

NJYS Concerto winners give Recital

BY MABEL PAIS

"I always knew that music and youth are a dynamic combination, but it seems more powerful during the pandemic." - Helen H. Cha-Pyo, Artistic Director & Principal Conductor

The New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS) presents a virtual recital featuring the 2021 Concerto Competition Winners on Friday, March 26 at 7:00 p.m. EST on WhartonArts.tv. The concert will feature this year's first place winner, violinist Samantha Liu; second place winner, clarinetist Alex Cha; and third place winners violinist James Song and pianist Sarah Ouyang; as well as the 2020 Concerto Competition Winner, French hornist Thomas McGrath.

New Jersey's largest youth orchestra program holds the annual competition for current members of the NJYS Youth Symphony with the top winner earning the opportunity to perform with the ensemble at a prestigious concert hall. This year, the competition was held virtually with 19 entrants performing for two guest adjudicators, Ilmar Gavilan, violinist of Harlem Quartet and Dr. Mark Laycock, professor of orchestral studies at Wichita State University.



NJYS Concerto Winners - Photo / WIPA

First place winner Samantha Liu of Basking Ridge, a junior at Basking Ridge High School, will perform the first movement from Barber's Concerto for Violin

and Orchestra, Op. 14. She has studied violin for nine years with Yousun Kim and has been a member of the NJYS for six years. She wants to thank her violin teacher, her NJYS friends, and Artist Director and Principal Conductor Helen H. Cha-Pyo, all of whom inspire her to be a better musician. She looks forward to making live music together in the spring.

Second place winner Alex Cha of Westfield, a senior at Westfield High School, will perform the first movement from Mozart's Clarinet Concerto in A major, K. 622. A proud member of the NJYS's Clarinet Quartet and Youth Symphony, he has been playing the clarinet for over nine years and currently studies with Jo-Ann Sternberg at the Manhattan School of Music Pre-College Division. Accolades in his musical career include placing first in the National Artists Competition and second place in the International Grande Music Competition as well as performing with the New Jersey Regional and All-State Bands.

Third place winner James Song of New Providence, a senior at the Union County Magnet High School, will perform the Finale from Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26. He studies with Oleg Pavlov and joins NJYS in his freshman year of high school as a member of NJYS. He has been placed in several competitions, most notably First Place in the American Protege International Concerto Competition (2020), Grand Prix Winner in the Concert Festival International Competition (2020), and Second Place in the American Protege International Piano & Strings Competition (2017).

Third place winner Sarah Ouyang of Basking Ridge, a junior at Ridge High School, will perform the first movement from Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 in A major, K. 488. A young musician who loves both the piano and the cello, she studies piano with Gloria Chu and cello with Gerall Hieser. She has performed as a piano soloist with Sinfonica del Festival di Chioggia under the baton of Maestro Pietro Perini at the International Festival Musica in Laguna in

Chioggia, Italy, as well as performing Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Major, Op. 15 with the Plainfield Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Charles Prince. As a cellist, she joined NJYS in 2015 and has been a proud member of NJYS since 2018.

In 2020 the NJYS Concerto Competition Winner Thomas McGrath of Princeton, a senior at Princeton High School, will perform Mozart's Horn Concerto No. 1 in D major, K. 412. He studies with Kathryn Mehrtens at The College of New Jersey and has performed with the New Jersey All-State Wind Ensemble and All-State Orchestra (Principal horn, 2020), Central Jersey Regional Orchestra, and Philadelphia Sinfonia.

NJYS, WIPA & PMP

The New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS), founded in 1979, is a tiered orchestral program offering ensemble education for students in grades 3-12 across New Jersey. NJYS has grown from one orchestra of 65 students to over 500 students in 15 different orchestras and ensembles, including the internationally recognized Youth Symphony.

NJYS is a program of the Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts (WIPA). Wharton is New Jersey's largest non-profit performing arts education organization serving over 1,500 students of all ages and abilities through a range of classes and ensembles.

In addition to the New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS), programs include the Paterson Music Project (PMP), an El Sistema-inspired program that uses music as a vehicle for social change by empowering and inspiring children through the community experience of ensemble learning and playing in its hometown of Paterson.

To learn more about NJYS, PMP and WIPA, visit WhartonArts.org

FILM

BY MABEL PAIS

STILL LIFE IN LODZ

DIR/PROD: Slawomir Grünberg | 2021 | Polish w/Eng subs | 1h 16m

"The individual stories are powerful, as are the visual comparisons between present-day and historical locations. A few animated sequences effectively evoke the evanescence of memory." - Ben Kenigsberg, 'The New York Times'

The film takes a look at how fragile - but also how incredibly necessary - our relationship with the past is for creating the future.

STILL LIFE IN LODZ," an emotionally riveting documentary that journeys to the historically tumultuous city of Lodz, Poland, has at its heart the lure of family mysteries. Here, a surprise reunion with a painting that hung in the same apartment for 75



Lilka, Paul and Roni place 'Still Life' photo back in original place - Photo / StillLifeInLodz.com

world-altering years becomes a probing investigation into the power of memory, art, time and resilience.

Once, this painting was the constant companion to Lilka Elbaum, who grew up in Lodz and lived there until 1968, when at the age of 19, an antisemitic purge drove her and her entire family out of Poland. The portrait might have been a simple likeness of lush flowers and ripe fruit, but for Lilka, it had been an indelible connection to her childhood and to Lodz itself.

Forty-eight years later, by remarkable chance, Lilka has an emotional re-encounter with the painting in Lodz. This will spark a new journey full of startling new discoveries but also to a reckoning with the countless ghosts and complicated stories of the city. She brings two important companions on her trek, each with roots in Lodz from different eras, each searching for their own answers. New Yorker Paul Celler brings the perspective of a second-generation Holocaust survivor as he traces how his mother, against all odds, made it out of the Lodz Ghetto and Auschwitz. Exploring the preWar life of Lodz is Israeli artist Roni Ben Ari who is drawn back to the spot of her family's textile workshop once located in Lilka's same building. Together, the trio maps their own labyrinthine stories onto Lodz's current landscape.

For Lilka, Paul and Roni, diving into the riddles and secrets of Lodz's past brings new personal revelations. But it also opens a way forward. For they each believe that a brighter future can be built by truly honoring the voices that still speak from Lodz's streets and walls...and from a painting that even in stillness was able to contain some of the vast beauty, wonders and sorrows of an entire century.

To access screenings, visit www.stilllifeinlodz.com/screenings

(Mabel Pais writes on The Arts and Entertainment, Social Issues, Spirituality, and Health & Wellness)