

HONENS MEDIA RELEASE

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HONENS OPENS APPLICATIONS AND ANNOUNCES DETAILS OF ITS 2025 INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION



Calgary, AB, March 26, 2024—The **Honens International Piano Competition**, one of the world’s most prestigious events of its kind, opens applications today and announces details of its 2025 edition. Distinguished for its search for the *Complete Artist*, Honens Competition Quarterfinals take place in Berlin and New York in March 2025, and the advancing Semifinalists and Finalists perform in Calgary that October. The Competition culminates with the announcement of the three 2025 Honens Laureates—Gold, Silver, and Bronze—on **October 24, 2025**.

Honens, Canada’s international piano competition located in Calgary, fosters pre-eminence in the art of piano performance. The Honens prize offers its Gold, Silver, and Bronze Laureates a cash prize of \$100,000 CAD, \$40,000 CAD, and \$20,000 CAD, respectively, and a comprehensive, three-year Artist Development Program. The program, based on a needs assessment and tailored to each artist, may include debut recitals in career-building markets; assistance in securing worldwide artist management; coaching and mentorship; media training; opportunities to experiment with programming and collaborations for specific audiences; residencies and special projects; and the production, release, and distribution of professional recordings. The Honens prize is one of the world’s largest of its kind.

The Honens Laureates are identified by the Jury as the pianists who best embody the organization’s philosophy of the *Complete Artist*—a pianist who is not only an outstanding virtuoso, but a risk taker, collaborator, and communicator who can express and interpret ideas from a wide cultural context, and whose distinctive voice and versatility demonstrate the level of preparedness necessary to embark upon a professional career.

“We’re delighted to announce our 2025 Competition,” says Honens Artistic Director Jon Kimura Parker. “This Competition, in particular, brings exciting new changes and growth to Honens through its expansion to three Laureates, the cash prizes they receive, and the holistic scope of the artistic development and career accelerator program.”

Competition juries include pianists, collaborative musicians, and concert presenters who play a meaningful role in the career of a successful artist. The jury for the 2025 Honens International Piano Competition includes Janina Fialkowska, Awadagin Pratt, Philippe Bianconi, Pavel Kolesnikov, and Tanya Bannister, among others. Final jury deliberations take place immediately following the last Finals II performance on October 24. The 2025 Honens Laureates—Gold, Silver, and Bronze—are announced that evening.

Honens believes a *Complete Artist* explores both the pivotal works of the piano literature and the music of our time (works composed in the last 50 years). As such, Iranian-Canadian composer and pianist Iman Habibi, a 2022 Azrieli Music Prize Laureate and founding member of the Piano Pinnacle duo, has been commissioned to compose an eight-minute piece to be performed by each Semifinalist. Semifinalists are also required to perform at least one work by an under-represented composer and provide rationale for their choice.

Each Competition year, Honens appoints an internationally renowned, active concert pianist as its Mentor-in-Residence, who provides a one-hour feedback session to each Semifinalist and Finalist in the days following their performances. The British classical pianist and composer Sir Stephen Hough, one of the most distinctive artists of his generation, will be the 2025 Mentor-in-Residence.

“Honens strongly believes in, and adheres to, its responsibilities to competitors, community, and the art music ecosphere,” says Honens President & CEO John Kieser. “This Competition showcases to the world and our audiences the new generation of Complete Artists who are performers, leaders, teachers, advocates, and communicators.”

Outside of the formal Competition rounds, Honens will present its new Incubator Award to one successful Quarterfinalist who has demonstrated a passion and courage for being an agent for change. The award provides the artist up to three years of support for one special project. While the nature and purpose of the project can vary—multidisciplinary projects addressing performance issues, social justice, or community service, among others, may be considered—the project must focus on increasing the relevance of art music.

Applications are now open to pianists between 20 and 30 years of age. The deadline to apply is October 30, 2024 (23:59 GMT-07:00). Fifty pianists will be selected to participate in the Quarterfinals in Berlin and New York; ten will advance to the Semifinals in Calgary in October. Three pianists will progress to the Finals, which conclude on October 24, 2025.

