



## Final results: Hubert van der Spuy National Music Competition 2025

### Eight finalists:

Sinran Emilie Yang, 9 years, Piano: Johannesburg, Gauteng  
 Henning Bouwer, 12 years, Flute: Johannesburg, Gauteng  
 Victor Le Du, 13 years, Piano: Makhanda, Eastern Cape  
 Izak Kriel, 13 years, Clarinet: Bellville, Western Cape.  
 Selina Yang, 11 years, Violin: Pretoria, Gauteng  
 Linjie Zeng, 12 years, Piano: Bellville, Western Cape  
 Haotian Mike Yang, 13 years, Piano: Rondebosch, Western Cape  
 Agnes Huang, 12 years, Piano: Johannesburg, Gauteng

### Top 3 results:

3<sup>rd</sup> prize winner: Henning Bouwer  
 2<sup>nd</sup> prize winner: Victor Le Du  
 Winner: Agnes Huang

### Photos:



Our 8 finalists with adjudicators and Prof Hubert van der Spuy

From left to right:

Back: Junnan Sun (adjudicator), Professor Hubert van der Spuy, Henning Bouwer, Victor Le Du, Linjie Zeng, Izak Kriel, Haotian (Mike) Yang

Front: Dr Esthea Kruger (adjudicator), Denise Sutton (adjudicator), Agnes Huang, Selina Yang, Sinran Emilie Yang



Our Top 3 with Prof Hubert van der Spuy, Dr Marlene le Roux and adjudicators  
From left to right:

Denise Sutton, Junnan Sun, Dr Marlene le Roux, Henning Bouwer (3<sup>rd</sup> place), Agnes Huang (winner), Victor Le Du (2<sup>nd</sup> place), Dr Esthea Kruger, Prof Hubert van der Spuy



Top 3 with Professor Hubert van der Spuy

From left to right:

Prof Hubert van der Spuy, Victor Le Du (2<sup>nd</sup> place), Agnes Huang (winner), Henning Bouwer (3<sup>rd</sup> place)



Top 3

From left to right:

Victor Le Du (2<sup>nd</sup> place), Agnes Huang (winner), Henning Bouwer (3<sup>rd</sup> place)



Agnes Huang (winner) with founder, Prof Hubert van der Spuy, and patron, Dr Marlene le Roux

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**4 October 2025**

**Finalists prove the future of music is in good hands, 12-year-old winner takes home almost  
R40 000**

The charismatic Professor Hubert van der Spuy has always prioritised and cherished the optimal development of young musicians. As a widely respected music educator he established the Hubert van der

Spuy National Music Competition in 1989 as chairperson of the newly formed SASMT Tygerberg branch. The Tygerberg branch has, over more than three decades, grown the competition into the most prestigious of its kind in South Africa and Namibia, offering a unique opportunity for children aged 13 years and younger to compete against their peers from all across the nation.

This year's competition took place from 30 September to 4 October at the world-class Endler Hall at the Stellenbosch University, the second year of a new collaboration with the University's Music Department. It brought together 43 successful applicants from KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape and Gauteng for more than just a contest for top honours and their share in the total of cash prizes exceeding R100 000. In the words of the competition patron, Doctor Marlene le Roux: *"The Hubert van der Spuy National Music Competition is a celebration of potential, discipline, and artistry. It offers a unique and much-needed platform for young South African musicians to share their gifts, dream boldly, and pursue excellence. Their dedication and passion are both inspiring and affirming, and the competition continues to uphold the highest standards in nurturing future professionals."*

Competition week kicked off on a high note with an excellent guest solo performance by the 2024 winner, Samuel Nel from Namibia. He was joined by the University of Stellenbosch Symphony Orchestra under the leadership of Reghardt Kühn, with the highlight being the first movement (Allegro con brio) from Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 1 in C, Op 15. The talent, maturity and technical expertise demonstrated by this young musician once again clearly proved why this competition has become such an annual highlight for students, teachers, parents and music lovers alike.

Adjudicating at the 36<sup>th</sup> edition of the competition were **Dr Esthea Kruger**, **Denise Sutton** and **Junnan Sun**.

