

Rising Stars Concerto Competition 2021

The Bay of Plenty Symphonia presented its biennial Rising Stars Competition in Graham Young Youth Theatre on Saturday evening. It was encouraging to see so many children and young people among the social distanced audience.

Five talented young musicians were the finalists taking part: Pilgyu Chang (piano), Hannah Seo (recorder), Yusuke Takahashi (double bass), Grace Tak (cello) and Hayden Butt (clarinet). Each was required to play one movement of a concerto with the Bay of Plenty Symphonia.

The high standard of playing by the soloists was matched by that of the Bay of Plenty Symphonia, under the baton of Justus Rozemond.

As each contestant took the stage it became obvious the three adjudicators, Peter Walls, Glenese Blake and Joe Thomas had a challenging task ahead. The range of instruments together with compositions written across the 17th to 20th centuries added further variety.

The winner was clarinettist Hayden Butt from Tauranga who played Debussy's *Première Rhapsodie*. The tone and accuracy of Hayden's seemingly effortless playing was excellent, the hallmark of a player who is in total command of the instrument.

A judges' special prize was awarded to Grace Tak who played the 1st movement of Lalo's Cello concerto in D minor. She conveyed her emotional involvement in the performance with excellent tone, especially in the upper registers.

While the adjudicators deliberated, the 2019 Rising Stars winner, Leo Read, played *Morceau Symphonique* by Gaubert. This was a *class act* and a fine example of what the *Rising Stars* competition is all about.

Jeremy Whimster