Backgrounder Attached

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Information

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BACKGROUND

2025 HONENS INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION

The Complete Artist

The Complete Artist is:

- a thoughtful interpreter, a consummate collaborator, an awe-inspiring virtuoso, a communicator, a risk-taking explorer.
- a pianist who expresses and interprets ideas from a wide cultural context and keen imagination through performances and programming choices that are informed and seasoned by a fascination for life outside the practice studio.
- an emerging artist whose distinctive voice, versatility, and ease clearly demonstrate the level of preparedness and mastery necessary to embark upon a professional career.
- a leader, teacher, advocate, and citizen artist who is skilled in the business of music, able to recognize and seize opportunities, knowledgeable about self-care, influential in communications, and socially conscious.

The Complete Artist's interpretations are founded upon the intellectual and emotional understanding of musical text and the ability to synthesize and express such understanding to challenge and stir the listener on multiple levels. This creative awareness stems not only from knowledge of a particular composition itself but from a wider knowledge of related music, of musical literature, and of the arts in general. If the resulting interpretation appears unusual and unconventional, it still appears fresh and natural. Artists taking part in the Honens International Piano Competition must also express—through stage deportment, program design, and interviews—a sensitivity to cultures and a willingness and finesse to communicate effectively with audiences regardless of age, location, background, or degree of musical sophistication.

Competition Rounds

The Applicant Screening Jury selects 50 pianists to advance to the Quarterfinals.

QUARTERFINALS

Each Quarterfinalist performs a 40-minute recital and participates in a 10-minute English-language interview in either New York or Berlin in March 2025. The First Jury selects ten pianists to advance to the Semifinals in Calgary.

SEMIFINALS

Semifinals I

Each Semifinalist performs a 60-minute solo recital that must include at least one work from an underrepresented composer.

Semifinals II

Each Semifinalist performs a 65-minute solo / collaborative recital that must include two works for cello and piano (from a prescribed list) with Rachel Mercer, the eight-minute newly commissioned work by Iman Habibi, and additional solo repertoire to round out the program. The Second Jury selects three pianists to advance to the Finals in Calgary.

FINALS

Finals I

Each Finalist performs a piano quintet (from a prescribed list) with the Isidore String Quartet, and an encore of up to four minutes announced from the stage.

Finals II

Each Finalist performs any concerto composed after 1791 with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Elias Grandy. Each Finalist also participates in a 30-minute English-language interview.

Cash Awards

Honens Gold Laureate (one)
\$100,000 CAD

Semifinalists (seven)
\$2,500 CAD each

Honens Silver Laureate (one)
\$40,000 CAD

Audience Award (one)
\$2,500 CAD

Honens Bronze Laureate (one)
\$20,000 CAD

Best Performance of Commissioned Work (one)
\$2,500 CAD

Artist Development Program

Aside from the cash portion of the award, Honens Laureates receive one of the most comprehensive artistic development and career accelerator programs in the world.

Based on a needs assessment and tailored to each Laureate, the program may include debut recitals in career-building markets (i.e. Berlin, London, New York, Toronto, etc.); introductions to artist managers; coaching and mentorship; media training; language skills and the business of music; seminars in well-being; opportunities to experiment with programming and collaborations for specific audiences; residencies and special projects; and the production, release, and distribution of professional recordings.

Incubator Award

Apart from the prizes at the Honens International Piano Competition, Honens has launched the Incubator Award. The award provides one Quarterfinalist, who has the passion and courage to be a change agent, up to three years of support for one special project. Whether it sheds a light on performance anxiety, brings awareness to a social issue, or creates a program to serve a community, Honens will assist the artist in further developing and launching the project. It may be transferable to other disciplines, but first and foremost, must increase the relevance of art music in today's world.

The successful project will be identified through the application, the Quarterfinal round, and a separate discovery process, which may include a second interview and additional documentation.