*Dr Esthea Kruger is a piano lecturer at the South African College of Music since 2019. She obtained her BMus and MMus (Piano Performance) degrees at Stellenbosch University under the guidance of Prof. Nina Schumann and Prof. Luis Magalhães; her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Piano Performance at the University of North Texas under the tutelage of Prof. Vladimir Viardo, and her Meisterklassendiplom at the Hochschule für Musik Würzburg in the class of Prof. Bernd Glemser. Additionally, she specialised in Art Song Accompaniment, obtaining a second master's degree in 2019 in Liedgestaltung from the Hochschule für Musik Würzburg as student of Prof. Gerold Huber.*

*Esthea has won prizes at many major competitions in South Africa, and apart from her solo performances, she regularly appears in concert as accompanist and chamber musician, in South Africa and abroad.*

**Denise Sutton** attended Stellenbosch University where she graduated with a BMus (cum laude). An Ernest Oppenheimer scholarship enabled her to study in Amsterdam with Theo Olof and in London with Peter Carter. She joined the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and was appointed Principal 2nd violin and also freelanced with the English Chamber Orchestra. Returning to South Africa, she was appointed Concertmaster of the then PACT orchestra, resident at the State Theatre. She was a member of the Rosamunde string quartet and was leader of the Transvaal Chamber Orchestra and the Johannesburg Festival Orchestra. She also taught at the University of Pretoria. She was a founding member and Concertmaster of the Chamber Orchestra of South Africa.

Denise has extensive experience of examining. She has examined for many universities, served on the panel of the UNISA National String Competition, the International Violin Competition in GORIZIA, Italy, and the Artscape competition, as well as numerous Eisteddfods.

Concert clarinettist and educator **Junnan Sun** is the clarinet teacher at Dulwich Pudong International School, and guest principal clarinet at The Wuxi Symphony Orchestra Shanghai. He moved to South Africa in 2003 and obtained his BMus at the University of Pretoria under the tutelage of Lizet Smith in 2011. He continued his studies at the Royal College of Music (RCM) in London where he obtained a Master of Performance (specialising in Orchestral Studies) with distinction. Before returning to China in 2019 he held the clarinet lecturer post at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg (2019) and the principal clarinet post at the KwaZulu-Natal Philharmonic Orchestra in Durban (2014 - 2018).

Junnan has been the recipient of numerous awards in China and named the over-all winner of five South African music competitions. As an orchestral musician he has worked with foremost conductors such as Charles Dutoit, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Sir Roger Norrington, Yu Long, Wolfram Christ and Christoph Eschenbach amongst others. In 2018, Junnan was invited by Justus Frantz to tour China and Germany with The World Peace Philharmonic Orchestra as their principal clarinettist. He has performed in famous concert venues worldwide.

After three rigorous rounds of judging, eight finalists were selected to go through to the final round on Saturday afternoon. In the group of five boys and three girls were five pianists (Sinran Emilie Yang, Haotian (Mike) Yang, Linjie Zeng, Victor Le Du, and Agnes Huang), a violinist (Selina Yang), a clarinettist (Izak Kriel) and a flautist (Henning Bouwer).

One tends to forget that these finalists are all 13 and younger, often with the insecurities and shyness so characteristic of that age. However, during the final concert all eight of them brought their individual magic to the stage, showing talent, technique and showmanship far beyond their tender ages.

After almost two hours of captivating the appreciative audience, it was time to announce the winners, with the 12-year-old **Agnes Huang** from Johannesburg taking top honours for 2025. Agnes started playing the piano as a 7-year-old in Grade 1. She attends the Michael Mount Waldorf School in Bryanston and is taught by Pauline Nossel. She also took part in the competition in 2024, when she ended third overall.

Apart from the Johanna van der Spuy Memorial Prize of R20 000, sponsored by Prof. van der Spuy personally, she also received a gold medal and an invitation to perform as soloist with the University of Stellenbosch Symphony Orchestra at the opening ceremony in 2026. Agnes is returning home with a whopping R39 700 in prize money, including R3 000 for the best performance of a Baroque work in the first round; R3 000 for the best performance of a Classical work in the second round; and R3 000 for the best performance of a Romantic work in the third round. She also won the piano category prize of R4 000 and an additional R4 000 for the best performance of a South African composition.

The silver medal and a prize of R15 000 went to another pianist, the 13-year-old **Victor Le Du** from Makanda (Grahamstown). Victor was also a finalist in 2024 and he started piano lessons in 2019. He attends Kingswood College and is a student of Professor Catherine Foxcroft. Victor also plays the clarinet as a second instrument and enjoys being a member of the Kingswood College Concert Band. His total prize money is R21 700, including an additional category prize of R4 000 for piano.

It was 13-year-old flautist **Henning Bower** from Johannesburg's third year as a finalist, and this time he walked off with the bronze medal and R10 000, as well as the category prize of R4 000 for Woodwinds, for a total amount of R16 700 in prize money. Henning is a proud student of Jan Cilliers Primary. He picked up the flute for the first time four years ago and since then it has always been close to his side. Henning also plays the violin and piano and has provincial colours in biathlon.

