



Final results: Hubert van der Spuy National Music Competition 2026

Eight finalists:

Adriaan Spies, 12 years, Piano: Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal
 Benjamin Monvoisin, 12 years, Clarinet: Bellville, Piano
 Emmanuel Spies, 10 years, Piano: Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal
 Hanna Marais, 10 years, Piano: Pretoria, Gauteng
 Juliette Nel, 13 years, Cello: Walvis Bay, Namibia
 Sinran Emilie Yang, 10 years, Piano: Johannesburg, Gauteng
 Henning Bouwer, 13 years, Flute: Johannesburg, Gauteng
 Derren Hsu, 7 years, Piano: Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal

Top three results:

Third prize winner: Benjamin Monvoisin
 Second prize winner: Henning Bouwer
 Winner: Sinran Emilie Yang

Photos:



Our eight finalists with adjudicators, Prof Hubert van der Spuy (founder), Hilda Boonzaaier (chairperson) and Dr Marlene Roux (patron)
 From left to right:

Back: Dr Waldo Weyer (adjudicator), Jean-Louise Moolman (adjudicator), Hilda Boonzaaier (chairperson), Professor Hubert van der Spuy (founder), Henning Bouwer
 Front: Derren Hsu, Sinran Emilie Yang, Juliette Nel, Benjamin Monvoisin, Emmauel Spies, Adriaan Spies, Hanna Marais, Dr Marlene le Roux (patron), Pamela Kierman



Our Top Three with Prof Hubert van der Spuy, Dr Marlene le Roux, Hilda Boonzaaier (chairperson), adjudicators

From left to right:

Back: Dr Waldo Weyer (adjudicator), Dr Marlene le Roux (patron), Henning Bouwer, Jean-Louise Moolman (adjudicator), Hilda Boonzaaier, Professor Hubert van der Spuy (founder), Pamela Kierman (adjudicator)
 Front: Sinran Emilie Yang, Benajmin Monvoisin



Top three with Professor Hubert van der Spuy

From left to right:

Henning Bouwer (2nd place), Sinran Emilie Yang (winner), Prof Hubert van der Spuy (founder), Benjamin Monvoisin (3rd place)



Top three with Professor Hubert van der Spuy and Dr Marlene le Roux

From left to right:

Henning Bouwer (2nd place), Sinran Emilie Yang (winner), Prof Hubert van der Spuy (founder), Benjamin Monvoisin (3rd place), Dr Marlene le Roux (patron)



Winner with adjudicators, Prof Hubert van der Spuy, Hilda Boonzaaier (chairperson) and Dr Marlene le Roux

From left to right:

Back: Dr Waldo Weyer (adjudicator), Jean-Louise Moolman (adjudicator), Hilda Boonzaaier, Prof Hubert van der Spuy (founder)

Front: Sinran Emilie Yang (winner), Dr Marlene le Roux (patron), Pamela Kierman (adjudicator)

PRESS RELEASE

26 September 2026

Sinran Emilie Yang wins 37th Hubert van der Spuy National Music Competition

For immediate release

A year ago, Agnes Huang went home as the overall winner of the 2025 Hubert van der Spuy National Music Competition. The event she since described as a key milestone in her own musical journey, last week once again became a wonderful platform for the youth when young musicians from across the country came together in Stellenbosch for the 37th edition of the Hubert van der Spuy National Music Competition.

The opening ceremony saw Agnes returning to the Endler Hall stage to perform Felix Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op. 40, with the University of Stellenbosch Symphony Orchestra (USSO), conducted by Reghardt Kühn. She described the competition as a significant achievement that had given her valuable stage experience and increased confidence.

At the opening ceremony, Agnes's music teacher Pauline Nossel received an honorary tribute for her contribution to music education. Ms Nossel's contribution as a teacher was further recognised with the announcement of the 2026 winner, Sinran Emilie Yang, who is also one of her students.

The five-day competition reached its climax on Saturday when Sinran Emilie Yang was awarded the Johanna van der Spuy Memorial First Prize. Thirteen-year-old flautist Henning Bouwer was awarded the Betsie Clüver Memorial Second Prize, while 12-year-old clarinettist Benjamin Monvoisin received the Joseph Stanford Memorial Third Prize. The three were among eight young musicians selected as finalists from the 47 participants aged 13 and younger who took part in the competition between 22 and 26 September.

