



PASADENA
SHOWCASE
HOUSE
for the Arts

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release.

PASADENA SHOWCASE HOUSE FOR THE ARTS AWARDS \$18,500 TO NINE ASPIRING YOUNG MUSICIANS

INSTRUMENTAL COMPETITION HELD AT PASADENA CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC



(Pictured L-R: Sally Hazen, Chair of the Instrumental Competition, Nikka Gershman-Pepper, Instrumental Competition Grand Prize Winner and Marti Farley, President of Pasadena Showcase House for the Arts)

(April 6, 2022) Pasadena, California. Pasadena Showcase House for the Arts held its 35th Instrumental Competition on March 19th at Pasadena Conservatory of Music's Barrett Hall. Nine finalists, ages 14-19 demonstrated their musical talents competing for monetary prizes totaling \$18,500. This year marked the first year that the age level of the competitors was changed to high school-aged students. That decision was made when the Instrumental

Competition was put on hold in 2020 due to the pandemic. “We took that opportunity to reflect on the competition and to see how we could improve it going forward,” said Pasadena Showcase House for the Arts President, Marti Farley. “We decided to address a younger audience because we felt there is such talent in that age group and this would be a great time for them to experience this,” she said. “It also allows us to give back to the surrounding communities that support us.”

Sally Hazen, the Chair of the 2022 Instrumental Competition said the comments that were shared by the judges and attendees proved that the new direction was a success. “The results were astounding,” she said. “Each one of the students reflected a true dedication to their instrument and great talent was revealed in their performances.” Hazen noted the team of judges, all members of the LA Phil, were not told the student’s name, age or the school they attended until after the winning decisions were made. They thoroughly enjoyed the experience and were so surprised when they learned the ages of the students,” she said. “We were so impressed with these young musicians and know that they have a very bright future.”

Nikka Gershman-Pepper, a flutist, was awarded the Grand Prize for “exceptional talent and musicianship.” The 14-year-old studies full time at the Colburn School while completing her high school education through independent study. She refers to playing the flute as “magical,” and began playing at the age of six when she says it came to her in a dream. “It’s one of the hardest instruments to get a sound out of but the first time I played it the most beautiful sound came out and I was passionate about it ever since,” says Gershman-Pepper. She has an extensive list of national and international solo performances and prestigious awards to her credit and is a composer as well.

Erre Maqueous, a 14-year-old student at Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, was the first-place prize winner in the brass category. Maqueous began playing the trumpet at age 5 and prefers it even though he plays other instruments. He says he likes the challenge the trumpet offers. “With the trumpet you could get a very dark sound but also a very bright one.” He previously played in the Colburn School’s wind ensemble as first chair and now plays in the Colburn Youth Orchestra.

Nathanial Yue, a 15-year-old cellist from San Marino and Ashley Tsai, a 16-year-old violinist from Canada tied for the first-place prize in the strings category. Yue is a student at San Marino High School in addition to his music studies at the Colburn School. He has won at least five first-place awards and scholarships in 2022 alone. Yue also participated in the Back to Bach Project and the Tuesday Musicale Juniors. Tsai is currently a student at the Colburn School, while completing her high school education through independent study. She has won many music competitions in Canada as well as California’s Music Teachers National Association Senior String Competition.

Two students from Calabasas High School tied for the second-place prize in the woodwinds category, Zachary Piesner on the bassoon and Max Kaminsky on the clarinet. Piesner, at 15

years old, is currently the principal bassoonist with the Conejo Valley Youth Orchestra and has also played with the Los Angeles Youth Philharmonic Orchestra as a featured soloist. Although he plays the violin and piano, he became interested in the bassoon when he saw it in an orchestra and liked the tone quality of the instrument. Besides, he says, “It also looks cool.” Kaminski, age 16, has played with the Glendale Youth Orchestra, the Los Angeles Youth Orchestra and the Colburn Youth Orchestra. He has won national and international competitions in both clarinet and piano.

An Honorable Mention in the strings category went to violinist Ashlee Sung, a 15-year-old student at Arcadia High School, where she is the assistant-concertmistress of the symphony orchestra. Sung also plays in the Pasadena Youth Symphony Orchestra and regularly performs solo recitals at the Pasadena Conservatory of Music.

Honorable Mentions in the woodwinds category went to Erin Sercel, a 16-year-old clarinetist from Pasadena and Celine Chen, an 18-year-old flutist from Santa Clarita. Sercel is a full-time student at Cal State Los Angeles and is pursuing her high school diploma and bachelor’s degree in music performance. She has played in ensembles and performed as a soloist with the Pasadena Youth Orchestra, CSULA, and the Pasadena Conservatory of Music. Chen is a student at West Ranch High School in Valencia in addition to studying music at the Colburn School. She is currently the principal flute in the Colburn Youth Orchestra and is active in her Junior Chamber Music Student Service Alliance as well as the Santa Clarita Valley Musicteers.

Pasadena Showcase has awarded more than \$685,000 in prizes to promising music students since the Instrumental Competition began in 1985.

Pasadena Showcase House for the Arts, an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization, has been supporting local music and arts programs since 1948. With the hard work and dedication of its 200+ members, the organization raises funds from its major benefit, the Pasadena Showcase House of Design—one of the oldest, largest, and most successful home and garden tours in the country. Through its **Gifts & Grants** program, Pasadena Showcase has contributed more than \$23 million to nonprofit organizations in support of music education, scholarships, concerts, and music therapy, while continuing to support the LA Phil and its learning programs for which the organization was first founded. Pasadena Showcase also nurtures the study and appreciation of music among young people with its three annual music programs: the **Music Mobile™**, which has introduced orchestral instruments to more than 125,000 third grade students; the **Instrumental Competition**, which has awarded more than \$685,000 in monetary prizes for exceptionally talented musicians; and the **Youth Concert**, which has brought nearly 250,000 fourth graders to Walt Disney Concert Hall for exuberant performances presented by the LA Phil.

THE 2022 Pasadena Showcase House of Design will be open from April 24th through May 22nd. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit pasadenashowcase.org.

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