

HONENS MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HONENS MARKS A NEW CHAPTER WITH ITS 2026 FESTIVAL: ECHOES & TRANSFORMATIONS

Running from September 10 to 13, 2026, this year's Festival was specially curated by 2003 Honens Laureate Winston Choi



Calgary, AB, April 16, 2026 — The 2026 Honens Festival, September 10 to 13, marks an ambitious new chapter in the organization's approach to its annual programming. For the first time in its 12-year history, the Festival has been shaped by a guest curator: **2003 Honens Laureate and Canadian pianist Winston Choi**. Titled *Echoes & Transformations*, the Festival explores how music reflects, distorts, and reinvents across time and genre. Featured artists include six pianists—**Winston Choi**, 2025 Honens Gold Laureate **Élisabeth Pion**, 2025 Honens Silver Laureate **Carter Johnson**, Honens Artistic Director **Jon Kimura Parker**, 2018 Honens Prize Laureate **Nicolas Namoradze**, and Canadian jazz pianist **Chris Andrew**—alongside violinist **MingHuan Xu**.

The Honens Festival is an ever-popular annual event, putting the piano at the centre of artistic life in Calgary. *Echoes & Transformations* is the most expansive Festival in recent years, comprising five concerts, four free events, and a full-day Honens Lab symposium valuable for both educators and performers. Programming spans a range of traditional recital programs, outdoor performances, family-friendly events, and a relaxed concert for neurodiverse audiences.

Throughout the Festival, artists use technology to expand the expressive possibilities of the piano. Steinway & Sons Spirio player-piano recordings allow pianists to layer live performance on top of past interpretations. 2025 Honens Gold Laureate Élisabeth Pion presents a solo recital, and 2018 Honens Prize Laureate Nicolas Namoradze offers his immersive Neurorecital, giving audiences direct insight into brain activity during performance. A complete listing of Festival events appears below.

“It was an honour to be invited to program the 2026 Honens Festival,” says Winston Choi. “As curator and performer, I wanted this Festival to explore how musical ideas resonate across time, allowing audiences to experience piano music in new and surprising ways. My time as a Honens Laureate transformed my career, and I am especially grateful to share the stage with recent Laureates, Honens Artistic Director, as well as other extraordinary collaborators. Together, we invite audiences into a festival of discovery, dialogue, and musical imagination.”

“*Echoes & Transformations* reflects a fresh perspective of Honens Festival and a natural extension of the Complete Artist philosophy, beyond our triennial Competition,” says Jon Kimura Parker. “This Festival puts the spotlight on our Laureates as Complete Artists. We’re asking them to not only perform, but to collaborate, curate, communicate, and innovate while exploring the piano’s evolving possibilities, and connecting with audiences in new ways.”

Four evening concerts will be preceded by pre-concert chats featuring various Festival artists, offering insight into the Honens Complete Artist philosophy.

The 2026 Honens Festival is made possible through valued collaborations across Calgary’s arts community including Studio Bell, home of the National Music Centre; TELUS Spark; Mount Royal University Conservatory; and High River Gift of Music. These partnerships reflect Honens’ commitment to working together to create meaningful and impactful artistic experiences.

Passes and single tickets are on sale now. For all up-to-date information, visit honens.com.

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BACKGROUND

2026 HONENS FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

Thursday, September 10, 2026

Honens Lab

9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

TransAlta Pavilion, Taylor Centre for the Performing Arts

Discover new ways of engaging with the piano at Honens Lab, a full-day symposium designed for pianists, students, teachers, and curious listeners alike!

Begin the day with a tai chi for musicians workshop with 2025 Honens Gold Laureate Élisabeth Pion, followed by an informative piano masterclass with Honens Artistic Director Jon Kimura Parker. The afternoon includes two in-depth seminars about practice strategies, mental rehearsal, and performance preparation led by 2018 Honens Prize Laureate Nicolas Namoradze—topics not often covered in standard training.

Dialogues with the Piano

7:00 p.m.

Performance Hall, National Music Centre

Enjoy an evening blending live piano and digital performances. Using Steinway & Sons Spirio player piano technology, Winston Choi, Jon Kimura Parker, and Carter Johnson perform live alongside their own pre-recorded performance, creating layered musical dialogues where past and present coexist and voices multiply. This showcase of artists sharing the stage with their past selves is followed by an exploration of the expansive sounds of the piano.

Friday, September 11, 2026

Reverberations: Chopin Reframed

Élisabeth Pion in Recital

7:00 p.m.

Performance Hall, National Music Centre

Experience a piano masterpiece ... reimagined. Known for performances of imagination, intensity, and individuality, 2025 Honens Gold Laureate Élisabeth Pion returns to Calgary with Frédéric Chopin's *Études Op. 25*. This time, she presents the piece with a poetic and fiery twist—interspersed with works of shimmering reflections and bold clarity from other composers.

Bison Noir: Revisions in Real-Time

9:00 p.m.

King Eddy

In true Bison Noir fashion, when the house lights dim, the boundaries of genres blur. Immerse yourself in an all-encompassing evening at the landmark King Eddy, where Chris Andrew, Winston Choi, Carter Johnson, and Élisabeth Pion experiment with historic and modern works on a Steinway & Sons Spirio self-playing piano, responding and improvising to digital recordings in real-time.

Saturday, September 12, 2026

Storytellers: Babar the Elephant

10:30 a.m.

Performance Hall, National Music Centre

Join us for a charming morning concert with Carter Johnson that brings Jean de Brunhoff's *The Story of Babar* to life. Children and families are welcomed into Babar's world in this charming, accessible introduction to classical music and storytelling.

Open Air Calgary

2:00 p.m.

RiverWalk Plaza, East Village | Rain Venue: Performance Hall, National Music Centre

A sunny afternoon along the Bow River awaits ... perfect for the whole family! Music spills into the open air in a celebration of piano and community. Bring your festival chairs and soak up the final days of summer.

Echoes in Motion

7:00 p.m.

Performance Hall, National Music Centre

From the elegance of the Baroque court to the fire of the modern concert hall, dance forms take centre stage in this journey across centuries. Beginning with deconstructed versions of grand historical works leading to energetic modern pieces, each reimagines—with shifting combinations of violin, harpsichord, and piano from Winston Choi, Carter Johnson, Jon Kimura Parker, and MingHuan Xu—what it means to dance with both grace and fire.

Sunday, September 13, 2026

Classical Adaptations: Duo Diorama

10:30 a.m.

Feature Gallery, TELUS Spark

Everyone is welcome at this free, relaxed, sensory friendly morning concert. Enjoy an easygoing and engaging musical experience where you can move, make sound, or simply listen comfortably. With the concert taking place at TELUS Spark, expect a touch of curiosity and discovery within the musical experience.

Open Air High River

2:00 p.m.

George Lane Memorial Park, High River | Rain Venue: High River United Church

A free musical extravaganza in beautiful George Lane Memorial Park. Music fills the park in this family-friendly program, perfectly paired with picnics and sunshine.

Neurorecital: Nicolas Namoradze in Recital

7:00 p.m.

Infinity Dome, TELUS Spark

Back by popular demand—and newly enhanced—after its sold-out premiere during the 2025 Honens International Piano Competition, this immersive experience invites audiences on a journey where art and science converge! As Nicolas Namoradze performs live, his brain activity surrounds the audience through striking 3D animated visualizations. The recital blends virtuosic piano performance with cutting-edge neuroscience and visual design.

ABOUT HONENS

Honens, home of Canada's international piano competition, cultivates piano artistry, supports remarkable young artists, and inspires a richer understanding of the piano and its 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.