Emilie's first prize includes R20 000, a gold medal and an invitation to perform as soloist with the University of Stellenbosch Symphony Orchestra at the opening ceremony of the 2027 competition.

A competition built around young musicians

Presented by the Tygerberg Branch of the South African Society of Music Teachers (SASMT), the first Hubert van der Spuy National Music Competition was held in 1989. It was initiated by Professor Hubert van der Spuy, then head of the Music Department at the University of the Western Cape and chairman of the Tygerberg Branch of the SASMT, as an instrumental competition for primary school learners.

The competition was initially sponsored by Sanlam and was known as the Sanlam National Music Competition until 2010. The South African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO) joined as a sponsor in 2011 and contributed to the competition until 2019. The competition was subsequently named in honour of its founder, with van der Spuy also donating money towards a prize bearing the name of his late mother, Johanna van der Spuy.

Professor van der Spuy studied at the Universities of Stellenbosch and Port Elizabeth and at the Akademie für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Vienna. He obtained a PhD and DMus at Stellenbosch University, as well as licentiates and diplomas in piano, harpsichord and organ. His career has included teaching,

conducting, performing, impresario work, publishing, adjudication and music examination. He taught at Denneoord, the University of Durban-Westville and the University of the Western Cape before joining Unisa in 1991, where he served until 2007 and examined 10 500 grade examination candidates and 780 licentiate candidates.

Van der Spuy has also served as an organist and conductor and was the literary custodian of the estate of composer Priaux Rainier. A former National President of the SASMT for four terms and an Honorary Member of the Society since 2003, he has been Patron of the Atterbury National Piano Competition since 2018 and remains active as an adjudicator. His honours include the Huberte Rupert Prize, an Honorary Licentiate in Music, a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 13th kykNET Fiëstas in 2023 and an Honorary Doctorate from North-West University in the same year.

A week of music, mentoring and experience

Hilda Boonzaaier, chairperson of the SASMT Tygerberg Branch, welcomed participants to the 37th competition and described the branch's partnership with the competition as one that encourages and nurtures some of South Africa's finest young talent. She paid tribute to teachers and parents for their tireless input, skill and encouragement, noting that "monumental results and successes start with baby steps".

Dr Marlene le Roux, patron of the competition, in her programme notes highlighted the broader value of taking part. She noted that participation develops young musicians' confidence and mastery while giving them an opportunity to learn resilience, good time management and humility. She also acknowledged the mentoring and encouragement provided by parents, guardians and music teachers, who help young musicians strive for excellence, technical mastery, authentic emotional communication and continuous artistic growth.

In her closing remarks at the prize-giving, Hilda thanked Professor Hubert van der Spuy, Dr Marlene le Roux, the adjudicators, Stellenbosch University and its Department of Music, sponsors and contributors, as well as participants, teachers, accompanists and parents. She described the adjudicators as "a vibrant and lively team" and thanked them for their input and hard work during the week.

The 2026 adjudicators

Pamela Kierman holds a BMus from the University of Port Elizabeth and an MMus from Stellenbosch University. A French horn player, she performed with the Prince Alfred's Guard Band and the former CAPAB orchestra, and has taught brass at schools, university and community music programmes. She joined the Department of Music at Stellenbosch University in 2004, where she convenes the Wind Division, Chamber Music and Orchestral Practice, lectures in brass and conducts the University of Stellenbosch Symphonic Wind and Brass Ensembles. She is also active in community music, performance, adjudication and workshops, and her research interests include South African wind bands and community music.

Jeanne-Louise Moolman is a violist with the Odeion String Quartet at the University of the Free State. She studied at the University of Pretoria, completed a Master's degree with distinction at UFS and subsequently studied in Salzburg with Thomas Riebl. Her performing career includes the 2020 world premiere of Stefans Grové's final work, Concerto for Viola and Orchestra, with the Free State Symphony Orchestra, as well as appearances at International Viola Congresses in South Africa, the United States, Brazil and France. She regularly performs works by South African composers, commissions new viola repertoire and explores African and South African musical traditions.

