

Media Release APRIL 8, 2009

Kiwi Fashion Icon Dresses the Field at the Michael Hill International Violin Competition

New Zealand fashion icon, Kevin Berkahn, has announced he will dress the female contestants who reach the last semi-final and finals of the 2009 Michael Hill International Violin Competition.

The Berkahn gowns will be adorned by the female contestants who reach the third round of the competition in Queenstown on Monday and Tuesday, June 8 and 9, along with at the thrilling final concert for the competition at the Auckland Town Hall on Thursday, June 11.

Mr Berkahn has had a long involvement with the Hill Family, dressing Christine Hill for many key events, including the upcoming World Entrepreneur of the Year Award night in Monte Carlo in May.

He said: "I am delighted to design these dresses for the finalists of the Michael Hill International Violin Competition. An event as important as the finale deserves a gown that does both the wearer and the music she creates, justice. I have always believed the gown a woman wears for the important events in her life adds greatly to the sense of occasion."

Semi finalists will have the opportunity to meet with Mr Berkahn at his showroom in Newmarket for gown selection and fittings. The Bulgarian winner of the 2007 Michael Hill International Violin Competition, Bella Hristova will also be dressed by Mr Berkahn for her much anticipated performance in Queenstown on Sunday, June 7 2009.

The winner of the 2009 Michael Hill International Violin Competition will walk away with a cheque for NZ\$40,000, a recording with classical music label, Naxos, and a nationwide tour in 2010 presented in association with Chamber Music New Zealand.

Tickets for the final of the Michael Hill International Violin Competition are available from 0800 BUY TICKETS or www.buytickets.co.nz. Podcasts of the competitors' performances will be available online at: www.violincompetition.co.nz (video) and www.radionz.co.nz/podcasts/MichaelHill (high-quality audio).

About the Michael Hill International Violin Competition

Be there for the drama as finalists vie for the top spot to become the winner of the biennial Michael Hill International Violin Competition. The Final concert on June 11 is the culmination of over a week of intense competition.

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."

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.

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. 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.

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

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.

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
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