

LIMELIGHT

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news

Emily Sun has been named Young Performer of the Year

The violinist has taken out the grand prize in a thrilling finale to the 2018 ABC Young Performers Awards at the Sydney Opera House.

by [Angus McPherson](#) on July 25, 2018



Violinist Emily Sun has been named Young Performer of the Year following a thrilling performance in the Finals of the 2018 ABC Young Performers Awards last night. The concert, which was broadcast live on ABC Classic FM, saw Sun competing against clarinettist Oliver Shermacher and pianist Kevin Chow in the final round of the competition, which began with 109 entrants. These were whittled down to the 12 [Semi-Finalists](#) who competed in recitals at City Recital Hall last week, and finally the three [Finalists](#), who performed concertos with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra under the baton of conductor Nicholas Milton at the Sydney Opera House.



Young Performer of the Year Emily Sun. Photo © Tom Truong

The concert began with Shermacher, who gave a charismatic performance of Weber's First Clarinet Concerto, Milton channeling the almost operatic drama of Weber's music in the opening and keeping the strings taut beneath the solos. Shermacher's sound was bright and clear, his technique smooth. His pianissimo following his duet with the SSO horn section in the second movement was a particular highlight, as was the playful humour of the finale.

Chow followed with a colourful performance of Prokofiev's Second Piano Concerto. His fingers danced across the keyboard in the second movement, kicking out accents with the orchestra and the march of the third movement had an almost saucy swing, but it was the first movement's monumental cadenza that stood out, Chow wringing from it both drama and great beauty.

Sun's performance of Beethoven's Violin Concerto after interval was the high point of the evening, however, the violinist giving a stunning, nuanced performance. Sun's sound is shimmering and polished, but with a steely core, and she demonstrated assured technical control and musical vision across the work. Her tone was resplendent in the prayer-like second movement, then earthier in the lively dance of the finale and her cadenzas were fiery.



Young Performers Awards Finalists Oliver Shermacher, Emily Sun and Kevin Chow. Photo © Tom Truong

As Young Performer of the Year, Sun receives a prize worth \$80,000, including the Australian Elizabethan Trust Scholarship, a \$50,000 scholarship to study overseas, the \$30,000 Sheila Walker Scholarship, and an appointment as ABC Classic FM's Artist in Residence. Sun was also awarded the YMF Award for Best Recital for her performance in the Semi-Finals, as well as a string of awards that will see her take up performance engagements with the Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney Symphony orchestras, as well as at City Recital Hall, Melbourne Recital Centre and UKARIA Cultural Centre. Each of the runners up receive the \$15,000 Triffitt Bequest, while Shermacher won the Kitty Fischer Audience Choice Prize and an opportunity to perform with the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra. Kevin Chow was awarded the Australian Festival of Chamber Music Prize, which will see him perform at the festival in Townsville in 2020.

The ceremony also saw renowned music educator and conductor Richard Gill awarded the MOST Achievement Award, which his son Anthony accepted on his behalf.

The team of adjudicators, led by Sydney Symphony Orchestra Concertmaster Emeritus Dene Olding, included Bernadette Harvey, Charmian Gadd, Catherine McCorkill, Warwick Ross, Alan Vivian, Nathan Waks, Gerard Willems and Raff Wilson. "This is our most prestigious and valuable national instrumental competition," Olding told the audience at the Sydney Opera House. "The young musicians that you have heard in the Semi-Finals and Finals these last two weeks will be those who shape the future of the Australian musical landscape and carry our artistic reputation around the world."

"We have witnessed something special tonight: technical mastery, artistic maturity and wonderful performances," he said. "The standard of the YPA throughout all of the rounds has been consistently high and augers well for the future of Australian music."

"I'm very overwhelmed," Sun said upon receiving her award last night. "I'm very humbled to be amongst the list of all the other extraordinary winners from all these years."

Sun congratulated her fellow finalists, saying, "Everyone's worked really hard and I think just to perform in the Opera House with the Sydney Symphony – I think we're all winners to have gotten that opportunity."

Sun also thanked the Semi-Finalists, Nicholas Milton and the SSO. "Mostly I'd have to thank MOST for taking over the Young Performers Awards, it was a real tragedy when it was discontinued last year," she said. "So thank you for continuing the support for young Australian musicians. I think Australia is very unique that we have such a great platform for young musicians."