Dr Waldo Weyer began piano studies at the age of eight and went on to study piano performance at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he obtained a BMus and the LRAM with honours. After returning to South Africa, he obtained the Unisa Performance Licentiate with distinction and completed an MMus cum laude in piano performance. He later earned a DMus in Music Performance from North-West University. An experienced chamber musician, accompanist, teacher and adjudicator, he is an Associate Professor in Piano and Piano Pedagogy and serves on the Unisa board of examiners. In September 2026 he began working at Akademia in Pretoria to establish new music programmes.

Eight finalists, eight musical journeys

Sinran Emilie Yang

Ten-year-old pianist Sinran Emilie Yang has participated in the Hubert van der Spuy competition before and also plays the violin, flute and clarinet. Her final-round programme included Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Piano Sonata in B-flat major, K.333, Allegro; Frédéric Chopin's Étude in G-flat major, Op. 10 No. 5; and Sergei Rachmaninoff's Prelude in G-sharp minor, Op. 32 No. 12. Emilie received the Johanna van der Spuy Memorial First Prize of R20 000 and a gold medal; the Petronel Malan Piano Prize of R4 000, together with a free Unisa grade examination in 2027; the John Roos Prize of R6 000 for the best candidate aged 10 and younger; the Robert & Geesje Simpson-Anderson Prize of R2 000 for the best performance of a Baroque work in the first round by a candidate aged 10 and younger, for her performance of Domenico Scarlatti's Sonata in A major, K.260; the R2 000 prize for the best performance of a Classical work in the second round by a candidate aged 10 and younger, for the Allegro from Mozart's Piano Sonata in B-flat major, K.333; and the R3 000 prize for the best performance of a Romantic work in the third round, for Chopin's Étude in G-flat major, Op. 10 No. 5. She also received an honorary mention for qualifying for and participating in four competitions, as well as the awards for participation in the third round and final. Pauline Nossel and Malcolm Nay received the R4 000 prize as teachers of the winner.

Henning Bouwer

Thirteen-year-old flautist Henning Bouwer first fell in love with the flute during the Covid-19 pandemic at the age of eight, under the guidance of Sanri Naudé. He enjoys athletics, swimming, rugby and hockey, represented Central Gauteng in biathlon earlier this year and hopes to pursue a career in medicine while continuing with the flute. His final programme included Georg Philipp Telemann's Suite in A, Lento; Jules Mouquet's La Flûte de Pan in F, Op. 15, Allegro; and François Prinsloo's Nampti's Dance in F. Henning received the Betsie Clüver Memorial Second Prize of R15 000 and a silver medal; the Leon Hartshorne Woodwinds Prize of R4 000, together with a free Unisa grade examination in 2027; the R3 000 prize for the best performance of a Baroque work in the first round, for Telemann's Suite in A, Lento; the Pauline Nossel Prize of R3 000 for the best performance of a Classical work in the second round, for the Allegro from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Concerto in D; the R4 000 prize for the best performance of a South African composition, for François Prinsloo's Nampti's Dance in F; and the R1 000 Janet Becker Audience Prize. He also received an honorary mention for qualifying for and participating in four competitions, as well as the awards for participation in the third round and final. His teacher, Sanri Naudé, received the R3 000 prize as teacher of the runner-up.

Benjamin Monvoisin

Twelve-year-old Benjamin Monvoisin has played the clarinet since the age of four and is a student at the Hugo Lambrechts Music Centre. He recently performed with the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra. Away from music, he enjoys mountain biking, squash, reading and trail running with his golden retriever, Leo. His final programme included Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Church Sonata No. 17 in C major, K.336, Allegro; Subei Diao by W. Chang; and Carl Maria von Weber's Concertino in E-flat major, Op. 26, Adagio. Benjamin

received the Joseph Stanford Memorial Third Prize of R10 000 and a bronze medal. He also received an honorary mention for qualifying for and participating in four competitions, as well as the awards for participation in the third round and final. Liam Burden received the R2 000 prize as teacher of the finalist placed third.

Juliette Nel

Thirteen-year-old Juliette Nel is an avid reader and one of six siblings. She is a devoted cellist who also enjoys snorkelling and stand-up paddleboarding with her dog, Tiger. She comes from Walvis Bay, where there are no cello teachers, so her musical journey has included learning with an online teacher. Her final programme featured Hendrik Hofmeyr's Amar(tan)go!; Gabriel Fauré's Élégie; and David Popper's Tarantella. Juliette received the Anzél Gerber Strings Prize of R4 000, together with a free Unisa grade examination in 2027, as well as the awards for participation in the third round and final.

