

## Chinese students dominate piano concerto competition

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By **Chris Breach**

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A talented group of musicians assembled for the 33rd annual Young Artists Piano Concerto Competition Sat at Olivet Nazarene University's Kresge Auditorium.

Jingjing Wang, a Chinese graduate student at the Chicago College of Performing Arts, emerged as the winner at playing Ravel's "Concerto in G" brilliantly.

The competition was sponsored by the Kankakee Valley Symphony Orchestra Association and the Len H. Small Family. The three judges spent about 20 minutes in deliberation before naming Wang the winner of the C. B. Small Award and the \$2,000 prize.

"We had a very long meeting," said William Heiles, professor of music at the University of Illinois and chairman of the judge. "... It was not an easy choice.

Ken Bade, chairman of the event for the KVSOA, was impressed with the quality of the finalists.

"I think that's why they took so long to make a decision," Bade said.

Wang also praised the other performers.

"I was a little bit nervous when I was playing, but now I feel much better. I'm happy," he said. "I think it was difficult competition. There were some very good candidates and it was very competitive. I guess I was lucky."

Also competing were Andrew Marrs, of Indiana University; Rebecca Mayer, of Michigan State University; Weiwei of the Cleveland Institute of Music and Seng Min Ha, Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Oberlin, Ohio.

Ma, also a native of China, was chosen as the alternate and received a \$600 prize. She performed Rachmanninoff's "Concerto on a Theme of Paganini."

Wang will return to the area on April 4 to perform with the Kankakee Valley Orchestra.

Heiles said all of the pianists were exceptional, but Wang showed a higher level of "maturity" in his playing and was "well-polished."

Wang, who was born into a family of non-musicians in China, recently finished his master's degree in piano performance at the Chicago College of Performing Arts with a full scholarship. He lives in Chicago and is continuing course work at the school under full scholarship.

Wang said he practiced three to four hours a day with his accompanist in preparation for the competition.

Other judges were Edward Kaizer, professor of music and director of keyboard studies at Bradley University in Peoria; and Ludmila Lazar, teacher of piano at Roosevelt University in Chicago.

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**Photo: Melissa Gaug**  
Runner-up Weiwei Ma, plays Rachmaninoff's "Concerto on a Theme of Paganini."  
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**Photo: Melissa Gaug**  
Winner Jingjing Wang is congratulated by a judge.  
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