

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra Announces 2026 Instrumental Competition Winner

Violinist Isabela Diaz Takes First Place; Will Perform as Featured Soloist in 2026-2027 Season

NEW LONDON, CT – The Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra is pleased to announce the results of its 2026 Annual Instrumental Competition, held on March 7, 2026 at Evans Hall, Connecticut College. After a day of outstanding performances by talented young musicians ages 25 and under, violinist **Isabela Diaz** was awarded first place for her exceptional performance of Khachaturian's Violin Concerto in D minor.

As the competition winner, Diaz will receive a cash prize and the opportunity to perform as a featured soloist with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra during the 2026-2027 season.

Isabela Diaz:

Isabela Diaz is a 20-year-old violinist based in New York City and Miami who has been studying the violin since the age of six. In recent years, she has studied with Jose Guibert and Huifang Chen, and she is currently pursuing her Bachelor of Music in Violin Performance at the Juilliard School under the guidance of Ronald Copes and Stella Chen. Isabela has performed with distinguished ensembles including the Juilliard Orchestra. These experiences have given her the opportunity to perform under the baton of renowned conductors such as Yannick Nézet Séguin, Michael Tilson Thomas, David Robertson, Louis Langrée, Stéphane Denève and James Judd, amongst others. She has earned recognition in several competitions, including the Sphinx Competition, Ocala Symphony Orchestra Young Artist Competition, MMTA Concerto Competition, the Charleston International Concerto Competition, and the FSMTA State Violin Competition. As a soloist, Isabela has performed with the Alhambra Orchestra, the NWSA Symphony Orchestra, the Ocala Symphony Orchestra, and the Stamps Quartet, and has also appeared internationally in Spain, Portugal, and France. She has also had the privilege of working with distinguished violinists including Itzhak Perlman, Hilary Hahn, Ida Kavafian, Ana Chumachenco, Kerson Leong, Régis Pasquier and Roland Daugareil, further shaping her artistic development and musical voice.

Second place was awarded to Violinist **Willa Brasch**, a sophomore at the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University. A student of Carolyn Huebl, Brasch has received honors in the Connecticut and Tennessee MTNA, American Chamber Orchestra, Musical Club of Hartford, and the Deborah Kahane Competitions. She performed Korngold's Violin Concerto as a soloist with the American Chamber Orchestra in 2023.

Third place was awarded to Oboist **Kyle Cho**, a first-year undergraduate oboe student at The Juilliard School, where he studies with Elaine Douvas. Cho is a recipient of the prestigious Kovner Fellowship, a full-tuition scholarship at Juilliard.

The ECSO Annual Instrumental Competition provides young musicians with the opportunity to perform before a panel of distinguished judges and compete for cash prizes and performance opportunities. The competition is open to instrumentalists age 25 and under and has helped launch the careers of numerous talented musicians over the years.

The Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra congratulates all competitors on their exceptional performances and thanks the judges, audience members, and Connecticut College for making this event possible.

About the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra

The Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra's mission is to inspire, educate, and connect communities through live orchestral music. Under Toshiyuki Shimada's distinguished leadership, the ECSO has become a cornerstone of the region's cultural landscape, presenting world-class performances that bring together exceptional musicians and devoted audiences.

Contact

For season tickets and complete program information, visit ectsymphony.com or call **(860) 443-2876**.

For single tickets go to gardearts.org.

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