

## Eight finalists selected, ready to compete during University MostArts Festival July 5-11

6/10/15



The eight finalists for the Young Pianist Competition at Alfred University&s (AU) 2015 MostArts Festival, July 5-11, have been selected.

Applicants are high school students ages 13-18. The finalists will travel to Alfred to perform the first movement of their selected Mozart Concerto (a competition requirement) with the MostArts Festival Orchestra before an international panel of judges including pianists Angelin Chang, Andreas Klein, and Anthony Pattin.

The contest goal is to encourage and promote excellence in the world of classical music and performance, said Dr. Lisa Lantz, the guiding force behind the festival. She is chairperson of the AU Division of Performing Arts, professor of music, and conductor of the University Symphony Orchestra.

The 2015 competitors are:

**Ting Yan Fung (Jade)**, a junior at the Interlochen Arts Academy, Michigan, who in Hong Kong won first place in the Inter-School International Performance Challenge Open Class, first place in the 62nd, 63rd, and 64th HK Schools Music Festival Chinese - composer group and piano solo group (2012, 2013, 2014), and third prize in Japan Hong Kong International Music Competition - professional group (2013).

In the United States, Fung was invited to play at the opening ceremony of the Michigan Youth Arts Festival (2014) and at the MMTA fall conference as a prize for winning first place in the Michigan Music Teachers Association Concerto Competition. This year, she won the state and district levels in the Senior Piano Duet Competition. She also was runner-up in the school Concerto Competition and performed Mozart&s Concerto No. 25 with the school orchestra. Immediately before attending the MostArts Festival this summer, Fung will perform in a recital in Weill Recital Hall (at Carnegie Hall), as a result of earning first place and the Judges Distinction Award from the American Protégé Concerto Competition.

Applicants were asked to talk about what piano means to them.

“Piano is my life and dream ever since I watched a documentary of Lang Lang (Chinese concert pianist) playing the piano when I was three,” said Fung. “The uniqueness in tone and the huge variety of colors produced by just a piano attracted me instantly. Unlike many other instruments, piano is harmonically self-contained. That is, one can play solos as well as being an accompanist to different instruments or even chamber music ....”

Fung selected Mozart Concerto No. 25 for the competition.

“Being one of the late works of Mozart&s, I love piano Concerto No. 25 because it reminds me of the ‘Magic Flute,& one of my favorite operas. Also, this concerto is full of surprise - slipping again and again unexpectedly into minor keys, and the ostentatious displays of learned counterpoint which is something rare in concertos.”

Thirteen-year-old **Avery Gagliano** is a Jack Kent Cook Scholarship recipient at Levine Music and a Young Scholar of the Lang Lang International Music Foundation. Born in Washington, D.C., she began piano lessons at age 5 and violin as a secondary instrument at 8. At 9, she had her orchestral debut with the Maryland Classic Youth Orchestra at Strathmore Concert Hall and performed at Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. The following year, Gagliano was invited to perform on National Public Radio&s “From The Top” and was featured in the PBS documentary “Arts and the Mind.”

Gagliano was selected as one of 13 Young Artists (ages 12 to 15) to compete at the 2015 Cleveland International Piano Competition. She was invited to perform in master classes at the 2015 Southeastern Piano Festival and the 2015 Oxford Philomusica Piano Festival. Among her honors are first prize at the International Young Artist Piano Competition in Washington, D.C. and Grand Prix at the Chopin International Piano Competition in Hartford, CT in 2014.

Additional highlights include first prize in all divisions of Levine Music&s Marlin - Engel Piano Competition, the Marlin-Engel Instrumental Competition, the Cogen Piano Concerto Competition, the DCPS Piano Competition, the Northern Virginia Music Teachers Association (NVMTA) Piano Competition, and the NVMTA Chamber Competition.

Outside of music, Gagliano enjoys reading, math, swimming, ballet, and watching movies.

**Vanessa Haynes**, 18, from Oak Ridge, NJ, has been a student at the New England Conservatory and in the pre-college division of Juilliard. In 2015 she was one of six emerging artists, nominated to be a fellow at the ARTEMISIA AKADEMIE at Yale.

Haynes, a Young Steinway Artist, won first prizes at the 2015 Yamaha International Piano Competition for senior young artists, The Cleveland International Piano Competition for junior artists, and from 2007-12 she garnered prizes in the Cleveland Suburban Orchestra, Boston Steinway Society Competition, Arthur Fraser Concerto Competition, Burgos Music Festival Competition in Spain, and Seattle Piano Competition.

She has been a soloist under such conductors as Uri Segal, Zvi Carmeli, Roni Porat, Morihiko Nakahara, and Anna Mroz and has performed at Carnegie&s Weill Recital Hall, and Merkin Hall, New York City. Haynes& performance was broadcast live in 2012 from Jordan Hall, Boston, on NPR&s “From the Top.”

