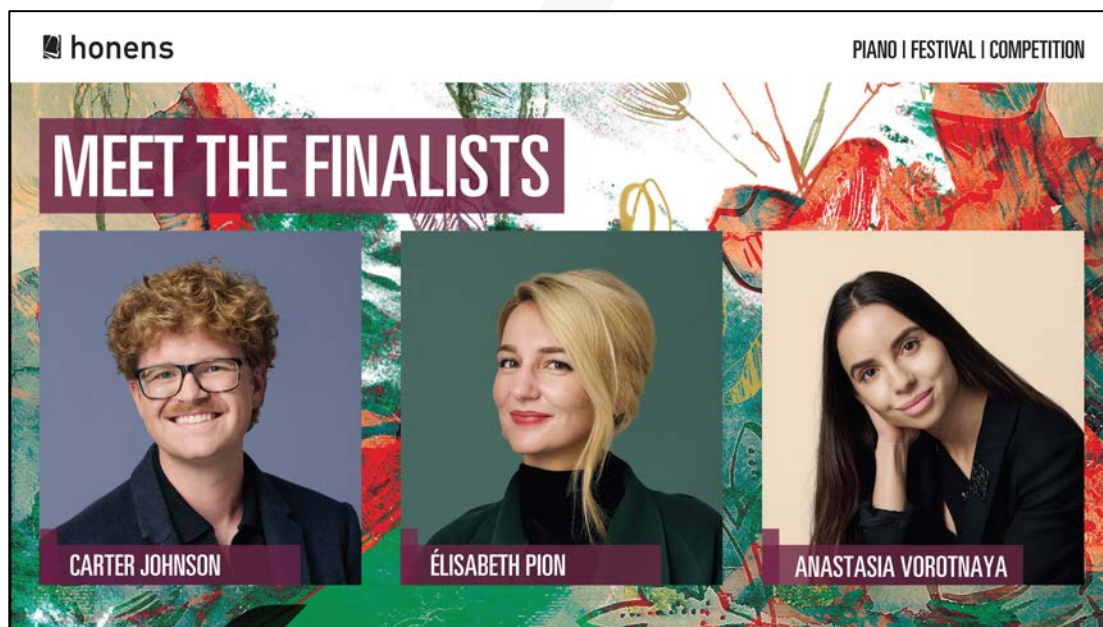


# HONENS MEDIA RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HONENS ANNOUNCES FINALISTS OF THE 2025 HONENS INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION



Calgary, AB, October 20, 2025— Honens announced tonight the three Finalists vying for the top prize at the 2025 Honens International Piano Competition, following two rounds of Semifinals from October 16 to 20, during which 10 distinguished Semifinalists participated in solo and chamber recitals at the Eckhardt-Gramatté Hall, Rozsa Centre. The three Finalists are **Carter Johnson** (29); **Élisabeth Pion** (29); and **Anastasia Vorotnaya** (30). They will compete for the title of 2025 Honens Gold Laureate, winning one of the world's largest prizes of its kind—\$100,000 CAD and a comprehensive, three-year artistic development and career accelerator program.

The members of the Second Jury, who evaluated the Semifinalists, are Philippe Bianconi, Jenny Bilfield, Janina Fialkowska, Leila Getz, Anne-Marie McDermott, Roberto Plano, and Awadagin Pratt. They will also evaluate Johnson, Pion, and Vorotnaya in the two rounds of Finals, on October 23 and 24, and select the 2025 Honens Gold, Silver, and Bronze Laureates, who will be announced following Finals II on October 24.

"Honens is thrilled to welcome three extraordinary pianists to the Final Rounds," says Honens Artistic Director Jon Kimura Parker. "The artistry of each Semifinalist was at the highest level this year. It was especially challenging for the jurors to narrow the group down to three, but the musical insight, performance, and overall brilliance that Carter, Élisabeth, and Anastasia exhibited had a profound impact."

