

HONENS MEDIA RELEASE

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HONENS ANNOUNCES ÉLISABETH PION FROM CANADA AS GOLD LAUREATE OF THE 2025 HONENS INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION



Calgary, AB, Oct. 24, 2025—Canadian pianist Élisabeth Pion (age 29) has been named Gold Laureate of the 2025 Honens International Piano Competition, following the Final rounds which included an English-language interview by Canadian arts journalist Katherine Duncan, and two intensive rounds of recitals: a performance of the César Franck *Piano Quintet in F minor Op. 14* with the Isidore String Quartet, and of the Sergei Prokofiev *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major Op. 26* with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Elias Grandy. As Gold Laureate, Pion receives \$100,000 (CAD) as well as a comprehensive, three-year Artist Development Program valued at an additional \$500,000 (CAD)—one of the world’s largest awards of its kind. Pion also won the Audience Choice Award (\$5,000 CAD).

Finalists Carter Johnson (29) and Anastasia Vorotnaya (30) received the Honens Silver Laureate prize of \$40,000 (CAD), and the Honens Bronze Laureate prize of \$20,000 (CAD), respectively. Each Semifinalist received a \$2,500 (CAD) award:

- Ádám Balogh, 28
- Elia Cecino, 24
- Giorgio Lazzari, 25
- Sandro Nebieridze, 24
- Chaeyoung Park, 28
- Derek Wang, 27
- Yuanfan Yang, 28

An additional prize was awarded to Anastasia Vorotnaya for the Best Performance of Commissioned Work (\$5,000 CAD), *Fracture*, by Iranian-Canadian composer Iman Habibi.

The Second Jury, which evaluated the Semifinalists and Finalists, was composed of Philippe Bianconi, Jenny Bilfield, Janina Fialkowska, Leila Getz, Anne-Marie McDermott, Roberto Plano, and Awadagin Pratt.

"It has been a thrilling experience to witness the full breadth of each artist during the Semifinal and Final rounds of the Competition," says Honens President & CEO Amanda Smith. "We are honoured to welcome Élisabeth to the Honens family, who demonstrated artistic excellence and a supreme commitment to Honens' values. Her integrity and humanistic perspective of what it means to be a Complete Artist are an inspiration, and not only in music."

"The Honens International Piano Competition has brought together some of the most gifted pianists of their generation," adds Honens Artistic Director Jon Kimura Parker. "They all showed passion, insight, sensitivity, and emotional and intellectual acuity as musicians. Congratulations to all the Semifinalists, and especially to Élisabeth. I, along with the rest of the Honens team, look forward to working with you and watching your career blossom."

In addition to the cash award, the 2025 Honens Gold Laureate receives a comprehensive three-year artistic development and career accelerator program. Tailored to the Laureate, the program may include debut recitals in career-building markets (e.g. Berlin, London, New York, Toronto); introductions to artist managers; coaching and mentorship; media training; language skills; training on 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.

Archived video recordings of the entire 2025 Honens International Piano Competition can be viewed at honens.com/livestream.

Backgrounder Attached

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BACKGROUNDER

2025 HONENS INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION

2025 Honens Gold Laureate Élisabeth Pion

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.

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.

Cash Awards

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

Semifinalists (seven)
\$2,500 CAD each

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

Audience Choice Award (one)
\$5,000 CAD

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

Best Performance of Commissioned Work Award (one)
\$5,000 CAD

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.