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47th Annual HVP String Competition 2019 Winners Announced!

(Poughkeepsie, NY) The 47th Annual Hudson Valley Philharmonic String Competition concluded its multi-day contest on Sunday March 17 in front of a standing room only crowd of over 400 music fans at Vassar College's Skinner Hall. Three exceptional finalists from thirty string players vying for recognition performed in recital and the judges made their decisions.

The winners are:

(As pictured in the attached, left to right) Second Place: Violist Ao Peng from the Juilliard School; First Place: Violinist Ashley Jeehyun from the Juilliard School and Third Place: Violinist Chener Yuan from the Juilliard School.

The winner will perform as soloist with the Hudson Valley Philharmonic as part of 2019-20 season, plus she will also get a trip to Italy to perform as part of the "Musical Landscapes of Italy" festival in August in San Quirico d'Orcia, Tuscany founded by Poughkeepsie native Steven Slade!

The HVP String Competition, begun in 1966 under the direction of then-HVP Artistic Director/ Conductor Maestro Claude Monteux, was conceived as a vehicle to identify talented string players for the orchestra. Decades later, the annual competition continues to attract some of the finest conservatory string players in the world. Many former winners have gone on to illustrious classical music careers. Previous notables include Marcus Thompson '67, violist (Boston Chamber Players); Fred Sherry '68, cellist; Ani Kavafian '73, violinist (Lincoln Center Chamber Players - soloist); and Adela Pena '85, violinist (Eroica Trio).

The judges for this year's competition were:

Randall Craig-Fleischer, Conductor. In addition to the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, Maestro Fleischer also conducts the Youngstown Symphony and the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra. He has degrees in Music from Indiana University and the Oberlin Conservatory, has studied with Leonard Bernstein, Seiji Ozawa and Ricardo Muti, and has been guest conductor of many of the world's great orchestras, including the Israel Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Pops, Los Angeles Philharmonic and Hong Kong Philharmonic. Some of the great soloists he has worked with are Mstislav Rostropovich, Yo-Yo Ma, Midori, Peter Serkin and Andre Watts. Fleischer is also a composer/arranger polymath working with many non-classical artists, such as Kenny Rogers, Natalie Merchant, Ani DiFranco, Richie Havens and 1000 Maniacs. Most recently, he conducted his blend of rock and classical music, Rocktopia, in a six-week sold-out run at the Broadway Theater in New York.

Fred Sherry, Cello. Former winner of this competition in 1968, Sherry has since been a founding member of TASHI and Speculum Musicae, Artistic Director of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and a member of the Group for Contemporary Music, Berio's Juilliard Ensemble and the Galimir String Quartet. He has also enjoyed a close collaboration with jazz pianist and composer Chick Corea. Elliott Carter, Mario Davidovsky, Steve Mackey, David Rakowski, Somei Satoh, Charles Wuorinen and John Zorn have written concertos for Sherry which he has performed with the San Francisco Symphony, Municipal Orchestra of Buenos Aires, BBC Symphony Orchestra, New York City Ballet, Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, New World Symphony and RAI Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale. He has premiered solo and chamber works dedicated to him by Milton Babbitt, Derek Bermel, Jason Eckardt, Lukas Foss, Oliver Knussen, Peter Lieberson, Donald Martino and Toru Takemitsu among others, and has appeared at Festivals including Aldeburgh, Casals, Tanglewood, Spoleto, Toru Takemitsu's Music Today, Chamber Music Northwest, OK Mozart, Ravinia and Mostly Mozart.

Carole Cowan, Violin. Cowan has been Concertmaster of the Hudson Valley Philharmonic since 1978 and is an active chamber musician, soloist, and teacher. As first violinist of the HVP String Quartet (the quartet-in-residence at the State University of New York at New Paltz), Cowan has performed with many chamber musicians, including the Emerson and Alexander string quartets and Innisfree. She performed for ten summers at the Festival Casals in Puerto Rico and has served as concertmaster and soloist in festivals in Spain, Italy and Aspen, Colorado. One of the original members of the Poné Ensemble for New Music, she returned to the Ensemble in 2013 after a leave of absence while she served as Chair of the Department of Music at SUNY-New Paltz. There she is a full professor and Conductor of the College-Youth Symphony. She holds a Doctoral of Musical Arts degree from the Yale University School of Music.