In the first round of Finals, on October 23, Johnson performs Johannes Brahms' *Piano Quintet in F minor Op. 34*; Pion performs César Franck's *Piano Quintet in F minor Op. 14*; and Vorotnaya performs Antonín Dvořák's *Piano Quintet in A Major Op. 81*, each with the New York City-based Isidore String Quartet. In the second round, on October 24, Johnson performs Sergei Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor Op. 16*; Pion performs Sergei Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major*

---

*Op. 26*; and Vorotnaya performs Johannes Brahms' *Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat Major Op. 83*, all with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra under conductor Elias Grandy. Each Finalist also participates in a 30-minute interview with Canadian arts journalist Katherine Duncan. Both rounds take place at the Jack Singer Concert Hall, Werklund Centre.

The pianist who best demonstrates the ideal of Honens' Complete Artist philosophy will be named the 2025 Honens Gold Laureate. The Awards Show follows Finals II; it will be hosted by Katherine Duncan, previous CBC host and producer, and Paolo Pietropaolo, host of *In Concert*, the award-winning classical music radio program on CBC Music. For all event details and artist biographies, please see the backgrounder.

All tickets are now on sale. For up-to-date information, visit [honens.com](http://honens.com).

**Backgrounder Attached**

-end-

---

## Information

Alberta Media Relations  
Lisa Farquharson  
Honens  
403 862 5168  
lfarquharson@honens.com

Worldwide Media Relations  
Patricia Price  
8VA Music Consultancy  
201 746 5116  
patricia@8vamusiconconsultancy.com

# BACKGROUNDER

## 2025 HONENS INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION

### Finalists

#### **Carter Johnson, 29\***

Birthplace: Campbell River, Canada | Studied in: Vancouver, Canada; and New York City and New Haven, US | Resides in: New Haven, US

There wasn't a strong musical tradition in the family when Carter Johnson grew up in Campbell River, a small town on Vancouver Island. But with encouragement from his grandmother, his parents enrolled him in piano lessons when he was five and Carter fell in love with making music. By age seven, he knew he wanted to be a concert pianist.

Carter ventured to the University of British Columbia in Vancouver for his undergrad, giving him the opportunity to live with his dairy-farming extended family, and then migrated to The Juilliard School for a master's (music) and Yale for an additional master's (musical arts) and doctorate (musical arts).

Carter currently lives in Connecticut with his wife, Hannah, and their sons, Preston and Ambrose. In the past few years, he's participated in a number of international competitions, built an active concert career, and enjoys teaching.

"I often catch myself not practicing in the way I tell my students to," he says, "and then I get to benefit from my own advice!"

In dealing with the stress of a competition, he tries to "think only when necessary, and redirect this energy into delighting in the music." He also keeps himself as busy as possible on the day of a performance, particularly with practice and score study, and tries to "spin every negative thought into a positive one." In live performance, he loves the risk, the vulnerability, and the direct line of communication he creates with an audience.

One of his favourite pieces of advice as a musician? "Enjoy every note."

#### **Élisabeth Pion, 29\***

Birthplace: Saint-Hyacinthe, Canada | Studied in: Pinerolo, Italy; London, UK; and Montréal, Canada | Resides in: London, UK

Not long ago, Élisabeth Pion finished a rehearsal of the Maurice Ravel Piano Concerto with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and invited the players to join her for a Tai Chi session after the performance.

She's been studying Tai Chi for a few years—a discipline that helps her feel grounded and strengthens the inner compass that guides both her daily life and her preparation for the stage.

Élisabeth began playing the piano at age five in a household filled with music. She felt an intuitive physical relationship to the keyboard and could play for hours on end. She loved science, literature, and philosophy, but decided at 19 to pursue a career in music.

After studying in Montréal, she moved to London, UK for advanced training, which included a class on improvisation. It was absolutely terrifying at first, but she was soon crafting cadenzas and even her own compositions.

---

Élisabeth revels in the sound of the piano, the possibility of intricate polyphony, its qualities of being both a singing and a percussive instrument. She believes the piano speaks to people from all walks of life, regardless of their musical preferences.

“Performance,” she says, “is a way of sharing a deep connection with others in real time, enveloped in a heightened sense of consciousness, of transcendence through art.”

As for competitions, Élisabeth enjoys the rigorous preparation and endless search for the next level of comprehension and craftsmanship. Even when she’s been eliminated early on, she’s made the most of it through learning new repertoire, forging new friendships, and discovering new places.

