

The Inaugural Robert W. and G. Ann Corcoran Concerto Competition Adjudicators

* Preliminary Round Only ** Final Round Only



NIKKI CHOOI**

Praised for his passionate and poetic performances, internationally-acclaimed violinist Nikki Chooi has established himself as an artist of rare versatility. Described as “expressive, enchanting, and transcendent,” Nikki is a recipient of prizes at the Queen Elizabeth and Tchaikovsky Competitions, and was awarded 1st Prize Winner of the Montreal Symphony's ManuLife Competition, the Klein International Strings Competition, and the Michael Hill International Violin Competition.

Nikki has received critical acclaim in recent engagements at the Harris Theater in Chicago, Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, Carnegie Hall and Kauffman Center in New York, Koerner Hall in Toronto, Place des Arts in Montreal, as well as appearing as soloist with orchestras across Canada and internationally with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Louisiana Philharmonic, St. Petersburg State Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Wallonie, National Orchestra of Belgium, Auckland Philharmonia, Malaysian Philharmonic, and Hong Kong Philharmonic.

Nikki has been featured at many international festivals with performances at the Marlboro Festival, Ravinia Festival, Rockport Chamber Music Festival, La Jolla Summerfest, Vancouver Recital Series, Moritzburg Festival, Kammermusik Utrecht, Dresden Music Festival, Olympus Festival in Russia, Chamber Music New Zealand, and Fundación Beethoven in Chile. His many collaborators have included Jan Vogler, Inon Barnatan, Desmond Hoebig, Kim Kashkashian, David Shifrin, Anthony Marwood, and members of the Guarneri and Juilliard String Quartets. Previously a member of the multi-genre ensemble, Time for Three, the group collaborated with From the Top and Universal Music releasing an arrangement of Taylor Swift's *Shake it Off* to record-breaking views on YouTube.

As Concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra in 2016-2017, Nikki worked closely with singers and conductors including Renee Fleming, Susanna Phillips, Elina Garanca, Eric Owens, Fabio Luisi, and Esa-Pekka Salonen. His solos can be heard through The Met: Live in HD broadcasts in productions of Verdi's *La Traviata*, Janacek's *Jenufa*, and the Grammy-nominated recording of Strauss' *Rosenkavalier* released on the Decca Label. Nikki has appeared as guest concertmaster with the Pittsburgh Symphony, Houston Symphony, Sydney Symphony, and is currently Concertmaster of the Grammy-award winning Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. A passionate educator, Nikki is currently on the violin faculty at University of Ottawa and has presented masterclasses at the San Francisco Conservatory, Morningside Music Program at the New England Conservatory, Orchestra of the Americas Academy, Sphinx Academy at the Curtis Institute of Music, Hong Kong Cultural Center, and the University of Auckland.

Nikki began his studies at the Victoria Conservatory, Mount Royal Conservatory, and at the National Arts Centre Young Artist Programme. He completed his formal studies at the Curtis Institute and the Juilliard School under the mentorship of Joseph Silverstein, Ida Kavafian, and Donald Weilerstein. He released his debut album of works by Prokofiev, Ravel, and Gershwin on the Atoll Label.



ROSS EDWARDS

Clarinetist Ross Edwards is a veteran of the Canadian orchestral scene. He has performed as Principal Clarinet with the National Arts Centre Orchestra and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra amongst others. He is currently the Principal Clarinetist with the Kitchener Waterloo Symphony, where he has performed several times as a featured soloist.

A recipient of several Canada Council grants, Edwards studied in Montreal, Chicago, Paris and Berlin. He has been a performer at chamber music festivals throughout Canada, including the Scotia, Ottawa, Music and Beyond, and Vancouver Music Society.

In addition to his performing career he is also on the music faculty at Wilfrid Laurier University. He has led workshops and master classes throughout the country, and regularly acts as an adjudicator and audition coach.

