

## A memorable MostArts Festival awards Grand Prize to 14-year-old pianist Carey Byron

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ALFRED, NY – Fourteen-year-old Carey Byron, a student at the Oak Crest Academy of Los Angeles, CA, won the \$10,000 Grand Prize of the Young Pianists Competition hosted by the 2019 MostArts Festival at Alfred University.

Byron, the daughter of Brad and Jennifer Byron of Los Angeles, accepted the award from MostArts Founder and Artistic Director Lisa Lantz at the conclusion of Saturday night's Gala Concert, as a packed Miller Theater exploded in applause and cheers. Byron's Grand Prize honors include an invitation to return to Alfred next July and perform with the MostArts Festival Orchestra as a soloist on the opening night of the 2020 Festival.

In addition to her Grand Prize, Byron also won an Audience Favorite award for her performance of Mozart's Concerto No. 9 in E-flat major K. 271, one of her favorite Mozart works, she says, citing the complex emotional character of the concerto "ranging from melancholic and longing to upbeat and exciting."

"Exciting" would be the perfect description of Saturday's Gala Concert and awards ceremony, in which additional honors were presented to four other young classical pianists who traveled to Alfred for this year's MostArts Festival. Eight young classical pianists in all played in the Young Pianists Competition.

Second prize in the competition went to Hyeonuk Park, 14, of Brookline, MA, while 17-year-old Ethan Yuen of Palo Alto, CA, won third prize. Park's honors included a \$5,000 award, and Yuen won \$2,500. In addition, 16-year-old LiYuan Byrne of Verona, NJ, won Audience Favorite honors for her Thursday evening performance of Mozart's Concerto No. 22 in E flat Major K. 482, and the Judge's Discretionary Prize went to Maxine Park, of Hanover, NH.

Saturday's awards ceremony capped a night in Miller Theater that featured world renowned Spanish pianist Joaquin Achucarro performing Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor, accompanied by the MostArts Festival Orchestra, directed by Maestro Yuval Zaliouk. The orchestra began the evening with Brahms' Festival Overture, followed by Beethoven's Symphony No. 8 in F major.

The Miller Theater audience gave the orchestra a standing ovation for its performances of the Brahms and Beethoven selections, then rose to its feet again when Achucarro finished with the Grieg. The ovation was the second intensely enthusiastic acknowledgement of Achucarro's internationally celebrated prowess, following a boisterous ovation Friday afternoon for his solo recital of Mozart, Beethoven and Chopin in Harder Hall's Holmes Auditorium.

This year's MostArts Festival was notable also for performances by renowned pianist André-Michel Schub, who performed Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor in Miller Theater, and Colombian violinist Blanca Gonzalez,

who performed Wieniawski's Violin Concerto No. 2 in D minor with the festival orchestra under Maestro Zaliouk.

When asked about her experience this week, Lantz replied, "It was an extraordinary event from every aspect: Chamber Music; the return of Christopher Zandieh opening night; our solo concerts with the beautiful Blanca Gonzalez and Andre Schub; the most spectacular performance of Shostakovich 9 by the international MostArts Festival Orchestra under the leadership of Yuval Zaliouk; our Young Pianist Competition recitals and concerts, conducted by Steven Thomas; and especially the incredible performances by our Maestro of the Piano, Joaquin Achucarro. Thank you Joaquin, for gracing our stage and leading us on that astounding musical journey."

Wayne Higby, director of the Alfred Ceramic Art Museum, offered his sentiments on the 2019 MostArts Festival.

"There is a moment in every great performance when the entire audience gets absolutely silent, absolutely still, as if breathing in unison. At that point, the audience has knowingly crossed the threshold of common experience into the unknown to receive an intangible gift of incomprehensible beauty," Higby commented. "I use to have to leave town to receive such a gift, but no longer. The MostArts Festival has brought the opportunity to me here where I live in Alfred, New York. The simultaneous sharing of this gift of beauty with my friends and neighbors makes it that much more meaningful. I will never forget the magnificent gifts of MostArts 2019."

All in all, it was a memorable week of classical music, as noted by Alfred University President Mark Zupan, who joined Lantz on the stage at the conclusion of Saturday's concert.

Zupan had presented Lantz gifts at the conclusion of the 2017 and 2018 MostArts Festivals: the presidential Fiat Lux Award, which included an inscribed baton, in 2017, and a Bobblehead statue of Lantz herself in 2018. This year, citing her superhero-performances as MostArts founder and artistic director, Zupan gave Lantz a purple super-hero cape adorned with the Alfred University seal and motto, Fiat Lux.

*Winners in the 2019 MostArts Festival Young Pianist Competition, pictured in photo above (left-to-right): Carey Byron, Grand Prize winner, Audience Favorite prize winner; LiYuan Byrne, Audience Favorite prize winner; Maxine Park, Judges' Discretionary Award; Ethan Yuen, Third Prize; Hyeonuk Park, Second Prize.*