### **Anastasia Vorotnaya, 30\***

Birthplace: Togliatti, Russia | Studied in: Moscow, Russia; Madrid, Spain; Como, Italy; and Kansas City, US | Resides in: Madrid, Spain

Anastasia Vorotnaya recalls having a wild and mischievous childhood growing up in a small city east of Moscow. She rollerbladed with abandon, played football with the boys, and loved roaring up and down a keyboard.

At eight, Anastasia and her mother moved to Moscow so she could study at the Conservatory. At 17, she moved to Madrid, alone, without speaking a word of English or Spanish.

The piano was a constant and reassuring companion.

“I love touching and caressing the piano as if it were a living being,” she says, “because, in many ways, it truly is. It feels as though I open my soul to the piano in a way I never have and never will with anyone else.”

She’s also fascinated with the world of medicine and considered it an alternative career to music. During the pandemic lockdowns, when the future of live performance was uncertain, she prepared for medical school entrance exams, studying six to seven hours a day.

But then concerts returned, borders lifted, and Anastasia found herself at a crossroads: medicine or music.

“When I imagined a life without the piano, with only a scalpel in hand, the choice was suddenly clear. Music is, and always will be, my greatest love.”

As for competitions? “They can be both rewarding and painful—but regardless of the outcome, I have never viewed these events as something that defines me or my worth as a musician. I see them as episodes, not verdicts. Art, for me, lives far beyond rankings.”

### **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.

## Events

### Honens Honours

**celebrating Heather Edwards, Helen Graham, and Clarice Evans Siebens**

Tuesday, October 21 at 6:00 p.m.

Calgary Petroleum Club | 319 5 Avenue SW

Honens Honours is a signature celebration paying tribute to individuals and organizations whose passion for the arts has profoundly shaped our community. Inspired by the visionary spirit of Esther Honens, this event shines a spotlight on those whose extraordinary contributions have enriched our city, province, and country.

### Curtain Call

**Illia Ovcharenko in Recital**

Wednesday, October 22 at 7:00 p.m.

Heather Edwards Theatre, Contemporary Calgary | 701 11 Street SW

Witness a defining moment in the artistic journey of 2022 Honens Prize Laureate Illia Ovcharenko as he returns to the Honens stage for his farewell recital before he passes the torch to the 2025 Laureate.

### Bison Noir: Música Callada

**with Sir Stephen Hough**

Wednesday, October 22 at 9:00 p.m.

The Grotto, Contemporary Calgary | 701 11 Street SW

Immerse yourself in the ethereal allure of Bison Noir as the legendary Sir Stephen Hough brings the evocative, intimate music of Frederic Mompou to life in this late-night performance blending artistry and atmosphere.

### Oscar

Thursday, October 23 at 10:30 a.m.

Jack Singer Concert Hall, Werklund Centre | 225 8 Avenue SE

Experience *Oscar*—a joy-filled performance celebrating the life and extraordinary talent of Canadian jazz icon Dr. Oscar Peterson. Through live music, storytelling, dance, and imagination, this uplifting production celebrates one of Canada's greatest pianists—his childhood dreams, his boundless curiosity, and his love of the piano.

### Finals I

Thursday, October 23 at 7:00 p.m.

Jack Singer Concert Hall, Werklund Centre | 225 8 Avenue SE

Discover the intimacy and intensity of chamber music at its finest as Carter Johnson, Élisabeth Pion, and Anastasia Vorotnaya take the stage with the acclaimed Isidore String Quartet, winners of the 2022 Banff International String Quartet Competition, performing emotionally rich, dynamic piano quintets revealing their depth as collaborative artists.

---

## Finals II & Awards Show

Friday, October 24 at 7:00 p.m.

Jack Singer Concert Hall, Werklund Centre | 225 8 Avenue SE

Feel the thrill as Carter Johnson, Élisabeth Pion, and Anastasia Vorotnaya perform dazzling concertos of their choice with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Elias Grandy. The evening's excitement continues with the unforgettable announcement of the 2025 Honens Laureates.

### 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)  
\$5,000 CAD

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

Best Performance of Commissioned Work (one)  
\$5,000 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; opportunities to experiment with programming and collaborations for specific audiences; residencies and special projects; and the production, release, and distribution of professional recordings.

### 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 excellence 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.

Community events and initiatives, along with the annual Honens Festival, 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.