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James Baik Wins 34th Annual Irving M. Klein International String Competition ***17-year old cellist captures top prize***

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — The first prize of the 34th Annual Irving M. Klein International String Competition, carrying a purse of \$13,000, has been awarded to **CELLIST JAMES BAIK**, 17. The Competition Finals were held Sunday, June 2nd at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and featured four competitors advancing from an original group of nine Semifinal programs the previous day,. Baik's winning program for the final round included movements from Beethoven's *Cello Sonata No. 5, op. 102, no. 2*; from the *Cello Concerto in A minor, op. 129* by Schumann; and from the Bach *Cello Suite No. 5 in C minor*; as well as the commissioned work *Between Worlds* by Carlos Simon.

Second prize went to cellist **DAKOTA COTUGNO**, cello, 23. He attends the University of Colorado where he studies with David Requiro (Klein prizewinner '06). Cotugno also won the Pablo Casals Prize for the best performance of the solo Bach work.

Third prize was awarded to violinist **JULIA MIRZOEV**, 22 . She attends Yale University, and is a student of Ani Kavafian. She also won the prize for Best Performance of the Commissioned Work.

Fourth Prize went to bassist **GABRIEL POLINSKY**, 20. He attends Curtis School of Music, Philadelphia; and is a student of Hal Robinson and Edgar Meyer.

A Fifth Prize was awarded to cellist **JAMES HETTINGA**, 19. He attends Cleveland Institute of Music; a where he is student of Dr. Melissa Kraut.

Said Artistic Director Mitchell Sardou Klein, "The 34th Klein Competition once again brought an exceptionally high level of performances to our growing San Francisco audience, but I was struck by the remarkable originality of so many of the interpretations that we heard. These were wonderfully imaginative and organic approaches to masterworks and also to lesser known pieces and to the commissioned works of Carlos Simon. It made for an engaging and highly enjoyable weekend of music."

"I am very pleased to offer my congratulations to the extraordinary young musicians who participated in this event. The Klein Competition attracts the finest talent in the world and every young artist in this competition is worthy of recognition. They have all done tremendous work and we wish them the best in their future endeavors," said David Stull, president of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

First prizewinner James Baik, 17, is a cellist studying with Hans Jørgen Jensen. He is currently a senior at New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois. James began playing the piano at six, and cello at eight.

James made his debut solo appearance in 2015 with the Houston Civic Symphony Orchestra and the Clear Lake Symphony as a winner of their concerto competitions. In 2017, he was a finalist at the Lynn Harrell Concerto Competition and performed at Meyerson Symphony Hall. He was also a winner of the 2018 DePaul Concerto Competition and has performed with the Oistrakh Symphony. James was also a finalist at the 2018 Johansen International Competition in Washington D.C.

James was a finalist at the 2019 Stulberg Competition, and prior, was named a YoungArts finalist and participated at YoungArts Week in Miami FL this past January. He was also awarded the grand prize at the Walgreens National Competition December 2018, and performed at Pick Staiger Hall, Northwestern University. In 2017, James studied at the Meadowmount School of Music, and in summer 2018, he attended the Aspen School of Music, participating in the Finckel Wu Han Chamber Music Program.

The full list of this year's semifinalists includes **James Baik**, cello, 17; **Dakota Cotugno**, cello, 23; **James Hettinga**, cello, 19; **Julia Mirzoev**, violin, 22; **Zechariah Mo**, viola, 17; **Gabriel Polinsky**, bass, 20; **Strauss Shi**, violin, 23; **Lucia Ticho**, cello, 21; and **Hannah White**, violin, 19. The young musicians were selected from a pool of 118 entrants from 17 countries, ranging in age from 15 to 23.

The jury for this year's Competition included **Cathy Basrak**, **Daniel Carlson**, **Nikki Chooi**, **Amir Eldan**, **Carlos Simon** (the 2019 Klein Competition Composer), **Ian Swensen**, and **Barbara Day Turner**.

Competitors in the Competition were required to perform at least one movement of an unaccompanied Bach work, a concerto, a commissioned work by Carlos Oliver Simon, and, for the three musicians selected to advance to the final round, a movement from a sonata with piano.

