**20190313 Wisconsin Young Artists Compete: The *Final Forte* Caption Transcript**

- They share a common bond, young performers driven by desire, dedication and a passion to pursue their dream. Music director John DeMain and the Madison Symphony Orchestra welcome the four finalists to Overture Hall: Monona Suzuki, Holly Venkitaswaran, Grace Kim, and Antonio Wu. It's *Young Artists Compete: The Final Forte.*

Major funding provided by: Diane Ballweg. A. Paul Jones Charitable Trust. Julie and Larry Midtbo. Stephen Morton. Fred and Mary Mohs. Joe and Mary Ellyn Sensenbrenner.

With additional support from: James Dahlberg and Elsebet Lund. W. Jerome Frautschi. Kato Perlman. Cyrena and Lee Pondrom. Sentry Insurance Foundation. Nick and Judith Topitzes. Marc Vitale and Darcy Lind. Focus Fund for Young Performers. The Board of the Friends of Wisconsin Public Television in memory of Roger Hauck, and Friends of Wisconsin Public Television.

[Applause]

- Thank you. Hello. And welcome to the *Final Forte*, the culmination of the 2019 Bolz Young Artist Competition. I’m Lori Skelton, host of Wisconsin Public Radio’s “Afternoon Classics.”

- And I’m Angela Fitzgerald, host of Wisconsin Public Television’s *Wisconsin Life*. 2019 marks the 13th year of this historic collaboration among the Madison Symphony Orchestra, Wisconsin Public Radio, and Wisconsin Public Television, a partnership formed to recognize and celebrate the talents and amazing achievements of some of Wisconsin’s best young performers.

- Tonight, live from majestic overture hall in Madison, four musically gifted teenagers will compete for top honors. The winner of tonight's competition will be awarded the Marian Bolz prize for distinguished musical achievement, which includes a $2,000 scholarship.

- The second place winner will receive the Steenbock Youth Music Award, which also includes a $2,000 scholarship. Two honorable mention scholarships of $1,000 will be awarded as well.

- Tonight’s finalists are from a group of 36 students. They are Monona Suzuki of Fitchburg, holly Venkitaswaran of Lisbon, grace Kim of Waunakee and Antonio Wu of Madison.

- Each will perform here tonight along with the Madison Symphony Orchestra under the baton of maestro John DeMain.

- Let’s meet our first finalist, Monona Suzuki.

- My name is Monona Suzuki, and I'm a sophomore at Madison West High School. I've been playing the violin since I was three.

Every day, the violin has a different sound because of the humidity and environment and everything. So, every day, I have a different feeling towards the violin. And that's a really good thing for artists. I've been taking lessons from Mr. Eugene Purdue for about seven years now.

- Eugene Purdue: You want the audience to move like that with you there.

[Chuckles]

Can you try that at 18?

- He always says to play to the room. So, if you're in a hall, like, play to the fullest that you can. He's also taught me a lot about [laughs] soloing. Like, just understand the music well, and know how it combines with your solo.

Mock Trial is.... A mock trial. [laughs] We get a case every year. Each person's, like, a witness or a lawyer. We get the affidavits of our characters and make, like, a script. We're judged based on, like, how well we present it. And then, the next question was like, "Then, the door opened." It's a lot of fun because we really have to get our heads together and think about a lot of things.

[cheerful laughter]

I'm playing "Tzigane" by Maurice Ravel. It's a French piece that's based on Gypsy music. The last part, which is also my favorite part, there's a lot of tempo changes, with like starting really slow, and then building up, and then, suddenly pulling back, and then, building it up again.

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Music is a really important part of my life. With the moment you step onto the stage, it's really different from, like, just practicing. The power that the orchestra has is really inspiring. I feel a lot of energy from the audience that's watching. So, when I get to stand there it's, like, really special for me.

[laughs]

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[applause]

- And now Monona Suzuki is taking the stage, along with maestro John DeMain. Monona will be performing tisane by Maurice Ravel, a French composer of the early 20th century. His name is derived from the European term for gypsy, although it does use any authentic gypsy melodies.

[cheers and applause]

- That was 16-year-old Monona Suzuki, performing “Tzigane” by Maurice Ravel. Monona is the first of four competitors in the final round of the 2019 Bolz Young Artist Competition.

- 2019 marks the 93rd year of the competition and as mentioned earlier, the 13th year the finals have been broadcast to a statewide audience on Wisconsin Public Radio, Wisconsin Public Television and Milwaukee public television.

- Our next competitor tonight is flautist Holly Venkitaswaran.

- My name is Holly Venkitaswaran and I live in Lisbon, Wisconsin. I'm 18 years old. I told my mom when I was six years old that I was bored in school. And so, she said, "Well, why don't you try an instrument and you can challenge yourself?" I immediately started taking lessons and I have never stopped since.

