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EC SO - INSTRUMENTAL COMPETITION

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Yi Qun Xu, First Prize, 58th Annual EC SO Instrumental Competition

The 58th Annual EC SO Instrumental Competition was held this past Saturday, March 11, 2017 in Evans Hall on the Connecticut College campus in New London. Generously sponsored by the Kitchings Family Foundation and the Zuckerbraun Family Fund and open to the public, this competition was established to recognize the outstanding talents of emerging young musicians through the age of 25. Eleven finalists from the top music conservatories across the country competed for a first prize of \$3,000 and the possibility of soloing with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra during the 2016-2017 concert season.

Cellist, **Yi Qun Xu**, 23, was this year's winner, performing Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme, op. 33*. A native of China, Yi Qun, has performed extensively as a soloist and chamber musician across the United States. She studies with Timothy Eddy at the Juilliard School where she is the proud recipient of a Kovner Fellowship. Yi Qun came to the US after studying with Yi-Bing Chu at China's Central Conservatory of Music where she has won multiple top prizes in Chinese national cello competitions. Additionally, she has received many honors including second place at the Juilliard Concerto Competition, the first prize in the 7th Antonio Janigro International Cello Competition in Croatia, the ASTA National Solo Competition, and the Wellesley Concerto Competition. As a passionate chamber musician, to date, she has collaborated and performed with many artists including her mentors Itzhak Perlman, Ani Kavafian, Ida Kavafian, Ralph Kirshbaum, among others. She will perform with the EC SO on February 24, 2018. In a statement about the competition, Yi Qun commented, "I came to know about this competition through a friend of mine [Jung-Hsuan Ko, 2015 First Place Winner], who collaborated with the EC SO a few years ago. It was a pleasure to be invited to the final round of EC SO Instrumental Competition and there were so many great artists at the final round. I felt very lucky to have the opportunity to get to know the judges and musicians--many of them I have been admiring for years and finally got to meet them. The competition was very well organized and the warmth of staff and volunteers made the competition process much easier. What EC SO offers is such a precious opportunity, especially to musicians who are at early stage of their career. I feel extremely honored and excited about collaborating with Maestro Shimada and EC SO!"

Bixby Kennedy, an alumnus of Yale University, took second place and \$1,500 with Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto in A Major*. Bixby has performed concertos with the Houston Symphony, Bloomington Sinfonietta, and Indiana University Symphony Orchestra. He will perform a concerto with the Minnesota Orchestra in the 2018-2019 season. **Rachel Ostler**, a Master of Musical Arts candidate at Yale, studying with Ani Kavafian, took the third place prize of \$750 with Korngold's *Violin Concerto in D Major*.