

Long Island teen takes top honors in MostArts Young Pianist Competition

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Christopher Zandieh, 2018 Young Pianist Competition winner, is greeted by Lisa Lantz.

ALFRED, NY – Christopher Zandieh, a 13-year-old eighth-grader at South Woods Middle School in Syosset, NY, won first prize in the 2018 Young Pianist Competition at Alfred University’s MostArts Festival.

The Long Island teen will receive a \$10,000 cash prize – given in memory of Robert Hutter, late Alfred University business professor – and an invitation to become a Young Steinway Artist. He will return to Alfred University for the opening Gala Concert at the 2019 MostArts Festival next July.

The Young Pianist Competition winners were announced Saturday evening at the closing concert of the 2018 MostArts Festival, performed by the festival orchestra in Miller Theater on the Alfred University campus. Fifteen-year-old Christian Chiu of Pittsburgh, PA, took the \$5,000 second prize, while Perren-Luc Thiessen, 15, of McKinney, TX, earned the third-place prize of \$2,500.

Two Audience Favorite Awards, each for \$500, were given for the most moving Mozart Concerto performance. Eight finalists, ages 13-18, participated in the Young Pianist Competition, giving solo performances of the second and third movements of a Mozart Concerto. Four finalists performed their Mozart concerti on Thursday and the other four on Friday. Ashley Kim, 14, of Wilmette, IL, won the Audience Favorite Award for Thursday’s solos, while Zandieh was the honored performer for Friday’s solos.

Other finalists in the piano competition were: Tyler Kim, 15, of Temecula, CA; Angeline Ma, 15, of Berwyn, PA; Maxine Park, 13, of Hanover, NH; and Simeon Radev, 17, of Orangeburg, SC.

The International jurors for the Young Pianist Competition included Grammy-winning pianist Angelin Chang, Steinway artist and German-born pianist Andreas Klein and American pianist Anthony Pattin.

The Young Pianist Competition was, as in previous years, a crowning moment of the festival.

“I have been reflecting on several highlights of this year’s Festival such as, Christophe,” said Lisa Lantz, MostArts founder and artistic director. “Last year’s award winner, Alice Zhang’s opening night piano performance set the tone for the week. It was definitely magical. As the festival unfolded the energy took hold of all participants.”

The MostArts Festival began with the Opening Gala Concert Sunday evening, July 8, in Miller Theater. The concert featured the talents of Zhang, winner of the Young Pianist Competition from the 2017 MostArts Festival. She performed Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1 with the International Festival Orchestra, under the direction of Maestro Yuval Zaliouk.

Other events held throughout the week included a number of musical performances and concerts – such as the noontime “Sound Bites Sampler” Chamber Music Series and Evening Concert Series. The free Sound Bites Sampler performances featured various groups of musicians performing gems of the chamber music repertoire, while the Evening Concert Series included internationally-renowned pianists Klein and Chang, and violinist Blanca Cecilia Gonzalez.

Wednesday night’s events included “Music Under the Stars,” and featured a “Gallery Hop” tour of the Alfred Ceramic Art Museum and local art galleries and exhibitions in the village and on the campuses of Alfred University and Alfred State College. A barbecue and dance was held under a tent and on the lawn outside the museum.

There were a number of workshops and art exhibitions in the University’s museums and galleries. Among the workshops was Saturday’s “Raku Extravaganza,” given by Wayne Higby, director of the Alfred Ceramic Art Museum and professor of ceramic art at Alfred University’s School of Art and Design. Raku is a term originally derived from the history of the Japanese tea bowl. “American Raku” was invented in the mid-20th century and features a post firing manipulation of surface effects. Higby is a world-renowned master of American Raku and is responsible for many innovative contributions to its history.

“Our night of “Music Under the Stars” was wonderful this year with over 400 people enjoying the barbecue, music and dance event at the Alfred Ceramic Art Museum,” Lantz noted. “The various workshops and the annual Raku Extravaganza brought our community together in the celebration of art during the entire week.”

Klein, a mainstay at the MostArts Festival, spoke fondly about the event and how it has grown and gained in popularity over the last five years.

“I wanted to thank you again for including me in the ‘Magic of Alfred’ which now has a steady following and appreciation by audiences beyond the village. I congratulate you for your tremendous efforts, organization and mission with the MostArts Festival,” Klein said in a note to Lantz following the conclusion of this year’s festival. “The seeds you planted in 2014 have developed into beautiful plants which bear fruit and cultural nutrition to an area which is deprived of classical concerts of various kinds. And you have proven with your endurance that obstacles against new ventures can be overcome!”

At the 2017 MostArts Festival, Alfred University President Mark Zupan honored Lantz with a Fiat Lux Award. At the conclusion of this year’s event, he opted for a more light-hearted gift acknowledging her work in founding and developing the MostArts Festival: a customized Bobblehead statuette of Lantz holding a baton.

Alfred University alumnus Jay Yedvab, ’56 presented Lantz a crystal vase on behalf of several MostArts supporters. Yedvab called Lantz an exemplar of the entrepreneurial spirit that Alfred University celebrates and encourages in its students.

Lantz expressed her appreciation for all who participated in the MostArts Festival and were involved in its organization.

“There are not enough words to say thank you to everyone involved,” she said. “The MostArts Festival returns each year because of you and your belief in the possibility of irresistible moments of magic.”