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I've been playing with the Milwaukee Youth Symphony for seven years now. When I started, I didn't know anyone in MYSO, but I've made a lot of friends over the years. I like that MYSO is very serious, but you also get to have a lot of fun with your friends, and we end up learning a lot in the process.

- Let's try in from here.

[vocalizing]

- I take lessons with Hideko Amano. She's a professor at Carthage College in Kenosha. She's very interactive during the lessons. We can talk about a lot of technical details, but also about musicality and reaching out to an audience and communicating. I would say she is demanding, but she is also very supportive.

I'm playing the "Carmen Fantaisie" for flute and orchestra by François Borne. It's very energetic and exciting and that's what makes me love it so much. The hardest part for me was getting into the character of Carmen. There is a section of the piece, it's called the Habanera, where Carmen sings. And, essentially, I have to sing, as well, even though I'm playing the flute.

At Peace Lutheran Church, I do various chamber groups throughout the year. I've been doing that since I was 12. We come in a week before the service. We'll play the music and practice it once before going and performing it at a divine service. I like that I get to learn a lot of new music for it. My favorite thing about it, though, was that I get to play this wonderful music in service to God.

When I have free time, I like to read a lot and I also play with my cousins. They are ages 5 and 7 and we play a lot of different games together. Sometimes, we'll play hide and seek or different board games and card games. Sometimes we solve mysteries or draw and color. Music has taught me to express myself in ways that I never thought possible. It has taught me the benefits of focus and practice, how to handle different life experiences and how to put that into your music. If you can't express something through words, music can do it for you.

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[applause]

- Holly Venkitaswaran is coming on stage now to perform François Borne's "Carmen Fantaisie."

He was also an innovator, who was personally responsible for several modifications to the design of the flute in late 19th century France.

[cheers and applause]

- That was 18-year-old holly Venkitaswaran performing the "Carmen Fantaisie" by François borne.

- Before we continue, we'd like to take a moment to tell you who is judging tonight's competition. Katherine young Steele is principle oboist with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and serves on the faculty at UW-Milwaukee.

- Bernard Zinck is an associate professor of violin and chamber music director at UW-Milwaukee.

- Myung Hee Chung is at the university of Wisconsin- whitewater.

- And Benjamin Whitcomb is a professor of cello and music theory at UW-Whitewater.

- The judges take into account maturity of sound, musicality and stage presence.

- coming up next, we're going to hear from our third finalist, cellist grace Kim.

- My name is Grace Kim and I'm a junior at Waunakee Community High School. I started cello in fifth grade. I picked the cello because it had a certain warm mellow sound that I really liked. It sounds a lot like the human voice and I thought that connected with me a lot more. - Uri Vardi: Is it a different expression now?

- I take cello lessons from Uri Vardi, who's the professor from the University of Wisconsin- Madison. I've taken lessons with Uri for almost two years. I like how he doesn't sugar-coat details in your playing and he really tells you how to fix problems.

- You should not sound exactly like a bored repetition.

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- I use mirrors so I can fix things that I'm doing wrong. I like to bake and draw whenever I get the time. I got interested in baking from watching *British Baking Show.* I think the most successful thing I've baked is probably... Well, I don't know. There are a lot.

[chuckles]

I like to draw lots of just realistic drawings. Whenever I get a really big idea in my head I just start to draw right away. They turn out pretty good. I will be performing the first and third movements of Saint-Saëns First Cello Concerto. I liked it because of its powerful personality right from the first measure and the different emotions that just flow throughout the piece.

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For me, performing music is a way to, like, express myself, like, day-to-day life, I'm more, like, introverted, I guess. When I perform, I focus on just enjoying the music and I hope that the audience enjoys it as much as I do.

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[applause]

- Our third competitor, 17-year-old grace Kim, is now coming on stage. She's chosen to perform the first and third movements of Saint-Saëns concerto no. 1. He composed this concerto in 1872 when he was 37 years old. The work was written for a Belgian cellist.

[applause]

- That was grace Kim performing the first and third movements of Saint-Saëns first cello concerto No. 1.

- Fall Youth Concerto Competition is open to musicians aged eight through middle school. The winner performs with the Madison Symphony Orchestra.

- Next, we're going to introduce you to tonight's final competitor, pianist Antonio Wu.

- My name is Antonio Wu, and I am a sophomore at James Madison Memorial High School. I've been taking piano lessons with my mom for almost 11 years.

When I was really little, my older sister began taking piano lessons with her. And then my other sister followed after her. And my mom would always hold me in her lap while she was teaching them. And so, from a very young age, I always dreamed of playing piano.

My mom is a very detailed teacher. She doesn't let anything slip by. She's just around the house, so she'll hear something and she'll be like, "You need to fix that." I'm never off the hook!

[Laughs]

She always has a very unique and creative idea for every nuance of a piece.