Hanna Marais

Ten-year-old Hanna Marais is a homeschooled learner who enjoys reading and swimming. Her final programme included Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's 12 Variations on 'Ah, vous dirai-je, maman' in C major, K.265; Frédéric Chopin's Polonaise No. 1 in C-sharp minor, Op. 26; and Aaron Copland's The Cat and the Mouse. Hanna received an honorary mention for qualifying for and participating in five competitions, as well as the awards for participation in the third round and final.

Derren Hsu

Seven-year-old Derren Hsu plays both piano and cello and enjoys soccer, golf and video games. His final piano programme featured Variations on a Theme of Paganini by I. Berkovich; Johann Sebastian Bach's Prelude in c BWV 999; and the Etude Allegro by Y. Nakada. Derren received the Nancy Hofmeyr Prize of R3 000 for the best candidate aged seven and younger, as well as the awards for participation in the third round and final.

Emmanuel Spies

Ten-year-old Emmanuel Spies is a Grade 4 learner at Manor Gardens Primary School in Durban. He enjoys cricket, hockey, athletics and swimming, plays the trumpet and likes surfing in Durban. His final programme included George Frideric Handel's Fantasia in A major; Jules Massenet's Mélodie in E major, Op. 10 No. 5; and Hendrik Roosenschoon's Cricket. He received the awards for participation in the third round and final.

Adriaan Spies

Twelve-year-old Adriaan Spies is a Grade 6 learner at Manor Gardens Primary School in Durban. He started playing the piano at four and also plays the saxophone. He enjoys cricket, swimming, hockey, being outdoors and camping with his family in the Drakensberg. His final programme included Ludwig van Beethoven's Sonata in G major, Op. 49 No. 2, Allegro; Astor Piazzolla's Milonga del Ángel; and François Prinsloo's African Rumba. He received the awards for participation in the third round and final.

Prizes recognise performance and progress

In addition to the major prizes, the competition awarded prizes recognising specific repertoire, age groups, instrumental categories and achievement throughout the competition. Category winners received R4 000 each, with prizes for piano, strings, woodwinds, and brass and other instruments. The category winners also received free Unisa grade examinations in 2027.

The Tygerberg Prize of R1 500 was awarded to Johandre Conradie as the candidate whose teacher is a member of the SASMT Tygerberg Branch, while Throy Petersen received the R1 500 prize for the branch member whose candidate performed best. Danille de Jager received the Ena Botha Prize of R4 000 for brass and other instruments, together with a free Unisa grade examination in 2027.

All 22 participants in the third round received R1 200, while all eight finalists received a further R1 500, sponsored by Suzuki Tygervally. Participants also received R500 gift vouchers from Allmusic.

Sponsors and contributors

The Hubert van der Spuy National Music Competition is made possible through the generous support of its sponsors and contributors. Hilda Boonzaaier thanked them in her welcome and closing remarks, noting that without their support the competition would not be possible.

Suzuki Tygervally generously sponsored the awards for participants in the third round and final, while Allmusic provided gift vouchers. Prize sponsors and contributors include Janet Becker, Dr Paul Clüver, Dr Anzél Gerber, Janette Hartshorne, Allan Heynen, Prof Alexander Johnson, Dr Petronel Malan, Pauline Nossel, the John Roos Trust and Robert & Geesje Simpson-Anderson. The competition is presented by SASMT Tygerberg in collaboration with the Stellenbosch University Department of Music.

Conclusion

After almost four decades, the Hubert van der Spuy National Music Competition is firmly embedded in South Africa's classical music landscape. But its legacy is about more than prizes, medals and trophies. It is about giving young musicians a stage, the courage to step onto it, and the experience to carry their music beyond it.

In the words of Vaughan Fleischfresser: "Fill a school with music and it becomes better. Fill an education with music and it becomes better. Fill a life with music and it becomes better. Fill a community with music and it becomes better."

And for 37 years, the Hubert van der Spuy competition has been doing exactly that — one young musician, one teacher and one musical journey at a time.

ENDS

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

Kind Regards

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