“What I love most of the piano is how I can create and share all the stories in the world. The vast sounds that you can produce on the piano are incredible and it is always an adventure exploring the different sounds and meanings in each story,” said Haynes.

Her competition piece, The Mozart Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major, “never fails to put a smile on my face. Though written during a period when he wrote more serious and intimate works, this work is on the happier side of the emotional spectrum. In the development section however, there is an incursion of drama, which is always fun for me to sneak in some more attitude,” she explained. “I love how I can travel through Mozart&s different moods and personalities through this piece, and ultimately always ending up in a great mood because of it.”

**Charlie Liu**, 14, of Princeton, NJ, began piano at age 4 and has been studying at Westminster Choir College of Rider University since 2007. He has been a winner in dozens of solo competitions, including earning first prize in the fifth David Dubois Piano Competition, third prize in the seventh Yamaha USASU International Piano Competition, first place four times in the New Jersey and Massachusetts Music Teacher associations competitions, first place in the Steinway Society Scholarship Competition, Gold Prize at the American Fine Arts Festival, and second prize in the Bradshaw & Buono International Competition.

At age 11, Liu made his orchestra debut with the Bravura Philharmonic Orchestra. He has since soloed with the Lansdowne Symphony Orchestra and twice with Midwest Young Artists Orchestra in Millennium Park, Chicago.

In 2008, he won the Lang Lang International Music Foundation Scholarship and remains the youngest ever selected by the Foundation. He set a world record at age 8 by completing a Carnegie Hall “Grand Slam” (performing in all three concert halls of the world-famous Carnegie Hall).

Liu has performed in the YouTube Symphony Orchestra debut in Carnegie Hall, on the “Ellen DeGeneres Show” and the “Oprah Winfrey Show” as well as for luminaries such as Queen Rania of Jordan and Bono of U2. He has also performed at other top venues across the United States from Lincoln Center and Merkin Hall in New York, to the Segerstrom Concert Hall in California.

Liu is committed to helping society and the community through his music, by initiating and organizing benefit events such as “Young Artists for Haiti.” He is actively fundraising to create a Rescue Music Foundation.

“Everyone can enjoy and love music, and being able to spread it and take pride in my music is what makes playing the piano great for me,” said Liu.

“I chose Mozart’s Concerto No. 13 because it is a very joyful and innocent piece and is very fun and enjoyable to play. It is also quite a contrast to the other pieces I am playing, most of which are minor, with a C major first movement and a beautiful F major second movement.”

**Michael Lu**, 15, started playing piano at the age of 5, and currently studies piano at Washington University, St. Louis, and chamber music on a scholarship in the Webster University Community Music School preparatory program. He has been a prizewinner in numerous piano competitions, including first prize in the inaugural Midwest International Piano Competition in Iowa in 2014, first at the Fite Family Young Artists Piano Competition in Missouri in 2014, and second in the Nice Cote-d’Azur International Piano Competition in France as the youngest competitor.

As a concerto soloist, Lu has performed with the Orchestre Régional de Cannes (Cannes Orchestra), France; the St. Charles County Symphony Orchestra; the Alton Symphony Orchestra; the University of Missouri-St. Louis Orchestra; and the Symphony Orchestra of the Ocean University, China.

In Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 20, “the piece utilizes another kind of character which is dark and brooding. He allows the listener to explore many different shades of mood - from the most menacing and dark to the most cheerful and bright. This is why I love this concerto and why I think it is one of the greatest masterpieces Mozart has ever produced,” said Lu.

“I feel that great music is extraordinarily immaculate in structure and incorporates all of the shapes, lights, sounds and colors of a paradise,” began Lu. “This feeling motivates me to explore the dynamic nature of music beyond its structure. And I feel that the piano allows me to express this feeling better than any other instrument because of its unparalleled beauty and colossal palette of colors.”

**Roger Shen**, 16, is one of 24 pianists to participate in the First Cliburn International Junior Piano Competition and Festival, Fort Worth, Texas this June. In addition to the prize for the “Best Performance of a 20th Century Composer” at the 2014 MostArts Piano Competition, Shen won the 2013 Southeastern Piano Festival Discretionary Award, the 2013 Walgreens National Concerto Competition Open Overall Winner Award, and first prizes at the Bradshaw & Buono International Piano Competition, Aloha International Piano Concerto Competition, Chicago Steinway Young Artist Competition, and the Phillips Exeter Academy Concerto Competition.

Shen made his Carnegie Hall debut at Weill Hall in 2010 and reappeared in 2011, and has been featured on WFMT’s “Introductions.” As an orchestral soloist, he has played with the Northbrook, Midwest Young Artist, and Hawaii Youth symphonies, and the Phillips Exeter Academy and MostArts orchestras.

