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NEWS - CLASSICAL MUSIC

Young Virtuoso Award NSW State Finals winner announced

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Jennifer Hou will go on to compete at the National finals, while Toby Thatcher is named Patron of Emerging Artists.

Pianist Jennifer Hou has taken out the New South Wales State Final of the Fine Music Young Virtuoso Awards in Sydney, winning \$3000 and the opportunity to compete in the National Finals held in November this year. Fine Music has also announced that conductor Toby Thatcher, Assistant Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, has been appointed Fine Music Patron of Emerging Artists as part of the station's Emerging Artists Program.

Hou, a graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium High School who is now studying Music and Law at the University of New South Wales, was competing against five other performers in the finals, pianist Enrico Mainas, sopranos Jessica Harper and Imogen-Faith Malfitano, trombonist Jamie McCarthy and clarinettist Rachel Thompson. The finalists competed in front of a live studio audience in a performance that was broadcast live on air. The judging panel consisted of Clemens Leske, Luke Spicer and Narell Yeo.

Hou performed the first movement from Ross Edwards' Piano Sonata as well as Chopin's Ballade No 1, Op. 23. The second prize, worth \$2000, went to Jessica Harper, who performed Wolf's *Kennst du das Land* and *Ah je suis seule... Dis moi que je suis belle* from Massenet's *Thaïs*.

"I plan to use the prize money towards my piano lessons and perhaps going overseas and partaking in masterclasses or summer schools," Hou said. "Playing on live radio will be really valuable in learning to perform under pressure, this will no doubt teach me how to tackle recording situations in the future!"

Thatcher's new role as Patron of Emerging Artists, which was announced at the event, will be to ensure that young artists receive expert mentoring and networking opportunities. "The musical training comes from their teachers, what we will be providing is the vital, non-musical support," he explained. "We'll do this through mentoring sessions – covering such issues as legal advice for contracts, media advice, interview technique etc. And, importantly being a radio station, Fine Music can provide this emerging talent with performance broadcast opportunities, creating much needed awareness by exposing their talent to a monthly audience of around half a million music lovers."

"It's tremendously exciting to be involved with Fine Music in a capacity which will enable me to become increasingly involved in the development of Australia's best young musicians," said Thatcher. "Creating opportunities, pushing standards and ensuring Australian audiences get behind their youngest and brightest is of the utmost important and in all of our best interests."

The winner of last year's [Young Virtuoso Award](#) was cellist Benett Tsai.

The winner of the Young Virtuoso Award Audience Choice Prize will be announced tonight on [Fine Music](#) at the end of the Drive programme.

Toby Thatcher will be at [Celebration of Fine Music](#), a fundraiser for the Emerging Arts Program featuring performances by Elena Kats-Chernin, The Streeton Trio and Frances Madden, on September 26 at the Mosman Art Gallery.