Previous winners of the Klein Competition include Jennifer Koh, Oliver Herbert, Frank Huang, Robert deMaine, Tessa Lark, and David Requiro. Last year, the Competition awarded violinist Alex Zhou of San Jose first prize. For more information, visit kleincompetition.org.

PRIZES

First Prize goes to 17-year old **JAMES BAIK**, cello. (\$13,000) includes performances with the Peninsula and Santa Cruz Symphonies, the Gualala Arts Chamber Music Series, and Music in the Vineyards.

Second Prize goes to **DAKOTA COTUGNO**, cello, 23 (\$6,300, includes performances with the San Jose Chamber Orchestra and Piedmont Center for the Arts) is given by Ruth Short in honor of Elaine H. Klein, wife of Irving M. Klein. For the past 33 years, Mrs. Klein has served on the board in support of the Klein Competition and the California Music Center.

Third Prize goes to **JULIA MIRZOEV** (violin, 22). \$2,500 is given by David and Judy Anderson, in memory of Judy's father, Milton Preves, principal violist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1939 to 1986 and instrumental in developing the basis for the current judging procedures for the Klein.

Fourth Prize (\$1,500) goes to **GABRIEL POLINSKY** (cello, 23), and is given in memory of Jerry Lee Klein, Irving M. Klein's younger son.

Fifth Prize (\$1,500) goes to **JAMES HETTINGA** (cello, 19).

Best Performance of the Commissioned Work (\$500) named in memory of Allen R. and Susan E. Weiss. goes to **JULIA MIRZOEV** (violin, 22).

Pablo Casals Prize (\$500) for the best performance of the solo Bach work, given this year by Loretta O'Connell in memory of Harry Adams, goes to **DAKOTA COTUGNO** (cello, 23).

Each Semifinalist not awarded a named prize receives \$1,000.

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About the California Music Center

CMC was founded in 1974 by Irving M. Klein, a virtuoso chamber musician and master cello teacher, as the sponsoring organization for a summer music institute and chamber music series for young artists. Following Mr. Klein's passing in 1985, CMC inaugurated the Irving M. Klein International String Competition ("the Klein") in 1986; since then, the Klein has become one of the most prestigious events of its kind, attracting ever-increasing numbers of entries annually from throughout the world and helping to enhance the developing careers of players who have gone on to become renowned soloists, chamber musicians, teachers, and prominent members of the world's finest orchestras. CMC also produces concerts year-round featuring laureates and conducts masterclasses and community engagement activities around the Bay Area. The Klein Competition is supported in part by the Mervyn L. Brenner Foundation, New Music America, the Ross McKee Foundation, and the Sam Mazza Foundation; and is presented in partnership with the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Learn more at californiamusiccenter.org.

About the San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Founded in 1917, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (SFCM) is a global destination for musical excellence, earning an international reputation for producing musicians of the highest caliber. SFCM's faculty includes nearly 30 members of the San Francisco Symphony as well as Grammy Award-winning artists in fields ranging from orchestral and chamber performance to classical guitar. The Conservatory offers its 400-plus collegiate students fully accredited bachelor's and master's degrees and professional diplomas in composition and instrumental and vocal performance, as well as in newly established, groundbreaking tracks such as Technology and Applied Composition and Roots, Jazz, and American Music. SFCM's collaborations with major Bay Area arts presenters, including the San Francisco Symphony, Opera, Ballet, and SFJAZZ Center, present an unprecedented learning environment for Conservatory students to engage with the world's leading artists. The Conservatory's relationships with Sony Playstation, Skywalker Sound, and other Silicon Valley companies also offer unique opportunities that reinforce the institution's innovative curricular approach in artistic, intellectual, professional, and individual development, a connected learning sequence that gives students an education for life. SFCM's collegiate and Pre-College students have appeared at such storied venues as Carnegie Hall and Davies Symphony Hall and have performed on national radio programs including NPR's *Live from Here* and *Performance Today*. Notable alumni include violinists Yehudi Menuhin and Isaac Stern, conductor and pianist Jeffrey Kahane, soprano Elza van den Heever, the Naumburg Award-winning Telegraph Quartet (on faculty as SFCM's Quartet-in-Residence), and Ronald Losby (President of Steinway & Sons - Americas), among others. For more information, visit sfc.edu.

Photos attached.