

NATHAN TOKUNAGA SELECTED AS 2026 YOUNGARTS AWARD WINNER

Tokunaga Honored as One of the Most Accomplished Artists, Ages 15-18, from Across the United States for Excellence in Jazz Clarinet



All the Strings You Are Concert, June 2025
Photo by Mike Lisching (edited)

[San Francisco, CA] (December 8, 2025) – YoungArts announced that Nathan Tokunaga, a recent graduate of Carlmont High School, has been selected as a 2026 YoungArts award winner in Jazz Clarinet. Tokunaga joins hundreds of the nation's most accomplished young visual, literary, and performing artists from 39 states and the District of Columbia. Bestowed annually since 1981, the YoungArts Award is the only award in the nation that recognizes exceptional young talent across artistic disciplines and affirms their pursuit of a professional life in the arts. Recipients become part of a lifelong community of peers and mentors, with access to critical resources that help sustain their creative practices throughout their careers.

Nathan Tokunaga is a clarinetist and saxophonist from the San Francisco Bay Area, now studying and performing in New York City. Inspired by early jazz and continually exploring new boundaries, Nathan's music engages audiences across generations. Since age 14, Nathan has performed in hundreds of shows at jazz clubs, swing dances, festivals, and concert halls, including Lindy Focus, Smalls Jazz Club, Birdland Theater, and Jazz at Lincoln Center's Rose Hall and Dizzy's Club.

"If we give young people the validation to pursue artistic careers, then the arts in the United States will continue to thrive," said YoungArts President & CEO Clive Chang. "The YoungArts Awards not only affirm their interests and talents, but give them the support networks and resources that allow them to envision a long-term path and sustain it. We are thrilled to recognize the extraordinary creativity, imagination, and talent of this year's award winners and to champion them for the rest of their lifetimes."

YoungArts award winners, all ages 15-18 or in grades 10-12, are selected through a highly competitive application reviewed by panels of esteemed artists in a rigorous adjudication process. All YoungArts winners have demonstrated exceptional technique, a strong sense of artistry, and an extraordinary commitment to developing their craft. Winners were selected from a record number of nearly 13,000 applications across 10 artistic disciplines: classical music, dance, design, film, jazz, photography, theater, visual arts, voice, and writing.

Tokunaga joins a distinguished community of artists who receive creative and professional development support throughout their career, including microgrants and financial awards, mentorship and professional development opportunities, and collaborations with major cultural partners nationwide. They also become part of an intergenerational network of more than 23,000 past awardees and accomplished artists including Daniel Arsham, Jon Batiste, Terence Blanchard, Camille A. Brown, Timothée Chalamet, Viola Davis, Amanda Gorman, Denyce Graves, Judith Hill, Jennifer Koh, Tarell Alvin McCraney, Andrew Rannells, Desmond Richardson, Jean Shin, Hunter Schafer, and Shaina Taub. Tokunaga will receive a monetary award of \$250 in recognition of their achievement.

A complete list of the 2026 winners is available at youngarts.org/winners.

Support

YoungArts programming throughout the year is made possible by the support of its most generous donors, including American Foundation for Bulgaria; Anthropologie; Aon; Micky and Madeleine Arison Family Foundation; Sarah Arison and Thomas Wilhelm; Berkowitz Contemporary Foundation; Black Family Philanthropies; Bloomberg Philanthropies; Estate of Ruth P. Cohen; Jeffrey Davis and Michael Miller; Molly and Bill Ford; Giving Bee Family Foundation; The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation; Hearst Foundations; The John C. Hench Foundation; Barbara and Amos Hostetter; Michi and Charles Jigarjian / 7G Foundation; Leslie and Jason Kraus; Melony and Adam Lewis; Ashley Longshore; Steven and Oxana Marks / Podhurst Orseck, P.A.; Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; Northern Trust Bank; The Jorge M. Pérez Family Foundation at The Miami Foundation; PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP; Christopher Rim / Command Education; Corey Robinson; Rockefeller Brothers Fund; Dr. Sidney Stern and the Stern Family Foundation; Sandra and Tony Tamer; Robert Wennett & Mario Cader-Frech; Todd White and Cameron Carani; and Lynn and Louis Wolfson II Family Foundation.

About YoungArts

YoungArts—the national foundation for the advancement of artists—was established in 1981 by Lin and Ted Arison to identify exceptional young artists, amplify their potential, and invest in their lifelong creative freedom. YoungArts provides space, funding, mentorship, professional development and community throughout artists' careers. Entrance into this prestigious organization starts with a highly competitive application for talented artists ages 15–18, or grades 10–12, in the United States that is judged by esteemed discipline-specific panels of artists through a rigorous adjudication process.

For more information, visit youngarts.org, [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/youngarts/), [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/youngarts), and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/youngarts).

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