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YOUNG WINNER ASTOUNDS JURORS OF SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION



Eighteen-year-old Hong Kong pianist, Wai Yin Wong, was announced as the winner of the 2011 Southern Highlands International Piano Competition to tumultuous applause at Frensham School's Clubbe Hall in Mittagong last night.

She is the youngest ever entrant in the biennial competition, and one of the youngest to win a prestigious Australian competition for international competitors.

Wai Yin Wong's superb interpretation of Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 11, confirmed her \$20,000 prize money, as well as international performance opportunities.

Wai Yin Wong is currently a Degree student at the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts under Professor Gabriel Kwok. As a Guiomar

Novaes Award winner in the second BNDES International Piano Competition of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, she was also the youngest gold medal winner in the VII International Competition for Young Pianists in Memory of Vladimir Horowitz, where she also won five special prizes. Her other awards include Gold Prize at the International Chopin Piano Competition in Asia, Japan.

She was presented with the award by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO.

The third biennial competition attracted 60 international entrants from 25 countries, including eight from Australia. Twenty eight were selected to compete in Rounds 1 and 2, with an unprecedented fifteen reaching the semi-finals.

The four finalists were: Giovanni Miglieta (Italy); Wai Yin Wong (China); Edward Neeman (Australia); and Rustam Muradov (Russia). Each performed a concerto with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, conducted by juror, Zaurbek Gugkaev.

The second prize of \$10,000 was jointly awarded to Australian Edward Neeman and Russian Rustam Muradov. Neeman also collected the "Best Australian Performer" prize of \$5,000.

Hungary's Peter Toth won "Best Performance of a Major Romantic Work", and Australian Jeremy So a special prize of "Best Emerging Talent".

The other three international jurists, internationally renowned pianist, Professor Mira Yevtich (President), leading teacher Tatiana Zelikman and pianist Ksenia Bashmet were joined in their adjudication by the competition's Artistic Director, Australian composer and pianist, Grant Foster.

Announcing the winners, Foster commented on the extremely high standard of this year's competitors. "We have been privileged to hear some young musicians who will most certainly

continue to forge outstanding careers on music stages throughout the world, not least of them the brilliant Wai Yin Wong”

Artistic Patron of the Southern Highlands International Piano Competition is renowned Russian conductor, Valery Gergiev. The competition’s major sponsors include The Springett Family Foundation, the NSW Government Premier’s Fund, and Theme and Variations, Australian importers and suppliers of Steinway pianos.

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