



Windsor, UK, 14th March 2024, for immediate release



Windsor Festival International String Competition Announces Finalists

**The three competitors progressing to the final,
*in the order they will perform:***

LELAND KO (25) – Cello – American/Canadian

ANDREW BYUN (25) – Cello – Canadian

LEON BLEKH (24) – Violin – Dutch

**They will compete to win the 9th Windsor Festival International String
Competition in the Final at Eton College, 7:30pm Friday 15th March.**

Each will perform their chosen 25-minute programme in front of live public and global streamed audiences and the WFISC Panel of international Jury: Joji Hattori, Lars Anders Tomter, Natalie Clein, Martin Denny, Alexander Van Ingen and James Williams.

His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh, Patron of Windsor Festival, will present prizes for the 9th WFISC at tomorrow's final in Eton College.

Audience members have the opportunity to cast their vote for the audience prize. A limited number of tickets are still available for public to come and be a part of this moment in musical history. Tickets are available from £20 – £45 at windsorfestival.com.

The winner will receive prizes to the value of over £30,000. These includes a concerto performance with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) in Windsor Castle during Windsor Festival 2024, further concerto performances in the RPO's UK Regional Touring Programme, a solo recording opportunity with Champs Hill Records, further recital and concerto opportunities, and a cash prize of £5,000. There is also an audience prize, and further cash prizes for second and third place.



Left: Leon Blekh (24), middle: Leland Ko (25), right: Andrew Byun (25)

Searching for the star performer of a generation, the 2024 WFISC will launch the international career of one successful violinist, violist or cellist. It has drawn together nations from across the globe. Competitors have been selected from over 160 applicants from 41 countries worldwide.

In a meeting of extraordinary talent, the semi-finals took place Tuesday 12th and Wednesday 13th March in front of the WFISC Panel of International Jury, live and streamed global audiences. Semi-finalists were brought to Windsor by the Competition and have stayed with local host families in the area.

The competition also works to inspire the next generation of performers. It has brought live music directly to thousands of children around Berkshire. Visiting local primary schools, each semi-finalist has given children an interactive performance. Pupils have had the opportunity to experience classical music up close—many for the first time—and to understand what it takes to become the best in your chosen field. KS3 local string players have tonight (Thursday 14 March) the opportunity to workshop with WFISC Semi-finalists.

The final will take place at Eton College tomorrow, 7.30pm (Friday 15th March).

-ENDS-

FURTHER INFORMATION BELOW



Quotes:

Martin Denny, Festival Director said, "The competition has produced some amazing winners in the past, and we look forward to doing so again this year. Many of our laureates are now enjoying international solo careers at the highest level, and through our mentoring and the prize package have been enabled to develop their skills and achievements. This year's semi-finalists are a stellar bunch, with hugely exciting prospects, which will give us a great competition in March."

James Williams, Managing Director, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra said, "The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra is honoured to be partnering with the Windsor Festival International String Competition for the forthcoming three competitions. Fostering the talents of tomorrow's musicians sits at the heart of the RPO's mission and since 2008, this Competition has discovered young musicians of remarkable quality. We look forward to joining the 2024 Competition winner on stage as part of the Festival in 2024 in addition to opportunities as part of the RPO's admired UK touring programme."

Programme for the final:

LELAND KO Cello – 25 – American/Canadian

DMITRY KABALEVSKY Cello Sonata in B flat major, Op. 71: II Allegretto con moto, and III Allegro molto

JOSEPH HAYDN Cello Concerto No. 1 in C major, Hob. VIIb/1: II Adagio, and III Allegro molto

ANDREW BYUN Cello – 25 – Canadian

I-SANG YUN Glissées I for Solo Cello (1970)

PAUL HINDEMITH Sonata for Solo Cello, Op.25 No.3

FRANK BRIDGE Cello Sonata in D Minor H.125 I. Allegro Ben Moderato

LEON BLEKH Violin – 24 – Dutch

RICHARD STRAUSS Violin Sonata in E-flat major, Op.18: I Allegro, ma non troppo, and II Improvisation: Andante cantabile

PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY Valse-Scherzo, Op.34

Prizes:

FIRST PRIZE

- £5,000 cash prize
- A solo recording opportunity with WFISC Recording Partner Champs Hill Records
- A concerto with WFISC Associate Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, in Windsor Castle during the 2024 Windsor Festival
- Further concerto performances with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra as part of their UK touring programme
- A London concerto performance with Orpheus Sinfonia
- Recital opportunities including in La Mortella, Ischia, Italy and UK Festivals

SECOND PRIZE

- £2,000 cash prize

THIRD PRIZE

- £1,000 cash prize



Panel of **International Jury** for WFISC 2024:

- **British Cellist, Natalie Clein**
- **Japanese Violinist, Joji Hattori**
- **Norwegian Violist, Lars Tomter**

Joined for the Final by esteemed members of the music industry including:

- **James Williams** (Managing Director, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra)
- **Alexander Van Ingen** (Executive Producer, Champs Hill Records)
- **Martin Denny** (Director, Windsor Festival)



WFISC 2019 Winner, Jonathan Swensen performing in the final

We are delighted and most grateful to be in partnership with our generous sponsors and exceptional international jury in achieving this.

Background

WFISC was launched in 2008, in memory of festival founder, and violinist, Yehudi Menuhin. Sharing knowledge, aspiration, and experience, WFISC forges future international connections. It now reaches all corners of the globe, with a track record of encouraging, nurturing, supporting and enabling prodigious talent to come to fruition. Recent winners include: Jiyeon Lee, Nathan Meltzer, Jonathan Swensen and Daniil Bulayev.



WFISC 2021 Winner, Daniil Bulayev in Prize Concerto Performance with Marin Alsop, © Gill Heppel

For further information and enquiries, please contact: **Windsor Festival**

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<https://windsorfestival.com/international-string-competition>

Press downloads, including **high resolution images** and competition overview:

<https://windsorfestival.com/international-string-competition/press>