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S. Korean wins 1st prize in Stradivarius contest

By **Edward Reichel**

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Fifteen violinists between the ages of 17 and 25 converged on Salt Lake City this week, vying for first prize in the senior category of the 1st Stradivarius International Violin Competition.

When it was all over Thursday, Yoonshin Song of South Korea walked away with the \$10,000 top prize. She will also receive a new violin made by Charles W. Liu, who sponsored the four-day event.

Song will perform with the Utah Symphony during the 2008 Deer Valley Music Festival.

For the final round, Song, 25, played Brahms' Violin Concerto. Filling the piece with emotion and drama, she gave an impassioned reading of the work that found favor with the seven-member jury.

Taking second place and \$5,000 in cash was 18-year-old Andrej Power of Sweden. He played Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto in an interpretation that was imbued with stunning technique and sincere musicality.

Third place went to the Sharon Park, an American. She won \$2,500 in cash for her expressive performance of Beethoven's Violin Concerto.

The \$1,000 fourth place was won by the only other American among the five finalists, Susan Jang, who played Sibelius' Violin Concerto.

Rounding out the winners was So Jin Kim from South Korea. She won fifth prize and took home \$500 for her performance of Dvorak's seldom-played Violin Concerto.

The top three winners received their prizes from Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. at the awards ceremony Thursday evening. They also reprised their winning concerto performances.

Accompanying them was University of Utah pianist Heather Conner. Other pianists who accompanied finalists were Larry Gee and Vera Oussetskaia Watanabe.

Sarah Moench was the only Utahn taking part in the senior category. The Juilliard School



Mindy Chen, 11, was the Stradivarius competition's youth winner at Gardner Hall on Thursday.

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student didn't make it into the final round, however.

While there was only one Utahn among the seniors, the state was better represented in the youth category (ages 10-16). Of the 56 participants, 28 were from the Beehive State. Unfortunately, none of them advanced into the final round.

The youth category was further divided into three divisions according to age. The lower division comprised violinists ages 10-12; the middle division consisted of 13- and 14-year-old players; and the upper division was made up of musicians between 15 and 16 years of age.

First prize in this category was taken by lower-division winner Mindy Chen of California. Second prize was won by upper division winner Jennifer Liu. Third prize went to Ashley Thakur from the middle division.

There were also three special Utah awards, given to outstanding players from the state: Rebekah Willey, Megumi Gass and David Price.

Two separate juries judged the competition.

The senior category panel consisted of Andres Cardenes, concertmaster of the Pittsburgh Symphony; Alvaro DeGranda, assistant concertmaster of the Cleveland Orchestra; Victor Danchenko, professor of music at the Curtis Institute; Robert Lipsett, professor of music at the University of Southern California; Nokuthula Ngwenyama, international violin and viola soloist; Jenny Oaks Baker, violinist with the National Symphony; and David Park, assistant concertmaster of the Utah Symphony.

The youth category was judged by Monte Belknap, Hasse Borup, Meredith Campbell, Kory Katseanes, David Porter, Judy Rich, Xun Sun, Shi-Hwa Wang and Eugene Watanabe.

The Stradivarius competition is expected to be a biennial event intended to draw top young violinists from around the globe to Utah.

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