The youngest finalist, 9-year-old **Sinran Emilie Yang** from Johannesburg, was Pauline Nossel's second student in the final. Like four of the other finalists, she was also there in 2024. Her total prize money of R10 700 includes R2 000 for the best performance of a Classical work in the second round for participants 10 years and younger, as well as R6 000 for the best candidate of 10 years and younger.

The 11-year-old violinist **Selina Yang** from Centurion in Gauteng won the Strings category prize of R4 000, for total prize money of R6 700. She also plays cello and piano and says she's had an interest and passion for music as long as she can remember. And just to prove that child prodigies can have fun too – she has two older brothers, and they always finish their trio rehearsal with a sword fight using their bows!

In addition to his prize money as third and final round participant, **Izak Kriel** on the clarinet won the R1 500 prize for the candidate whose teacher (Charlene Verster) is a member of Tygerberg branch of the SASMT.

Other participants who also received cash prizes are **Sophie Wang** for the best performance of a Baroque work in the first round for participants 10 years and younger, and **Vidya Bhoola** with an honorary mention for qualifying and participating in four competitions.

During her short address at the end of the evening, Hilda Boonzaaier, the Chairperson of the South African Society of Music Teachers Tygerberg, referred to a well-known quote of the great Nelson Mandela. It says: "*Music is a great blessing. It has the power to elevate and liberate us. It sets people free to dream. It can unite us to sing with one voice. Such is the value of music*". And indeed, the Hubert van der Spuy National Music Competition is all of that and more!

The comprehensive prize list is attached. Please confirm additional photo requests or enquiries.

Kind Regards  
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X: Hubert van der Spuy Music Competition  
YouTube: <https://m.youtube.com/c/HubertvanderSpuyNationalMusicCompetition>

RESULTS HUBERT VAN DER SPUY MUSIC COMPETITION 2025	AMOUNT	NAME
<u>DR MARLENE LE ROUX</u>		
1. All participants in the third round 2. All participants in the final round	R1 200 R1 500	Sinran Emilie Yang Izak Kriel Haotian Mike Yang Selina Yang Linjie Zeng Henning Bouwer Victor Le Du Agnes Huang
Honorary mention is awarded to candidates in their <u>last</u> year of participation who qualified and participated in the competition for 4 years and more		
3. Honorary mention: This candidate qualified and participated in 4 competitions	R1 000	Vidya Bhoola

<u>PROF MARIO NELL</u>		
4. Best performance of a Baroque work in the 1 <sup>st</sup> round	R3 000	Agnes Huang <i>for</i> the Sonate K 98 by Scarlatti
5. Best performance of a Baroque work in the 1 <sup>st</sup> round <u>10 years and younger</u>	R2 000	Sophie Wang <i>for</i> Courante from French Suite 2 in c min by JS Bach
6. Best performance of a Classical work in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> round	R3 000	Agnes Huang <i>for</i> Rondo in D K 485 by WA Mozart
7. Best performance of a Classical work in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> round <u>10 years and younger</u>	R2 000	Sinran Emilie Yang <i>for</i> the Allegro from Sonate in F Hob XVI:23 by J Haydn
8. Best performance of a Romantic work in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> round	R3 000	Agnes Huang <i>for</i> the Novelette Op 21 no 1 by R Schumann
9. Tygerberg prize for the candidate who's teacher is a member of this branch of the SASMT	R1 500	Izak Kriel
10. Tygerberg prize for a member of this branch who's candidate did the	R1 500	Ms Charlene Verster

best		
<u>PROF HUBERT VAN DER SPUY</u>		
11. Category prize: Piano	R4 000	Agnes Huang
12. Category prize: Strings	R4 000	Selina Yang
13. Category prize: Woodwinds	R4 000	Henning Bouwer
14. Additional Category prize: Piano	R4 000	Victor Le Du
15. Best candidate of 10 years and younger	R6 000	Sinran Emilie Yang
16. Best performance of a SA Composition	R4 000	Agnes Huang for 5678 by J Zaidel- Rudolph
17. Third prize and a bronze medal	R10 000	Henning Bouwer
18. Teacher	R2 000	Sanri Naudé
19. Second prize and a silver medal	R15 000	Victor Le Du
20. Teacher	R3 000	Catherine Foxcroft
21. First prize: The Johanna van der Spuy Memorial Prize and a gold medal + an invitation to perform as soloist with the University of	R20 000 Sponsored by Prof. Hubert van der Spuy	Agnes Huang

Stellenbosch Symphony Orchestra at the opening ceremony in 2026.		
22. Teacher	R4 000	Pauline Nossel