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Over 75 of the world's top young harpists will gather in Central Ohio this summer as the renowned Young Artist's Harp Seminar and Competition comes to Kenyon College for the first time.

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CONTACT: Kimberly Rowe, co-director, Young Artist's Harp Seminar

Phone: 215-837-2834

e-mail: krowe@harpcompetition.com

www.harpseminar.com

Now in its 17th season, the Young Artist's Harp Seminar (YAHS) arrives in Central Ohio this summer. Over 75 of the world's top young harpists will take up residence at Kenyon College in July for two weeks of intensive study, coaching sessions with renowned instructors, and concert performances open to the public.

The festivities open with the 6th Young Artist's Harp Competition, a biennial event with entries this year from as far away as Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Russia, and Canada who will vie for a top prize of \$1,000. The competition, which takes place during the day July 5-6, is open to harpists up to age 19 in three age divisions. A concert on July 7 will showcase winners and is open to the public.

Following the competition, harpists will embark on a two-week course of study with renowned YAHS faculty, along with 2018 Guest Artist **Nancy Allen** and special guest **Katherine Siochi**. One of the most sought after teachers in the nation, Allen heads the harp program at the Juilliard School, in New York, where she also performs as principal harpist with the New York Philharmonic. This will be her first appearance at YAHS. Siochi—a four-year alumni of the YAHS program—is the reigning Gold Medal winner of the 2016

USA International Harp Competition and newly appointed principal harpist with the Sarasota Orchestra. Both Allen and Siochi will be featured in concert events open to the public.

"The first time I performed in front of an audience of harpists was at YAHS," says Siochi. "Since then, I have given more solo performances than I can count...Growing comfortable in solo performance situations definitely all started with YAHS." Siochi is not the only star player to emerge from the YAHS program. A training ground for elite artists, many YAHS alumni have continued on to attend top schools and conservatories such as Juilliard, the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Curtis Institute of Music, the Jacobs School of Music at I.U., the Paris Conservatory, and many others.

YAHS alumni have claimed top prizes at major international competitions like France's prestigious Concours de Harpe Lily Laskine and the Nippon Harp Competition, where YAHS alumnus **Madeline Olson** recently took top honors. "All of the performance experience and classes [at YAHS] were a huge confidence builder for me, and changed the way I played," says Madeline, who is currently a Masters student at Juilliard.

Throughout their two weeks at YAHS, harpists have opportunities to practice performing on stage, in masterclasses, and in a series of simulated orchestral auditions. "Going to YAHS gave me exposure to facets of harp playing I wouldn't have encountered elsewhere," says French harpist **Heloise Carlean-Jones**, a fourth-year student at the Curtis Institute of Music who recently won an audition to become an extra player with The Philadelphia Orchestra. "I loved... learning about orchestral music and then getting to experience a mock audition—that certainly prepared me for real auditions."

"A big part of my YAHS experience was playing in large harp ensembles and learning how to listen and react to other harpists," says 23-year-old **Ellie Kirk**, who recently performed with the Chicago Lyric Opera and is principal harpist with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago. Kirk will return to YAHS this summer as a Counselor/Apprentice to teach classes and serve as a mentor for this summer's group of aspiring young harpists.

Susan Bennett Brady (Principal Harpist with the Atlanta Opera Orchestra) and **Kimberly Rowe** (editor of Harp Column magazine) founded the YAHS program in 2002 as a way to give young harpists ages 12–26 an intense performance and practice environment with top instruction. In 2008 they launched the international Young Artist's Harp Competition, and in 2014 the auxiliary one-week YAHS Prep program debuted for harpists ages 8–17. Held previously in northern Georgia, YAHS's 2018 move to Kenyon College was sparked by a desire for better performance spaces and interaction with a more vibrant arts community.

"The Central Ohio arts scene was a big factor in our decision to relocate to Kenyon College," says Brady. "We searched throughout the Eastern half of the country to find a setting that would give us a professional performance environment, beautiful scenery, and nearby recreational opportunities. Kenyon College meets our needs beautifully, and we can't wait to interact with the local arts community here."

Concert-goers will have many opportunities to hear the young harpists—along with faculty and special guests—in action this summer at a series of concert events open to the public. "I always enjoy the final concert the most," says YAHS Prep instructor **Kristi Shade**, another YAHS alumni. "It is so fun to watch the students perform together in ensemble and to be so proud of what they have accomplished. The atmosphere backstage is always so exciting as well—everyone is giving each other the energy and encouragement they need before performing their solos."

Shade now lives in New York city where she performs on Broadway for shows like "Wicked" and others. Other YAHS faculty members include **Emily Levin**, principal harpist with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, **Angela Schwarzkopf**, an instructor at the University of Toronto, and **Katie Andrews**, who also plays on Broadway as well as in a harp duo with Shade. Siochi will also stay on to teach throughout the program. Rowe and Brady credit the high level and dedication of the teaching staff to the success of the YAHS program. A typical summer includes nearly 50 percent returning students, with many attending three or more years.

Most YAHS students are serious about the harp, and many have plans to pursue it as a career path. Some students, however, don't see a professional harp career in their

future, and for Rowe and Brady that's fine. "Our number one goal," they say, "is simply to impart a love for music and for the harp." They are confident the students' experiences at YAHS will help them meet their goals, whatever they may be.