

Semi-finalists tune up for New Zealand

Michael Hill International Violin Competition

The thrilling finale of the 2009 Michael Hill International Violin Competition takes place in June when 18 rising stars of the music world arrive to compete in the final rounds of this prestigious contest.

On the line is the winner's cheque of NZ\$40,000, a recording with classical music label, Naxos, and a winner's tour in 2010. There is a 10-day nationwide programme of events scheduled for the finals [*ed: see notes for list of dates*].

The first two rounds of the semi-finals take place in Queenstown on June 4 to 6, when all 18 semi-finalists perform demanding programmes of solo and piano-accompanied works live. The field will be whittled down to just six for the third round focusing on chamber music. They will perform in Auckland on June 8 and 9, with cellist Ashley Brown and pianist Michael Houstoun. The remaining top three will advance to the Final Round of the Michael Hill International Violin Competition on Thursday, June 11, performed live in the Auckland Town Hall and accompanied by the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra.

Masterclasses with the visiting artist judges will take place in Wellington on June 2, Christchurch on June 3 and in Auckland on June 10 and 11. These are open to the public and free of charge and will feature competitors who have not advanced to the finals and university music students.

From a field representing 30 nationalities that entered the competition in December, the 18 semi-finalists invited to compete are all aged 18 to 28 years.

Michael Hill, Founding Trustee of the competition said: "The field this year reflects the truly international status this biennial competition has achieved since its inception in 2001. I am always vastly impressed with the talent, dedication and commitment shown by the semi-finalists, and am positive their performances in the final rounds will be extraordinary to watch and listen to."

The esteemed judges serving on the 2009 panel are all internationally renowned: Shmuel Ashkenasi (Israel), Pamela Frank (USA), Philippe Graffin (France), Dong Suk Kang (Korea), Oleh Krysa (Ukraine/USA), Wilma Smith (NZ/Australia) and Radoslaw Szulc (Poland/Germany); they will be chaired by New Zealander Dr Robin Congreve.

Second through sixth place getters receive from NZ\$10,000 to NZ\$1,000 and a prize of NZ\$2,000 will be awarded to the semi-finalist who has the best performance of New Zealand composer Gareth Farr's, specially-commissioned work. In a first for the competition, the audience on the night of the final will determine The *Michael Hill Audience Prize* through text voting. A highly sought prize is the two-year loan of a contemporary Cremonese violin by master craftsman, Riccardo Bergonzi. The Competition provides the semi-finalists with airfares to New Zealand and accommodation in private homes.

New Zealand is represented this year by Sarah Buchan, originally of Christchurch, who was one of the six alternates selected for the competition. A recent graduate of The Juilliard School in New York, Sarah is also the winner of the Competition's inaugural *NZ Development Prize* - created to offer an intensive development opportunity for a Kiwi violinist to accompany and observe the competition's proceedings, participate in the masterclasses being offered by the international Artist Judges and be acknowledged in the prize-giving. Should Sarah be called upon to compete in the competition, the *NZ Development Prize* will fall to Auckland violinist, Eugene Kim.

Tickets for the live performances in Queenstown through Ticket Direct 0800 4 TICKET www.ticketdirect.co.nz and Auckland are available from 0800 BUY TICKETS or www.buytickets.co.nz

The Michael Hill Violin Competition is a member of the World Federation of International Music Competitions (Geneva). Visit: www.violincompetition.co.nz

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Notes to editors:

Key dates:

2009:	2 June	Masterclasses with artist judges in Wellington
	3 June	Masterclasses with artist judges in Christchurch
	4-6 June	Semi-final Rounds I and II in Queenstown
	7 June	“Bella is Back” recital in Queenstown
	8-9 June	Chamber Round III in Auckland
	10-11 June	Masterclasses with artist judges in Auckland
	11 June	Finals with Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra in Auckland

Semi-finalists:

In alphabetical order:

Jinjoo Cho	Korea
Hyunjoo Choo	Korea
Tessa Frederick	America
Emilie-Anne Gendron	America
Luanne Homzy	Canada
Yoo Jin Jang	Korea
Yihua Jin	China
Dami Kim	Korea
Hye-Jin Kim	Korea
Jee Won Kim	Korea
Maxim Kosinov	Russia
David McCarroll	America
Alexander Read	Canada
Sophie Rosa	UK
Mateusz Smol	Poland
Josef Spacek	Czechoslovakia
Danbi Um	Korea
Kyoko Yonemoto	Japan