

PLEASE FORWARD THIS EMAIL TO ALL MEMBERS OF YOUR ENSEMBLE

May 7, 2020

Dear Fischhoff musicians, coaches and family members,

Please accept my congratulations for being invited to participate in the advanced rounds of the 2020 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition. 130 ensembles submitted videos, with musicians from 27 countries. Approximately only one third of those entries (24 Senior Division and 25 Junior Division) were invited, yours among them! I truly hope that you will feel that you benefitted from this event. The Fischhoff has an excellent track record in identifying the rising stars of the chamber music world. In fact, numerous Grammy Awards given for Chamber Music have been won by groups that entered the Fischhoff as relative unknowns. But.... more on that later.

This year's event has presented unique challenges, and many decisions and plans had to be quickly made and implemented in order for there to be a 2020 Fischhoff Competition. The Fischhoff strives to be a different experience from other Competitions, and this year's event will feature many creative ways to involve you, the jurors and the audience despite it all being done "virtually". This includes quarterfinal, semifinal and final rounds, much as they would have occurred during the live competition, although the actual judging of these rounds was made during the past two weeks.

I want to urge you to do all you can to learn as much as you can through your participation in the Fischhoff. We are an organization founded by music educators and have worked hard to keep the goals of the original founders at heart. The Fischhoff organization goes to great lengths to try to make your experience a positive one. Every group is treated fairly and equally, and the jury is selected not only for their musical expertise, but also for their personal integrity. I can assure you that no "back door deals" or any other disreputable activities are ever permitted in the process of choosing the prizewinners of the Fischhoff competition. You may end up agreeing with the jury's decisions, or respectfully disagreeing. Because the level of playing is very high, it is unlikely the jury will reach a unanimous decision on the outcome. Remember too, that even within your own ensembles, you may often not agree with each while making decisions.

In addition to written comments, under normal circumstances you are traditionally given the opportunity to meet and speak with the jurors. Unfortunately, this is not able to occur this year. You will, however, still receive written comments from the jurors, which will be sent to you later in May. (Some jurors may prefer to meet with your ensemble via Zoom, etc.) Please expect that the juror comments will be encouraging, but may also be frank with you, too.

I urge you to watch and listen to videos from as many other groups as possible. When and how you choose to do that is a personal choice, but there is so much to be learned from this including: seeing different approaches to ensemble playing, comparing your opinions to that of the jury, getting a sense of where your ensemble compares to others, and simply hearing great chamber music and chamber musicians. **I urge you to listen to ensembles in both Senior and Junior Divisions.** In this one regard, our format this year allows you easier access to these performances than if you were actually in South Bend.

If you are eliminated from the competition, please recognize that only a total of three ensembles in each category can win. Every group that enters can perform wonderful concerts, and surely would receive a

warm reception from an audience. **But, please remember that you have chosen to enter this event, which is a competition in which a small number of people (the jury) are asked to collectively choose a small number of groups to win prizes.** As such, although you will likely feel disappointed if you are not a prizewinner, I hope you will remember the context in which your performance occurred.... a competition. Not only that, but it is quite likely that a different set of jurors would come up with a different ranking of the ensembles. And in our field, not only prizes, but also jobs are won and lost in this manner. The more experience you gain performing in this context, the more likely you are to later “win” a competition for either a prize or a job. **Please try to listen to the remaining performances in the semifinal and final rounds if you are eliminated from prize contention.**

For the Senior Divisions, we are not YET awarding a Grand Prize in the Senior Division. This is because of the relatively light repertoire requirements for the preliminary audition video, and because we had no other way to have the Fischhoff this year except to use those videos. However, if conditions allow us to have our Autumn Gold Medal tours, we hope to be able to record full-length recitals, send these videos to the Jury, and have them choose which group they feel should be awarded the Grand Prize with its additional prize money and possible Italy tour. This, of course, remains to be determined.

Many of the Fischhoff Grand Prize winners have gone on to very successful careers in chamber music. But many who don't take the top prizes have also gone on to have long and successful careers. Now back to those Grammy Award winners: The Pacifica Quartet, The Parker Quartet and Eighth Blackbird were those Grammy Award winners, yet none of them were winners of the Fischhoff Grand Prize! Not only should this give you a perspective on the nature of competitions in general, but also help you to see that there are many outstanding ensembles that never win any competitions! Talent, hard work, commitment, connections, perseverance, and yes...luck, all have a big role in that success.

I hope whether or not you win a prize at this year's Fischhoff, your experience in preparing for it and your time during this competition week will be a wonderful one and also prove to be an experience that helps you grow as an artist.

Most sincerely,
Tom Rosenberg
Artistic Director (since 1981), Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Rosenberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "y".