilliard; and **Nelita True**, who has been described as "one of the world's most sought-after and beloved

pianist-teachers” and whose students consistently take top prizes at national and international competitions.

The first-prize winner, and recipient of the \$8,000 Jerold & Lee Dougherty Ross Award (funded by Artist Series Concerts Friends), is **Ying Li**, 19, a student at Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. The second-place winner and recipient of a \$5,000 prize (funded by Ernest Kretzmer), is **Aaron Chow**, 24, a student at Shenandoah University in Winchester, VA. Placing third and winner of the \$4,000 Mary Theines-Schunemann Award (endowed by the late Dr. R. Lawrence Thienes), is **Lin Ye**, 24, a student at the Cleveland Institute of Music. The fourth-place prize of \$3,000 (funded by Edith Winston) went to **Min Joo Yi**, 22, a student at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore.

The four semi-finalists were each recognized with a \$400 Donald Britt Award, funded by Donald Britt and Katherine Lauder. Those four semi-finalists are **Nicha Stapanukul** (22, Indiana University); **Angie Zhang** (20, Juilliard School of Music), **Yuan Liu** (19, Texas Christian University); and **Chenyu Wang** (24, University of South Carolina).

Now in its 15th year, the Artist Series Concerts’ annual young musician’s competition draws gifted young musicians from around the nation. According to Lee Dougherty Ross, co-founder of Artist Series Concerts and director of outreach and competitions, dozens of winners have gone on to successful music careers. She says that in selecting the semi-finalists, judges look for accuracy, artistry and technique.

“Our adjudicators are all brilliant music educators and musicians,” says Dougherty Ross. “Their participation raises the bar to a whole new level. Being judged and counseled by such a celebrated panel of adjudicators is exciting and an honor that will remain with the performers for a lifetime.”

John Fischer, managing director of Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota, says that a primary goal of Artist Series Concerts “is to take an active role in building the next generation of professional musicians by providing support to promising young musicians. In the past decade, we’ve awarded nearly \$300,000 to 80 gifted young musicians. Our focus is the future. The support we get to present this competition makes that future possible.”

Since 1996 Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota has presented an ever-expanding annual season of concerts by globally renowned and emerging artists. The current season concludes on May 14 at the Sarasota Opera House with “Hot ‘n’ Cole: A Celebration of Cole Porter.” The revue features local singing sensation Maria Wirries and other young artists from Penn State’s musical theatre program. For more information about Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota, visit www.artistseriesconcerts.org or call 941-306-1202.

Photo captions:

(Left to right) Joseph Holt (artistic director for Artist Series Concerts), Ying Li (19, Philadelphia, PA), Lin Ye (24, Cleveland, OH), Min Joo Yi (22, Baltimore, MD), Aaron Chow (24, Winchester, VA), Lee Dougherty Ross (co-founder and director of competitions and community programs for Artist Series Concerts). Photo by Rod Millington.

(Left to right) Judge Nelita True, Lee Dougherty Ross (co-founder and director of competitions and community programs for Artist Series Concerts), judge Julian Martin. Photo by Rod Millington.

(Left to right) Fourth-place winner Min Joo Yi (22, Baltimore, MD), with Edith Winston. Photo by Rod Millington.

(Left to right) Second-place winner Aaron Chow (24, Winchester, VA) with Ernest Kretzmer. Photo by Rod Millington.

(Left to right) Third-prize winner Lin Ye (24, Cleveland, OH), with David Chivas (president of Artist Series Concerts Friends). Photo by Rod Millington.

(Left to right) Jerold Ross, (co-founder of Artist Series Concerts), first-prize winner Ying Li (19, Philadelphia, PA), Lee Dougherty Ross (co-founder and director of competitions and community programs for Artist Series Concerts). Photo by Rod Millington.