[Tennis balls impacting]

I've played tennis on and off since about second grade. I joined the tennis team in my freshman year. It's just something that I can do to get some exercise and spend some time with friends.

- This year, we're aiming for 30 volunteers, which is a lot, I know.

- I am a board member of Spartan Youth Service, which is the largest volunteering organization at our school. Last year, I was one of the three organizers for Spirit Day. We had about 270 volunteers go to over 10 different schools throughout the Madison district and they helped out during the day. I wanted to become a board member because I care deeply about volunteering, and it has also helped me a lot in learning how to be a leader. If I could get four to six volunteers, that would be great.

I will be performing the "Rachmaninoff Concerto No. 2, the third movement." I like the third movement because it's kind of a reflection on the first two movements, but it also takes on its own character. The orchestra builds up to this really crashing moment and then it suddenly stops and then the piano takes over in a very passionate, emotion-filled few measures. It's a challenge for me, mentally and physically. I enjoy the feeling right after a performance when you know you've done well, and you have no regrets about what you've played.

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[Applause]

- Maestro John DeMain is coming on stage now with pianist Antonio Wu, who will perform the 3rd movement of Rachmaninoff’s concerto no. 2.

- Rachmaninoff was a Russian composer, conductor and virtuoso pianist of the late romantic period.

[Cheers and applause]

- That was our final contestant for the evening, 15-year-old Antonio Wu from Madison. Let's give all our contestants a final round of applause.

[Applause]

- And we have something to applaud for you, Maestro. As many of you know, this is Maestro DeMain's 25th season as music director of the Madison Symphony Orchestra. Congratulations on that spectacular achievement.

[Applause]

- This concert is the work of, well, certainly this week alone some very intense days. So I was wondering if you would take us through the preparation process for the orchestra as well as for the soloists getting to the *Final Forte*.

- Well, as you know, the soloists have worked for years and months on these pieces with their extraordinary teachers which really lift them. When they play in the semifinal, we really hear the level that they are and whether we think that they're ready to play with orchestra. Once this week starts, I try to give them a professional experience as though it were the same way as one of our major artists coming in to play with the orchestra. On Monday I hear their interpretation. If we have anything to discuss, we discuss it. Then they play with the orchestra. We go through it, wade through it and go back and really work on it. And I took virtually two-thirds of the rehearsal so each one had really a good amount of time. And then on Tuesday, we do a dress rehearsal with you. We just go through the piece. And then after-- we do a television dress rehearsal. After a break we come out and do any spots, just like I would do with a normal artist. And then tonight. So hopefully they're having a really professional experience of what it likes to play with a fully professional orchestra and one at the level of the Madison symphony. As I’ve said, very nice cash prizes tonight. The thrill of playing these concertos with an orchestra, the winners will have played four times this week. Thursday morning is the spring youth concert. So it's a lot of time with the orchestra, which is invaluable in their growth at this stage.

- And the orchestra having to learn four different concertos. Pretty good for the orchestra, I would say.

- Especially coming from last week's subscription concerts.

- What do you want the audience to take away from *the Final Forte*?

- Well, the television audience sees incredible visuals. But I think also practicing pays off. You can tell your kids. Because when you get to play this well, it's a lot of fun as well as a lot of work because you get rewarded. But what we all learn is that to be a virtuoso, it's all about starting young. When I went to Julliard, by the time you're 14, my teacher said, it's too late. I was 18. I worked pretty hard. But these kids, look at the level that they play, you know, at this age. Amazing.

- Thank you, maestro.

[Applause]

- And now, what will the orchestra be performing to close out tonight's performance?

- We will perform the waltz, from Tchaikovsky’s opera “Waltz from *Eugene Onegin*.”

- Thank you, Maestro. Ladies and gentlemen, Maestro John DeMain and the Madison Symphony Orchestra.

[Applause]

[Applause]

- John DeMain and the Madison Symphony Orchestra with Tchaikovsky’s "Waltz from Eugene Onegin." and now, the moment we've all been waiting for. If we could ask maestro domain and our four competitors to join us back out here on stage.

[Applause]

- Before we present the awards, we first want to recognize the immense talent of our young performers. They are all deserving of performing here tonight with the Madison Symphony Orchestra.

- Indeed.

[Applause]

- So, starting with the two honorable mentions, we have: Holly Venkitaswaran and Monona Suzuki.

[Applause]

- Our second place winner for tonight is Antonio Wu.

[Applause]

- Which means that grace Kim has taken the first place award for the 2019 Bolz Young Artist Competition.

[Cheers and applause]

- Congratulations to all four of our finalists, along with music director John DeMain and the Madison Symphony Orchestra.

- And thank all of you for joining us this evening. From Overture Hall in Madison, I’m Lori Skelton.

- And I’m Angela Fitzgerald. Goodnight.

[Applause]

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