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BEN HEPPNER

Ben Heppner, internationally renowned operatic tenor, public advocate for the arts, and radio broadcaster. For almost 3 decades, Mr. Heppner has been hailed among the most sought after musical talents in the operatic world. His command of the heroic repertoire of Wagner, Strauss and Verdi, among others – is second to none. He is widely appreciated for the depth of his interpretations and for the expressive character that he has brought to the roles that he has played.

Ben Heppner first came to the attention of the Canadian public as the winner of the CBC Talent Festival, in 1979. He won the Metropolitan Opera auditions in 1988. Heppner's career has taken him to the most prestigious opera and concert stages of the world – from Vienna to Paris, Berlin, London, New York and beyond. He set new standards of performance in some of the most demanding operatic roles including such as Wagner's *Tristan*, Verdi's *Otello* and the complex and dark leading role of Benjamin Britten's Peter Grimes.

Ben Heppner has appeared on numerous recordings and has won three Juno and three Grammy awards. He has also received nine honorary doctorates from prestigious academic institutions throughout Canada. He is the recipient of the Governor General's Performing Arts Award and, in 2008, was promoted to Companion of the Order of Canada. Ben has received a life-time achievement award from the Governor General Performing Arts Award.

Ben Heppner retired 8 years ago from the opera and concert stage – and became host of CBC Radio's *Saturday Afternoon at the Opera* and *Backstage with Ben Heppner*. Recently he left his position on the radio. However, every once in a while, he'll press the tux and shine his shoes to host a concert or be a jury member for a competition.



MICHAEL KIM

Dean and Professor of Piano at the Don Wright Faculty of Music at Western University in London, Ontario, Canada, Dr. Michael Kim enjoys a distinguished, multi-faceted career as an academic administrator, professor, and concert artist. Formerly Director and Professor of the School of Music at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, he also previously served as Dean of the School of Music and Vice-President External at Brandon University, Canada, where he led BU's advancement programs (overseeing its integrated offices of fundraising, alumni relations, marketing, communications, and web design), and as Chair of the Keyboard Department and Faculty Associate to the President at Lawrence University (Appleton, WI).

A veteran of the concert circuit with a wide-ranging concerto repertoire, Dr. Kim has performed repeatedly as soloist with numerous orchestras (including the Boston and Cincinnati Pops, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony, Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra London, the Florida Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic, and the symphonies of Toronto, Vancouver, CBC Vancouver, Vancouver Island, Victoria, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, Milwaukee, Green Bay, Oklahoma City) under the baton of such distinguished conductors as Yannick Nezet Seguin, Hans Graf, Jerzy Maksymiuk, Sian Edwards, Mario

Bernardi, and Georg Tintner. He also performed extensively under the baton of pop icons as Mitch Miller (Sing Along with Mitch), Skitch Henderson of the Tonight Show, and Richard Kaufmann.

He has toured extensively as solo recitalist throughout Canada, the U.S., the U.K., and South Korea, and with the Music as Theatre productions The Schumann Letters and Nadia. As a chamber musician and collaborative artist, he performs frequently with his wife pianist Dr. Kyung Kim and sister violinist Helen Kim, also collaborating with the Bakken Trio, James Ehnes, Edgar Meyer, James Campbell, members of the Canadian Brass, and the Cecilia, New Orford, Fine Arts, New Zealand String Quartets. Summer festival performances have included Ottawa's Chamber fest, Festival of the Sound, Colors of Music, Agassiz, Brevard, Aspen, Banff, Clear Lake, Huntsville, Heifetz (Annapolis, MD), and Niagara. While in Minnesota, Michael appeared regularly in subscription performances with the members of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, also performing with legendary clarinetist Martin Frost.

He holds the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Juilliard School, and was silver medalist in the 1992 Scottish International Competition in Glasgow, a prizewinner in the Leeds and Ivo Pogorelich International Piano Competitions, and grand prizewinner of the Canadian Music and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation National Radio Competitions. Dr. Kim can be heard on critically acclaimed recordings for Arktos, CRI, Summit, and Orpheum Masters.

