

**VARSITY ARTS**

# Who's the 2017 Artist of the Year in Instrumental Music? Meet Aileen Chung



2017 Artist of the Year for instrumental music: Aileen Chung, Crean Lutheran High School. (Photo by Leonard Ortiz, Orange County Register/SCNG)

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Tchaikovsky is Aileen Chung's all-time favorite composer. And her most-loved piece by the world's most popular Russian composer is his Violin Concerto in D Major, 1st Movement.

The 1878 composition is a technical challenge for anyone, let alone someone only 18. But Chung has plenty of passion and skill to call upon, combined with the humility to know there is always something yet to learn.

Every time she tackles the piece, the senior from Crean Lutheran High says she discovers something new.

When Chung played Tchaikovsky in her bid to be named the Register's 2017 Artist of the Year in instrumental music, she said it wasn't so much to impress anyone, but to let the music speak for itself.

But Chung did impress the judges – more than any of the other nominees, and they were all standouts.

She demonstrated “the highest level of concert artistry,” said Jeff Held, assistant dean at the College of Arts and Sciences at Concordia University.

Not to mention her tone quality. “You just don't hear high school players play with that kind of consistency,” Held said.

That's a product of Chung's training and her desire.

In addition to her studies at Crean, Chung has spent the past three years in the extracurricular pre-college program at Colburn Music Academy in Los Angeles. The experience at Colburn has included coaching in chamber music, private lessons and, Chung said, teachers who push her to do her best.

Her violin teacher encouraged her to focus on the music and let it impact the audience.

“It helped me realize that as an artist, we perform for audiences for their

enjoyment,” she said. “That is our goal as an advocate for the arts.”

Her mother, who studied piano, wanted her to learn the cello. But Chung insisted on violin. She admits to the many times she wanted to quit – all that practice with no enjoyment.

Chung was ready to leave the violin behind when she got an invitation in 2013 to attend the summer program of the Summit Music Festival in Pleasanton, New York. The other student artists inspired her.

“There were so many talented kids who told such a different story with every piece they played.”

Chung has served as an inspiration herself to the young, aspiring musicians she teaches through a community outreach program at Colburn and as associate concertmaster at Crean Lutheran.

“Her ability to sight-read and immediately grab hold of a piece of music is unmatched in her section and motivates those around her to push themselves towards mastery,” said Jonathan Pratt, the music teacher who nominated Chung for Artist of the Year.

For college, Chung applied to The Juilliard School, USC, New England Conservatory and Cleveland Institute of Music.

The Artist of the Year panel was certain she'll be ready for whatever comes, wherever she goes.

Said Held: “It's extremely mature when you can say you're not trying to impress anyone, and you're here to just let the music speak.”

## Honorable mentions

**Elaine Huang, 17, Beckman High School, *violin and piano***

Expressive not only with an instrument in hand, but in writing and talking about the difference between a mere musician and an artist. Huang applied to 23 colleges, with UC Berkeley, USC and UCLA her top three choices.

“She has great control,” said Bongshin Ko, assistant director of the school of music at Cal State Fullerton. “I loved her writing, too,” said Held, commenting on how she expressed herself in her application

**Hanae Yoshida, 17, Northwood High School, *tenor trombone and piano***

People might not be used to seeing a female trombonist. To Yoshida, it's not how she looks, but how she sounds. She knows there are very few women, let alone Asian women, in the brass section of most orchestras and she wants to become a role model for girls who want to play trombone.

She hopes to attend The Juilliard School in New York.

## THE TOP 10 SELECTION COMMITTEE:

**Chris Carbajal**, St. Margaret's Episcopal School; **Victor de los Santos**, Santa Ana High School; **Jeffery deSeriere**, Orange County School of the Arts; **Gregg Gilboe**, Huntington Beach High School; **Heide Janssen**, Orange County Register; **Jim Kollias**, Beckman High School; **Cathy Olinger**, Tesoro High School; **Jonathan Pratt**, Crean Lutheran High School; **Rob Shetland**, Buena Park High School; **Bruce Topping**, Valencia High School; **Troy Trimble**, Fullerton Union High School

## ARTIST OF THE YEAR SELECTION PANELISTS:

**Siri Bloom**, artistic operations coordinator, Philharmonic Society; **Chris Carbajal**, instrumental music teacher, St. Margaret's Episcopal School; **Jeff Held**, assistant dean, college of arts and sciences, director of arts activities, director of instrumental activities, Concordia University; **Heide Janssen**, varsity arts editor, Orange County Register; **Gary Matsuura**, lecturer of woodwind pedagogy, saxophone and university jazz ensembles, Chapman University; **Shawn Zarubica**, director of youth ensembles, Pacific Symphony

**SPECIAL THANKS** to Segerstrom Center for the Arts, which generously provided a rehearsal room for the Top 10 interviews.

**CONTACT VARSITY ARTS:** 714-796-2258 or varsityarts@ocregister.com

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