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Violinist, Nicholas Hammel awarded First Prize in ECSO Instrumental Competition finals

The 64th Annual ECSO Instrumental Competition was held Saturday, March 22, 2025, in Evans Hall on the Connecticut College campus in New London. The judges this year were ECSO Music Director & Conductor, Toshiyuki Shimada and ECSO Concertmaster Stephan Tieszan.

Violinist, **Nicholas Hammel**, 24, was this year's winner, performing Elgar Violin Concerto. He will be performing sometime in the 2025-2026 season with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra. Details will be announced soon.

Nick is currently pursuing his Master of Musical Arts in Violin Performance under Ani Kavafian at the Yale School of Music. He has earned degrees at other institutions such as the University of Texas at Austin and the New England Conservatory, studying with Sandy Yamamoto and Donald Weilerstein. He has soloed with orchestras such as the Richardson Symphony, Austin Civic Orchestra, and the University of Texas Symphony Orchestra. Most recently, Nick won first prize in the 2022 Ann & Charles Eismann Young Artists Competition.

Nick is also an active chamber music performer, and has performed with artists such as Sandy Yamamoto, Bion Tsang, Andrew Brownell, and Anton Nel. His piano trio, Trio Sponte, won the Grand Prize at the 2024 Coltman Chamber Music Competition. They were also the 2023-24 Honors Ensemble at New England Conservatory.

Wanxinyi Huang, (The Juilliard School) took second place and \$1,000 with a performance of Elgar's Cello Concerto arranged for viola. Wanxinyi Huang is a violist, born in China, currently based at the Yale School of Music, where she is pursuing her Master of Musical Arts (M.M.A.) degree under the guidance of Professor Ettore Causa. She completed her Master of Music (M.M.) degree at Yale in 2024.

Gaeun Kim, (The Juilliard School) took third place and \$500 with a performance of Martinu's Cello Concerto No. 1. A Juilliard graduate studying under Richard Aaron, Joel Krosnick, and Darrett Adkins, Gaeun actively promotes contemporary music, premiering works by composers such as Fazil Say, Katie Jenkins, and Seounyun Kim. Her dedication to broadening the cello repertoire and bringing new perspectives to classical and modern pieces has been praised by her peers and critics alike.

Generously sponsored by the Zuckerbraun Family Fund, this competition was established to recognize the outstanding talents of emerging young musicians through the age of 25. Ten finalists from the top music conservatories competed for prizes and the possibility of soloing with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra during the 2025-2026 concert season.

ECSO general copy:

We are thrilled to announce our 2024-25 Season lineup, curated by Music Director and Conductor Toshiyuki Shimada. Season Highlights include Saint-Saëns' *Symphony No. 3 (Organ)*, Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 4*, Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 3* featuring our Instrumental Competition winner, Puccini & Verdi selections with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Chorus and international guest artists. From early fall to late spring, the 75-plus member professional Symphony Orchestra presents six subscription concerts annually, most of which feature guest soloists. Subscription concerts are primarily performed at the historic award-winning Garde Arts Center on State Street in New London.

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Founded in 1946 by Norwegian immigrant, Victor Norman, the ECSO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization serving the eastern Connecticut region, including New London, Norwich, Waterford, Groton, Mystic, Old Lyme, and East Lyme. Recent concerts in Norwich, Willimantic, and Stonington reflect our renewed dedication to serving a broader area.

Our mission is to inspire, educate, and connect our communities through live orchestral music.