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GABRIELLE DESPRÉS Wins 35th Irving M. Klein International String Competition *19-year old violinist captures top prize in first all-online competition*



SAN FRANCISCO, CA — The first prize of the 35th Irving M. Klein International String Competition, carrying a purse of \$13,000, has been awarded to **VIOLINIST GABRIELLE DESPRÉS, 19**. Thousands worldwide watched eight semifinalists via YouTube livestream June 6 – 7 compete for cash prizes and performance contracts. A distinguished jury of seven convened remotely to determine winners, which were announced Sunday afternoon online. The broadcasts were produced by the [California Music Center](#), the founder of the Klein.

Després' winning program included the Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 77 by Brahms; Bach's Sonata No. 2 in A minor, BWV 1003, *Fugue*; as well as the commissioned work *The Harmony of Tensions: Air* by Robert Gibson. She also won one of two prizes for Best Performance of the Commissioned Work.

Second prize went to cellist **JIAXUN YAO, 18**. She is a student of Richard Aaron and Sieun Lin at the Juilliard Pre-College, and also won a prize for Best Performance of the Commissioned Work.

Third prize was awarded to violinist **MASHA LAKISOVA, 18**. Masha heads to New England Conservatory in the fall to study with Miriam Fried. She also won the Pablo Casals prize for Best Performance of Bach.

One of two Fourth Prizes went to violinist **CAROLINE DURHAM, 18**. She attends The Juilliard School and Columbia University in their joint program and studies with Masao Kawasaki.

A Fourth Prize was also awarded to violinist **DONGYOUNG SHIM, 18**. He is pursuing his Bachelor of Music with Donald Weilerstein at New England Conservatory.

To view the Competition:

- Sat Round 1 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=giVLohZ77DA&feature=youtu.be>
- Sat Round 2 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DD5IUlluWg>

Said Artistic Director Mitchell Sardou Klein,

“We were so pleased to be able present to our audience the eight extraordinary young string players who were live-streamed this weekend. Nothing can replace the experience of hearing the next generation of musical leaders in person, in a concert setting. But seeing and hearing their performances streamed from remote locations in Korea, Canada, and every time zone in the US proved to be a remarkable musical event in its own way. Each Semifinalist made a convincing case for a powerful individual vision and personality. Hearing all eight play unaccompanied Bach, World Premiere works by Robert Gibson, and a wide range of concertos was quite riveting and uplifting. The Jury (which met via Zoom) was impressed by the high level of musicianship and artistry, and we were able to reach a huge new audience of thousands of music lovers on at least four continents. We hope to be able to serve this new audience, even when we return to our usual presentation at the San Francisco Conservatory in future years.”

First prizewinner Canadian-born **violinist Gabrielle Després (18)** has won numerous provincial, and national competitions, including the Northern Alberta Concerto Competition and the Canadian Music Competition, and has earned top prizes in Radio-Canada’s television show “Virtuose”, and the national Shean Strings Competition. In 2018, she performed as a soloist with the Chamber Orchestra of Edmonton, and the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. Gabrielle was a student of Robert Uchida since 2016 and began studying at The Juilliard School for her Bachelor of Music degree in 2018 where she currently studies with Masao Kawasaki and Joseph Lin. She has studied at the Orford Summer Music Academy, Morningside Music Bridge, and the Casalmaggiore International Music Festival. In 2019, Gabrielle attended the Aspen Music Festival and School as a New Horizons Fellowship recipient. Gabrielle gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the Anne Burrows Music Foundation and the Edmonton Community Foundation in supporting her education.

This year’s semifinalists were **KEONI BOLDING**, viola, 22; **GABRIELLE DESPRÉS**, violin, 19; **CAROLINE DURHAM**, violin, 18; **MASHA LAKISOVA**, violin, 18; **ENRIQUE RODRIGUES**, violin, 18; **DONGYOUNG SHIM**, violin, 18; **JIAXUN YAO**, cello, 18; and **DAVIS YOU**, cello, 18. Contestants were selected from 116 entrants from 12 countries, ranging in age from 15 to 23. Semifinalists were required to perform – all unaccompanied – at least one movement of an unaccompanied Bach work, a complete concerto, and the commissioned work by Robert Gibson.

The jury for the 2020 Competition included **Richard Aaron, Christopher Costanza, Glenn Dicterow, Jaren Dreyfus, Robert Gibson** (the 2020 Composer), **Ian Swensen**, and **Barbara Day Turner**.

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 cellist James Baik first prize.

PRIZES

First Prize (\$13,000) goes to 19-year old violinist **GABRIELLE DESPRÉS**. It includes performance contracts with the Peninsula and Santa Cruz Symphonies, Gualala Arts Chamber Music Series, and Music in the Vineyards.

Second Prize (\$6,300) goes to cellist **JIAXUN YAO**, 18. It includes performance contracts with the San Jose Chamber Orchestra and Piedmont Center for the Arts, and is given by Ruth Short in honor of Elaine H. Klein, wife of Irving M. Klein. For 34 years, Mrs. Klein served on the California Music Center board.

Third Prize goes to **MASHA LAKISOVA** (violin, 18). \$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 **CAROLINE DURHAM** (violin, 18), and is given in memory of Jerry Lee Klein, Irving M. Klein's younger son.

A Second Fourth Prize (\$1,500) goes to **DONGYOUNG SHIM** (violin, 18).

Best Performance of the Commissioned Work (\$500) named in memory of Allen R. and Susan E. Weiss. goes to both **JIAXUN YAO** (cello, 18) and **GABRIELLE DESPRÉS** (violin, 19).

Pablo Casals Prize (\$500) for the best performance of solo Bach, goes to **MASHA LAKISOVA** (violin, 18).

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

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About the California Music Center

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 and anticipated 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 masterclasses and community engagement activities around the Bay Area. CMC is supported in part by the Mervyn L. Brenner Foundation, the California Arts Council, New Music America, and the Sam Mazza Foundation. Learn more at californiamusiccenter.org.

Photos available.