Shen attended the International Institute for Young Musicians several times on scholarship. He is currently enrolled at Phillips Exeter Academy and has attended the New England Conservatory Advanced Piano Seminar.

When at home in Northbrook, IL, Shen is an active member of a student music outreach group and performs biweekly concerts for various nursing homes around New Hampshire. He enjoys hiking, swimming, chess, fishing, and ping pong.

**Elisabeth Tsai**, 16, of Phenix City, AL, began studying the piano at age 7. She most recently was awarded third place at the 2015 Hilton Head International Piano Competition. In 2014, she received first prize and Best Solo Award at the Arthur Fraser International Piano Competition. Also in 2014, she was the winner of the first prize and the Chopin Prize at the national finals of the 2014 MTNA Junior Piano competition.

Her additional first-prize awards include those at the 2014 New York International Artists Association, the 2014 Blount-Lawson Young Artists Concerto Competition, the 2013 Zelpha Wells Piano Competition, the 2015 and 2012 Lois Pickard Scholarship Competition, and the 2012 Indian Springs Piano Competition. She was a state winner in the Alabama Music Teachers Association competition in both the solo and concerto categories from 2009-13.

Tsai has appeared as a soloist with the Montgomery and Hilton Head Symphony orchestras, and has upcoming performances with the South Carolina Philharmonic and the Alabama Symphony Orchestra in the 2015-16 concert season.

This fall, she will be a freshman at Columbus State University&s Schwob School of Music. Along with her siblings, Elisabeth frequently performs at retirement homes around Columbus, GA.

“Music is a gift from God that can be used to bless many people,” said Tsai. “I feel that I can express many unspeakable things through playing the piano, as well as touch and inspire people&s hearts through the music.”

Tsai chose Mozart Piano Concerto No. 23 for the MostArts competition: “A challenging work, it expresses purity and simplicity that is so characteristic of Mozart&s music. The first movement is very graceful, expressive, and singing, and gives the listener a sense of joy.”

**Victor Xie**, a 17-year-old from Palo Alto, CA, began his musical studies at age 7 and has established himself as a solo pianist in a myriad of competitions. He was a winner at the Menuhin Piano Competition in 2011 and the U.S. Open Junior Solo Piano Competition in 2012. He has also performed in the Carnegie/Weill Recital Hall twice as a winner for the American Fine Arts Festival Competition 2011 and as a gold prize winner of the AADGT International Young Gifted Musician Festival&s “Passion of Music 2013.”

As winner of the El Camino Youth Symphony Concerto Competition, Xie was a featured soloist performing with the ECYS Orchestra at the Lunar New Year Celebration Concert in February 2014. He performed with the Mercury Orchestra at the Sanders Theatre, Harvard University as the winner of the 2014 Foundation for Chinese Performing Arts Concerto Competition. In June 2014, he won first prize at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual San Francisco Young Pianists Competition and appeared in a recital at San Francisco State University in September 2014.

In February of this year, he won second place at the Mondavi Center Young Artists National Competition. In March 2015, he soloed the complete Saint Saens Concerto No. 2 with the California Youth Symphony in two concerts as winner of the 2015 Young Artists Solo Competition.

Selecting Concerto No. 20 in D Minor for the competition “starts with my love for all of Mozart&s music .... The Concerto No. 20 in D Minor in particular is very dark and dramatic, being unmatched in its ability to create constant tension and forward movement through its syncopated rhythms. Like many of the late concertos,” explained Xie, “No. 20 includes many romantic elements and expresses many complicated feelings, more than just the joy or playfulness that he is usually associated with. These qualities altogether make it a very effective and captivating piece to perform and a really timeless work that I hope to share my love of.”

Following a successful inaugural year, the MostArts Festival at Alfred University (AU) returns this summer for a weeklong run, Sunday, July 5 through Saturday, July 11, with a series of musical and art events highlighted by the Young Pianist Competition.

The mid-summer celebration is “committed to enriching the cultural, economic, and educational potential of the Alfred community by inviting internationally renowned musicians to the region to share their passion for music and to engage in the broader dialogue between music and the vibrant world of Alfred art,” said Lantz.

The competition will culminate with a \$10,000 first prize; \$2,500 for second place award; \$1,500 for third; two \$500 Audience Awards; and a \$500 Discretionary Prize.

MostArts Festival activities will include both daytime and evening events open to the public. All daytime concerts and activities are free; the Evening Concert Series requires a ticket.

An “Applause Pass Patron” \$100 ticket will provide entry into all six evening concerts in Miller Theater; single evening tickets are \$20. Special rates for senior citizens are available at \$50 for six evenings, \$10 single ticket; student rates are \$25 for the week or \$5 for a single evening ticket. Special group and family discounts are also available. For information please visit [MostArts@alfred.edu](mailto:MostArts@alfred.edu) or call 607.871.2828.