

Menuhin Competition 2014 announces winners after a spectacular ten days of world-class music-making

Austin, Texas: 21 February - 2 March 2014

The Menuhin Competition 2014 announces Japanese Rennosuke Fukuda (14) and Dutch-American Stephen Waarts (17) as this year's junior and senior first prize winners. As the world's leading competition for violinists under the age of 22, the Menuhin Competition has once again brought together the world's greatest young violin talent in another year of world-class and spectacular music-making. The ten-day Competition took place for the first time in the US, at Austin's Butler School of Music at the University of Texas.

The star-studded jury, comprising artists, educators and previous Menuhin Competition winners including Ilya Gringolts, Joji Hattori and Lu Siqing, faced the difficult task of narrowing down the winners during ten days of competition, after a world record number of applicants from 27 countries this year.

In a particularly strong Senior (16-21) Finals, 17-year old Stephen Waarts returned to the Competition to triumph in first place, after being awarded 2nd Prize in the Junior Division of the Menuhin Competition in Oslo 2010. The win tops an impressive international performance record for Stephen, whose repertoire spans over 25 violin concertos. As well as playing the violin and the piano, Stephen is an enthusiastic mathematician, having won many national US maths awards. His spell-binding performance of Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No.2 with the Austin Symphony Orchestra wowed the judges and led Artistic Director Gordon Back to comment:

"If (Yehudi Menuhin) were here tonight, he would be absolutely thrilled as to what happened to this competition. Tonight you have witnessed some of the best playing you'll hear in any competition, in any city, of any age."

Meanwhile in the Junior (under 16s) Finals, first prize winner Rennosuke Fukuda gave a stunning performance of F. Waxman's virtuosic *Carmen Fantasy* with the University of Texas Symphony Orchestra. Out of the seven junior finalists, the top five players were recognised with prizes for their outstanding performances. These

include two Europeans, in the first time Norway and Sweden have made it into the top five junior winners. First prize winner Rennosuke Fukuda won his first violin award at the age of four after starting to play the instrument at age three, and he since donates much of his time to performing charity concerts.

Chair of the Jury, Pamela Frank, spoke passionately from the stage:

"I would like to thank these young players. Tonight was a culmination not only of a celebration of the violin, but also a celebration of music in general. We have fantastic artists in our midst, and we will hear more from them. The big winner is the music world, to have you all in it.

During the several days of competition rounds, the players also got to perform world premieres of newly commissioned works for solo violin, all with a Texan theme: for the Seniors, Donald Grantham's *Black-eyed Suzy* and for the Juniors Dan Welcher's *The Cowboy and the Rattlesnake*.

Both first prize winners win the opportunity to take to the stage in a glittering Closing Gala Concert on Sunday 2 March with the Cleveland Orchestra - one of the world's most renowned orchestras- conducted by Giancarlo Guerrero. Each also wins the individual prize of \$10,000 plus the one-year loan of fine Italian violin by Christophe Landon Rare Violins (Senior first prize winner Stephen Waarts) and \$7,000 USD plus the one-year loan of a fine Italian violin by Florian Leonhard Fine Violins (Junior first prize winner Rennosuke Fukuda).

Founded in 1983 by Yehudi Menuhin, the competition's aim to help exceptionally talented young musicians from around the world develop into artists of the highest calibre is demonstrated by its previous winners, which include Julia Fischer, Ilya Gringolts, Tasmin Little, Nikolaj Znaider, Ray Chen and Chad Hoopes. Each competition takes place in a festival-like environment in order to nurture the young players with a rich programme of masterclasses, juror recitals, chamber music evenings, and talks, as well as the competition rounds. Each competitor is encouraged to stay for the whole competition to benefit from the programme of nurture and support. The Menuhin Competition 2014 takes place for the first time in the US, at Austin's Butler School of Music at the University of Texas, chosen because it shares the competition's creative vision and Menuhin's legacy of nurture, support and development.

The Competition, which takes place in a different world city every two years, returns to London in 2016 to celebrate the centenary of Yehudi Menuhin.

Menuhin Competition 2014 Prize winners:

Senior prize winners:

1st Prize: Stephen Waarts (17, Dutch-American): Also wins Bach Prize and Composer's Prize.

2nd Prize: In Mo Yang (18, Korean)

3rd Prize: Christine Seohyun Lim (19, American)

4th Prize: Stephen Kim (18, American)

Additional prizes:

Chamber Music Prize: Stephen Kim

Bach Prize: Stephen Waarts

Composer's Prize: Stephen Waarts

ECMY Prize: Aaron Timothy Chooi

Junior prize winners:

First prize: Rennosuke Fukuda (14, Japanese)

Second prize: Daniel Lozakovitj (12, Swedish)

Third prize: Ludvig Gudim (15, Norwegian)

Fourth prize: Alex Zhou (12, American)

Fifth prize: Jaewon Wee (14, Korean)

Additional prize:

Composer's Prize: Alex Zhou

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About the Menuhin Competition:

The Menuhin Competition is one of the few international violin competitions for young musicians under the age of 22. It is open to participants of all nationalities and is comprised of two age groups: Juniors (under the age of 16) and Seniors (16 to 21 years of age).

For nearly 30 years it has consistently attracted some of the greatest young talents from all over the world.

Going beyond the boundaries of traditional music competitions, the Menuhin Competition is a feast for music and violin fans from all over the world. More festival than mere competition, each competition is a ten-day festival of concerts, masterclasses, talks and outreach activities with world-class performers.

The competition is traditionally invited by a host city or a host organisation and has most recently been held in London/England, Cardiff/Wales, Oslo/Norway and Beijing/China (in 2012). The 2014 Competition takes place in Austin/Texas in 2014; the first time the event will be held in the US. In 2016 the Competition returns to London in celebration of the centenary of Yehudi Menuhin.

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Jury members for 2014:

Pamela Frank (Chair), Joji Hattori (Vice Chair), Olivier Charlier, Arabella Steinbacher, Lu Siqing, Ilya Gringolts, David Kim, Brian Lewis and Anton Nel.
www.menuhincompetition.org/jury.html

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