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Daniel Piano Competition continues tradition, attracts top talent

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A first time for everything

After 25 years of rain-free Commencements in Paladin Stadium — except for a late downpour in 1997 — Furman's luck ran out in 2007. Fortunately, Timmons Arena was available, and the last-minute shift indoors proved only mildly disruptive. The Scholarship Cup for highest academic average (4.00) went to economics major Jane Elizabeth Crockett of Dothan, Ala., mathematics major Lauren Brooke Hund of Lubbock, Texas, and chemistry/Spanish major Michael Thomas Vagnini of Winter Springs, Fla. Hund and Vagnini received General Excellence awards as the outstanding female and male graduates. For more on graduation, visit www.furman.edu/fumag.

Daniel Piano Competition continues tradition, attracts top talent

What do you get when you offer high school pianists \$8,500 in prizes and the opportunity to study with international concert pianists?

Three days of inspiring performances by leading artists and students alike.

In March, 26 high school students came to Furman for the first Daniel Piano Competition for Young Artists. The students, chosen from 52 applicants, hailed from the Carolinas, Kansas, New York and eight other states.

The judges, all of them performing artists, were Robert Blocker '68, dean of the School of Music at Yale University; Richard Cass '53, professor emeritus at the University of Missouri Conservatory of Music and a visiting professor at Furman in 2006-07; and Marina Kolomiitseva, a professor at the Moscow Conservatorium.

The students competed for the top prize while also enjoying a weekend of master classes with the judges and a recital by Kolomiitseva. Yvonne Chen of Oak Hill, Va., emerged as the winner from a field of six finalists.

The competition evolved from an event sponsored for many years by the Greenville Symphony. Furman decided to carry on the tradition by opening it to a national audience and beyond, and increasing the prize money to \$5,000 for first place, \$2,500 for second and \$1,000 for third.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2008 competition, to be held March 28-30. And word is spreading: Music professor and program director Ruby Morgan has already received an inquiry from a young pianist in China.

This year's recitalist will be Anne Koscielny, a first-prize winner in the Kosciuszko Chopin Competition. She will serve as a judge with Julian Martin, a piano professor at The Juilliard School and the founder and artistic director of the New Millennium International Piano Festival.

Deadline for submitting audition CDs is December 1. For audition information, visit www.musicatfurman.com/danielcompetition.htm.

The music department is hoping to establish a permanent endowment for the competition with the help of support from individual and corporate sponsors. To learn more, send an e-mail to ruby.morgan@furman.edu.

— ELIZABETH COOKE '08