For Immediate Release, November 19, 2026

The Violin Society of America Announces 2026 Competition Winners

19 Gold Medals awarded at the 26th International Competition in Cleveland

Cleveland, OH - The Violin Society of America announced the winners of its flagship instrument-making competition tonight to a room of professional luthiers, dealers, players, and enthusiasts.

The VSA administers the contest with strict judging standards to identify excellence in categories of *Artisanship* and *Tone*. Over 400 violins, violas, cellos and bows by more than 250 makers entered The VSA's largest competition to date. A panel of 25 internationally recognized experts studied the double-blind entries to ensure an accurate contest over four days of evaluation.

"The level of work at this year's competition, from the physical artifact to the acoustic mastery of these instruments, has truly set a new benchmark for modern lutherie," says Brandon Godman, VSA President. "Everyone should be proud of what contemporary makers have achieved here in Cleveland."

Six Double-Gold Medals in *Artisanship* & *Tone*, were awarded as follows:

- Violin - Gideon Baumblatt & Mira Gruszow, Collin Gallahue
- Cello - Gideon Baumblatt & Mira Gruszow, Gianmaria Stelzer & Boris Haug
- Bass - Christopher Savino
- Quartet - Gianmaria Stelzer & Boris Haug

Additional recognition included 13 Gold, 17 Silver, 1 Bronze medal and 66* Certificates of Merit, for a total of 103 awards for outstanding examples from modern makers. A complete list of awards is available at the website listed below.

Importantly, The VSA bestowed its highest recognition, *Hors Concours*, to 4 makers for their consistent and outstanding achievements over multiple competitions: Gideon Baumblatt, Mira Gruszow, Justin Hess, and Christopher Savino.

The competition was paired with a weeklong convention featuring presentations, live demonstrations, exhibits of rare instruments and bows, a non-competitive showcase of new instruments, and an auction of violin shop supplies and ephemera donated by members which raised $32,000 for VSA scholarships. The combined event drew more than 550 attendees worldwide.

Founded in 1974, The Violin Society of America is a non-profit organization that promotes the art and science of making, repairing and preserving stringed musical instruments and their bows. The VSA holds events, publishes journals, and awards scholarships and grants to expand the field of lutherie. Membership is open to all and includes over 1,200 makers, dealers, players and enthusiasts.

Visit vsaweb.org for more information. Direct inquiries to Brandon Godman - (859) 391-9290 or president@vsaweb.org *(*Updated Nov 21)*

###