

Top Prize Winners Announced for the 2026 Festival of Music & 23rd Washington International Piano Artists Competition

Longest-running competition in the United States for adult non-professional pianists names Dr. Jim Chou, Ivan Wong, and Phil Hosford as top winners

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, August 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Following three stages and four days of remarkable public performances by 21 accomplished pianists from countries around the world, the winners were announced for the 2026 Washington International Piano Competition, the longest-running contest of its kind in the United States for outstanding nonprofessional pianists. The competition, which took place in four prestigious locations in the nation's

capital, ended with the finals, awards ceremony, and glittering gala dinner at the Mexican Cultural Institute with the gracious support of 2026's Honorary Competition Chair, His Excellency the Mexican Ambassador to the United States Roberto Lasserri Montano, and a warm welcome from Mexican embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Juan Carlos Lara Armienta.

Dr. Jim Chou, a cardiologist from New York City, was the Grand Prize winner of \$3,000.00 and an invitation to perform at the WIPAC Winners Grand Prix Concert in Washington, D.C., traditionally presented in April of the following year. His performances of Maurice Ravel's "Gaspard de la Nuit," Sergei Prokofiev's Third Piano Sonata, a Bach Prelude and Fugue, Sergei Rachmaninoff's Etude-Tableaux Op. 39 no. 5, Liszt's Rigoletto Concert Paraphrase, and Chopin's Third Sonata won the hearts of the professional jurors who included distinguished pianists Teodora Adzharova, Frederic Chiu, Frank Conlin, Eric Himy, Anna Ouspenskaya, David Witten, and its chair, Mike Davidson. Dr. Chou also won the Audience Prize and the prize for the Best Performance of a Chopin Work. The Grand Prize cash award was donated by board members



2026 competition winners (left to right) Ivan Wong (Second Prize), Phil Hosford (Third Prize) and Dr. Jim Chou (First Prize)

and competition committee chairs Mark Stubis and Qin Sun Stubis.

The competition's Second Prize was awarded to Ivan Wong, an engineering manager from Richmond, B.C., Canada, who played a challenging program of Bach, Liszt, and transcriptions of works by Bach and Schubert, and Medtner. He was awarded \$2,000.00, generously provided by board member Michela Gorham.

Third Prize went to Phil Hosford, an arts academy director from Gaithersburg, Maryland, who won a cash award of \$1,000.00 for his performances of Beethoven, Scarlatti, Brahms, Chopin, Ravel, Debussy, Scriabin, and Liszt. The prize was donated by board secretary Judith Ramage.



The Washington International Piano Arts Council and its international competition were founded in 2001

Longtime board members Portia and Mike Davidson contributed \$250 to each of the three other finalists, William Bloomquist of Riva, Maryland, Illya Bunyakyn of Maryland, and Jonathan Shih of Seattle, Washington.

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For decades, the Washington International Piano Artists Competition has been dedicated to recognizing the extraordinary talents of those who play for the love of music”

Chateau Gardecki

Special awards of \$250 were also given for:

Best Performance of a Baroque Work, which went to Jonathan Shih of Seattle, Washington and was sponsored by Zidi Berger, M.D.

Best Performance of a Classical Work, which went to Illya Bunyakyn and was sponsored by Faye Rokni.

Best Performance of a Romantic Work, which went to

Catherine Doss of Manassas, Virginia and was sponsored by Suzanne Eisinger in memory of her late husband Clayton Eisinger, President Emeritus.

Best Performance of a Contemporary Work, which went to Jonathan Shih for his own original work, “Prelude in g-minor, Op. 1: By the Sea” and was sponsored by Lisa McFarren Polgar.

The Most Imaginative Programming Award, underwritten by Frances Berkman, went to William Bloomquist.

The Audience Award, sponsored by Suzanne Finney, was given to Jim Chou.

In the category of Composer Awards, \$250 was awarded each for:

The Best Performance of a Bach composition, which went to Reiko Osawa of Itami, Hyogo, Japan, and was sponsored by Annie Totah, who provided two more grants.

Best Performance of a Beethoven work went to Phil Hosford and was sponsored by Suzanne Tolstoy.

Best Performance of a Chopin Work went to Jim Chou and was sponsored by Dr. Wanda O'Brien-Trefil.

Best Performance of a Rachmaninoff Work went to Yuchao Zhou of Redwood City, California, and was sponsored by Carolyn Fuller.

Best Performance of a Latin American composer went to Yoko Taruki of Yokohama, Japan, and was sponsored by Sheila Switzer.

A special Press Award, chosen by WIPAC's press jury with the kind assistance of Jan Du Plain and Henry Polgar, was bestowed upon pianist Phil Hosford.

Gifts for everyone were generously donated by Faye and Mike Rokni.

Plaques of recognition were donated by Diane Merriam.

Flowers and bouquets were donated by Portia Davidson and Jeanne Blackwell.

WIPAC honored Dr. Raymond Jackson for his longtime support with a special plaque. Grateful thanks were also given to President Faye Rokni, the board and committee members, Diplomatic Liaison Rhoda Septilici, Lola Reinsch of the Reinsch Pierce Family Foundation, Zidi Berger, M.D.,



WIPAC Co-founder Chateau Gardecki announcing the winners of the 23rd Washington International Piano Artists Competition

Portia and Mike Davidson, Rosalia Rodriguez-Garcia, Monique Lass, Kunhiro Matsuda, Robin Phillips, Frances Berkman, J. Terry Davis, Hal Matson, Judith Ramage, Wayne and Linda Sharp, and John P. Williams.

Special thanks were also given to Michela Gorham, Chris Pedzich, Karl Woelflein, Jeanne Blackwell, and Don and Grace Sumihiro for their invaluable help in making the event run smoothly and efficiently.

The Festival of Music and the Washington International Piano Artists Competition were launched in 2001 by the Washington International Piano Arts Council, a cultural mainstay in the capital for the past quarter-century. The contest has showcased hundreds of talented pianists, drawn as much by the prize money and performing opportunities as by the organization's dedicated community of professional juries, sponsors, board members, diplomatic partners, friends, and supporters, which this year included The Mexican Cultural Institute, Beth Akiyama, the Church of Scientology, the National League of American Pen Women, and The Kosciuszko Foundation. Juror Anna Ouspenskaya arranged for an internet TV global broadcast of the finals courtesy of Virtual Concert Halls™.

"For decades, the Washington International Piano Artists Competition has been dedicated to recognizing the extraordinary talents of those who play for the love of music," said Chateau Gardecki, who with her husband, pianist John Gardecki, co-founded WIPAC and its annual competition.

Added President Faye Rokni: "We are thrilled to have again given a platform to the dedicated pianists who work so hard to perfect their art and wish to share their passion and skill with the world."

The Washington International Piano Arts Council strives to give the gift of music and nurture significant talent through its popular annual concert series and international piano competition for non-professionals.

To learn more about WIPAC and the Washington International Piano Artists Competition, please visit www.wipac.org

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