



Winner of the 2015 Singapore International Violin Competition Benny Tseng Yu-chien (above) has played with the London Philharmonic.

Win and play on stage



Nine-year-old Yang Jing Tong (above) was a participant of the Singapore International Festival of Music Competition held over the weekend at The Arts House.
PHOTOS: SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF MUSIC COMPETITION, SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL VIOLIN COMPETITION

Two contests for young classical musicians offer the opportunity to perform in concerts

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Classical music competitions have kicked into high gear here.

A new ongoing contest for musicians aged 16 to 30 offers a prized opportunity: Winning soloists and vocalists get to perform in music festivals outside Singapore.

This sets the Singapore International Festival of Music Competition apart from other contests such as the 20-year-old National Piano & Violin Competition.

Applications are open for the biennial National Piano & Violin Competition in December as well as the triennial Singapore International Violin Competition, which starts in January and offers \$50,000 as the top prize.

The National Piano & Violin Competition is open this year to musicians aged 25 and younger who reside in Singapore, are Singaporeans

or permanent residents. It offers cash prizes of up to \$5,000, but no concerts for the winners.

Past winners have played with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, but engagements are not guaranteed. This remains the case, though the orchestra organises the contest this year, taking over from the National Arts Council (NAC).

But a chance to perform is vital to emerging talents as many in the industry have pointed out.

The Singapore International Festival of Music Competition is an offshoot of the two-year-old festival organised by well-known local conductor Darrell Ang.

Contestants compete in either the young talents category (16 years and under) or the soloists category (17 to 30 years old). Finals for the young talents category were held this weekend at The Arts House, while the soloists compete from July 1 to 9.

The head of the jury is Paris-based conductor Marlon Chen and his six-member panel judges performances on a jaw-dropping range of musical instruments: violin, viola, cello, piano, winds (woodwind and brass) and voice (female and male).

The first-place winner in each in-

strument category will have a chance to perform in music festivals outside Singapore.

There are South-east Asian engagements for the young talents and festivals in China, Russia, Estonia, France, the United Kingdom and United States as well for the soloists.

Chen says there are many contests focusing on the violin or piano, but other instruments deserve a chance as well. Ang points out that there is no point to winning a contest if the winner then does not get to go on stage.

Chen agrees: "Having an audience is vital to each young artist's development."

Singapore's biggest music competition, the Singapore International Violin Competition, offers both performances and a rich purse. The contest is hosted by the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, supported by the NAC and organised by a team led by Qian Zhou, the conservatory's head of strings.

Applications are open until Sept 30 this year for violinists of all nationalities who will be aged 30 or younger next year.

The prizes for the 2018 contest include \$50,000 and concert engage-

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BENNY TSENG YU-CHIEN, the 2015 winner of the Singapore International Violin Competition, who went on to play with the London Philharmonic, tour Japan and release a CD

ments for the winner. The 2015 winner, Taiwanese violinist Benny Tseng Yu-chien, went on to play with the London Philharmonic and tour Japan. Thanks to the competition, he also released a CD with noted label Deutsche Grammophon.

The 23-year-old says in a statement: "Winning the Singapore International Violin Competition opened whole new doors for me. It was really amazing to see how much the Singapore competition has offered in concerts, recordings and management. These are some of the most important things for young musicians."

Jury member Qian agrees. She says: "Our aim is to create a platform for the deserving artist to be noticed through the competition."

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• Registration for the National Piano & Violin Competition closes on July 28. To apply, go to www.sso.org.sg/national-piano-violin-competition/national-piano-violin-competition-2017. Registration for the Singapore International Violin Competition closes on Sept 30. To apply, go to singaporeviolincompetition.com