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ELISSA LEE*

Winner of the 23rd Eckhardt-Gramatté Strings Competition, Elissa Lee is a versatile musician, performing throughout Europe and Canada as a solo violinist, chamber musician, and orchestral player. Elissa has appeared as soloist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Quebec Symphony Orchestra and has performed chamber music at festivals all over the world and has performed with musicians Louis Lortie, Augustin Dumay, Anton Kuerti.

Elissa has held positions as Concertmaster with the WDR Sinfonie Orchester, the Oslo Philharmonic and performs regularly with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra of Europe. Elissa joined award-winning piano quartet Ensemble Made In Canada in 2010 which created a nation-wide project called "MOSAÏQUE" which received national acclaim and was awarded a Juno for best album of the year for solo or chamber works in 2021. Born in Toronto, Elissa studied with Thomas Brandis at the UDK in Berlin, Lorand Fenyves at the University of Toronto and Victor Danchenko at the Royal Conservatory of Music.



ALEXINA LOUIE**

"The music of Alexina Louie bears a personal stamp derived from a unique blend of her Chinese background, an exotic instrumental palette, both traditional and non-traditional elements of western music, poetic images, nature, historical studies and a fascination with heavenly phenomena." - National Arts Centre, Canada

Acclaimed composer Alexina Louie has collaborated with leading Canadian and international soloists, ensembles and orchestras. Her orchestral works have been performed by the San Francisco, Montreal, BBC, St. Louis, Toronto, and Vancouver symphony orchestras, as well as China's NCPA Orchestra, Beijing, among others. Her compositions have been conducted by Sir Andrew Davis, Kent Nagano, Leonard Slatkin, Pinchas Zukerman, and Ingo Metzmacher.

Singers Barbara Hannigan and Russell Braun, violinist James Ehnes, and pianist Jon Kimura Parker are among the many celebrated soloists who have performed her compositions. Of Ehnes' performance of the work he commissioned, in April, 2014 the Edmonton Journal wrote "Beyond Time confirms, if one needed any confirmation, that Alexina Louie, with her kind of 21st century impressionism, is one of the finest composers in Canada today."

Louie's work spans a wide range of eclectic styles and technical demands, from her much loved and often performed pedagogical piano pieces to main stage opera (*The Scarlet Princess*, Canadian Opera Company commission), virtuosic chamber and solo compositions, as well as works for dance, film, and television. Dominique Dumais (*a hundred words for snow*) and Matjash Mrozewski (*Wolf's Court*) have choreographed ballets to her music for The National Ballet of Canada. Her TV projects include the groundbreaking made-for-TV comedic mini-opera *Toothpaste* and the international award-winning collection of mini-operas, *Burnt Toast* (commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation).

In 2019, presenters in Vancouver, Calgary, and Cork/Clonmel (Ireland) produced retrospective concerts comprised entirely of her solo, vocal, and chamber music compositions. In the same year, her seminal work, *Take The Dog Sled* for two Inuit throat singers and ensemble, received its European premiere in Neuchâtel, Switzerland.

For Louie, composing music is an act of communication and self-expression. She freely explores various styles and differing inspirations to create music that reveals truths about the artistic spirit and the times in which we live. An Officer of the Order of Canada and a recipient of the Order of Ontario, Alexina Louie has received numerous awards for her lifetime of music creation including an honorary doctorate from The University of Calgary. Among the many awards Louie has received are two JUNO Awards, The Canada Council for the Arts Molson Prize, The Governor General's Performing Arts Award For Lifetime Achievement, The National Arts Centre Composers Award, The Chalmers Award in Composition, The Jules Léger Prize for New Chamber Music, The Louis Applebaum Composers Award (Film and Television), and two Golden Sheaf Awards for Original Film Music.