Juries

All jurors have extensive knowledge of piano literature and the qualities an artist must possess to build and sustain a career in today's musical world. Biographies of all jurors can be found at www.honens.com/juries.

APPLICANT SCREENING JURY

Tanya Bannister (United States / United States)*

**indicates country of origin / country of residence*

Tema Blackstone (Canada / United States)

Karim Said (Jordan / UK)

Micah Yui (Japan / United States)

FIRST JURY (QUARTERFINALS)

Sara Davis Buechner (United States / United States)

Nicolas Namoradze (Georgia / United States)

Marianne Perron (Canada / Canada)

Robert Roux (United States / United States)

SECOND JURY (SEMIFINALS AND FINALS)

Philippe Bianconi (France / France)

Jenny Bilfield (United States / United States)

Janina Fialkowska (Canada / Germany)

Pavel Kolesnikov (Russia / United Kingdom)

Anne-Marie McDermott (United States / United States)

Awadagin Pratt (United States / United States)

Joyce Yang (Korea / United States)

Mentor-in-Residence

In addition to feedback meetings with members of the Second Jury—required for all Semifinalists and Finalists to discuss their technique, musicianship, and artistry—Honens chooses an internationally-renowned, actively touring pianist to serve as Mentor-in-Residence. Each Semifinalist who does not advance to the Finals will meet with the Mentor-in-Residence for a one-hour meeting on the days following the Semifinals. The Mentor-in-Residence also attends the Finals and later meets with the Gold, Silver, and Bronze Laureates.

The 2025 Mentor-in-Residence is Sir Stephen Hough.

Collaborating Artists

Rachel Mercer cello

Iman Habibi composer

Isidore String Quartet

Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra

Elias Grandy conductor

Important Dates

March 26, 2024	Application submissions open
October 30, 2024	Application submission deadline
March 2 to 4, 2025	Quarterfinals: Berlin
March 17 to 19, 2025	Quarterfinals: New York
October 16 to 20, 2025	Semifinals I / Semifinals II
October 20, 2025	Announcement of the three Finalists
October 23, 2025	Finals I
October 24, 2025	Finals II & Announcement of the Honens Laureates

Applications, which will be processed through Embark, an online application and admissions platform, are available at www.honens.com/apply. They must be submitted by October 30, 2024 (23:59 GMT-07:00), along with two confidential letters of recommendation from musicians of international standing. The application fee is \$185 CAD.

Eligibility

Pianists who are no younger than 20 years of age on October 16, 2025 and no older than 30 years of age on October 24, 2025, are eligible to apply. Previous Honens Laureates are not eligible to apply. For additional information about the 2025 Honens International Piano Competition, please visit www.honens.com/2025.

ABOUT HONENS

Honens, home of Canada's international piano competition, fosters the art of piano performance, identifies and supports outstanding young artists, and sparks and enhances appreciation and understanding of the piano and piano music.

Esther Honens created a legacy of musical pre-eminence to be enjoyed for generations. In 1991, Mrs. Honens gave \$5 million to endow an international piano competition in her hometown of Calgary, Canada. Today, the triennial Honens International Piano Competition is considered one of the world's most prestigious events of its kind. Honens prepares its Laureates, who embody the philosophy of the Complete Artist, for professional careers in music, through a comprehensive and customizable three-year artistic development and career accelerator program which creates opportunities for exposure and holistic growth. Driven by its commitment to responsibility to competitors, the community, and the art music ecosphere, Honens provides a runway for Laureates to set themselves apart from other artists as skilled performers who are also leaders, educators, advocates, and citizen artists.

The annual Honens Festival as well as community events and initiatives are intended to share Mrs. Honens' love of world-renowned music, and provide every Calgarian access to barrier free, enriching musical experiences. Her generosity, vision, and love of music continue to touch the lives of musicians and music-lovers at home and around the world.

Honens Legacy Partners support the ongoing growth and development of Esther Honens' vision by securing the organization's future. The Legacy Partners Endowment Fund enables Honens to provide wide-reaching programming through its annual festival and other enriching community education and outreach initiatives.