

Media Contacts:
(415) 621-3186
Brechin Flournoy, x104
Lisa Okuhn, x112
neqacomm@quinn-assoc.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*The California Music Center and San Francisco State University, College of Creative Arts
announce, with pleasure, the winners of*

The 24th annual Irving M. Klein International String Competition

First Prize: NIKKI CHOOI, 19-year old violinist from Victoria, Canada

Student of Joseph Silverstein and Ida Kavafian, Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, PA

Second Prize: SO JIN KIM, 23-year old violinist from South Korea

Student of Cho Liang Lin at Rice University, Houston, TX

Third Prize: META WEISS, 21-year old cellist from San Francisco, CA

Student of Norman Fischer at Rice University, Houston, TX

Plus **Fourth Prizes** to **SUJIN LEE** (cello) and **JACQUELINE CHOI** (cello)

(San Francisco, CA – June 15, 2009) This past weekend, the 24th annual Irving M. Klein International String Competition showcased some of the world's most outstanding young string artists in a close competition that pitted eight semi-finalists from across the U.S., South Korea, China, Canada, Daly City and San Francisco against each other for the top spots. At stake were cash prizes totaling over \$25,000 and a series of concert dates with various symphonies, along with the prestige of having placed at the Klein Competition.

The 2009 Klein Competition Semifinalists represented the top tier of young musicians worldwide. They were selected from a pool of 62 entrants from nine countries and ranged from 15 to 23 years of age. During the Semifinal and Final Rounds, the dazzling group of Semifinalists captivated an enthusiastic and appreciative audience who greeted the performances with cries of 'bravo' and standing ovations.

At the Competition on Saturday, Semifinalists were asked to play complete works and/or selected excerpts totaling 20-25 minutes. From this stage, three players advanced to the Final Round on Sunday and played for 30 minutes each. In accordance with the guidelines established by the judges, each Finalist played one Bach work, one Classical, Romantic or major 20th Century concerto, one Classical or Romantic sonata movement, and a work composed specifically for the competition by Joel Hoffman. The Finalists were judged on a cumulative score for both days.

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The First Prize of the Competition was awarded to **Nikki Choi** (19-year old violinist from Victoria, Canada) who performed selections by Bach (*Sonata No. 2 in a minor*), Joel Hoffman (*Square One*), Fauré (*Sonata in A Major, Opus 13. No. 1*), and Sibelius (*Concerto in d minor, Opus 47*). Mr. Choi wins over \$14,000 from the Irving M. Klein Memorial Award including solo appearances with the Peninsula and Santa Cruz Symphonies, recitals at the Tulsa Chamber Music Series (Oklahoma), performances at the Music in the Vineyard festival in the Napa Valley, plus a benefit concert and other performances to be announced.

The Second Prize of \$5,000 from The William M. Bloomfield Memorial Award was awarded to **SoJin Kim**, 23-year old violinist from South Korea who studies with Cho-Liang Lin at Rice University in Houston, TX. Ms. Kim's Semi-final and Final programs were selections by Bach (*Sonata No. 1 in g minor, BWV 1001, Fugue*), Joel Hoffman (*Square One*), Sibelius (*Concerto in d minor, Opus 47*), and Beethoven (*Sonata No. 5, Opus 24, Allegro*).

The Third Prize winner (The Alice Anne Roberts Memorial Award of \$2,500) was awarded to cellist **Meta Weiss**, a 21-year old San Francisco native who studies with Norman Fischer at Rice University in Houston, TX. Ms. Weiss earned further distinction at the Klein Competition as the **recipient of the Allen R. and Susan E. Weiss Memorial Prize of \$200 for Best Performance of the Commissioned Work by Joel Hoffman**. For the Semi-final and Final Round, Ms. Weiss performed Joel Hoffman's *Unaccompanied Minor* and selections by Bach (*Suite in C Major, BWV 1009*), Schumann (*Concerto in a minor, Opus 129*), and Brahms (*Sonata in F Major, Opus 99*). This was Ms. Weiss' second Klein Competition – she was a Semifinalist in 2008.

The distinguished pianists who accompanied the Semifinalists were **Dmitriy Cogan** and **Timothy Bach**.

At the close of the Semifinals on Saturday, two young players were awarded Fourth Prizes in the amount of \$1,500 each. Both Fourth Prize winners are students of Paul Katz at the New England Conservatory.

The Thomas and Lavilla Barry Award went to **Sujin Lee**, a 17-year old cellist from South Korea who attends Newton South High School in addition to her studies with Mr. Katz.

The Jules and Lena Flock Memorial Award went to **Jacqueline Choi**, a 22-year old cellist from Old Tappan, NJ and also student at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, MA.

The remaining Semifinalists were each awarded a \$1,000 cash prize. They are: **Eunice Kim** (17-year old violinist from Daly City and student of Wei He at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, San Francisco); **Vicki Powell** (20-year old violist from Chicago, IL and student of Roberto Diaz at the Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia, PA); and **Xiang Yu** (20-year old violinist from Shanghai, China and student of Donald Weilerstein at the New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, MA).

The distinguished jury of the 24th Annual Irving M. Klein International String Competition was **Ethan Filner, Michael Gelfand, Peter Gelfand, Marc Gottlieb, Alan Grishman, Joel Hoffman, Jennifer Koetzel, Joshua Kosman, David Park, Alice Schoenfeld, and Sandy Wilson**.

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EXPANDED BIOGRAPHIES OF THE WINNERS

NIKKI CHOI (First Prize)

Born in Victoria, British Columbia, this 19-year old violinist is enrolled at the Curtis Institute of Music, studying with renowned violinists Joseph Silverstein and Ida Kavafian. His previous teachers include Bill van der Sloot at the Mount Royal Conservatory, and Sydney Humphreys at the Victoria Conservatory of Music. He is a recent recipient of the Sylva Gelber Foundation Award of the Canada Council of the Arts.

In 2008, Mr. Chooi performed with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. He was also featured soloist with the National Arts Centre Orchestra on its Western Canada Performance and Educational Tour. In May 2009, he embarked on a European Tour performing chamber music with violist, Roberto Diaz and pianist, Robert MacDonald. In 2007 he was invited by Debut Atlantic to give a series of six recitals, touring across the Atlantic provinces of Canada. In January 2008, he performed a recital at the Canadian National Arts Centre featured by its Debut Series in Ottawa.

At age 18, Mr. Chooi was a Special Prize winner and the youngest competitor at the XIII Tchaikovsky International Violin Competition in 2007. He was also a semi-finalist at the 2007 Michael Hill Violin Competition in Auckland, New Zealand, winner of the 2007 Shean Strings Competition in Edmonton, awarded the “Galaxie Rising Star” at the Montreal International Violin Competition in 2006, and winner of the Montreal Symphony Standard Life Competition in 2004. At the 2004 Canadian National Music Festival, Mr. Chooi was awarded first place in the strings category, first place in the chamber music category, and was the overall “Grand Award” winner.

Mr. Chooi has been guest soloist with orchestras throughout Canada and has attended numerous summer programs, including the National Arts Centre Young Artist Program under the direction of maestro Pinchas Zukerman, where he was recipient of the “Most Promising Artist” scholarship.

SOJIN KIM (Second Prize)

Twenty-three year old violinist Sojin Kim began piano studies at age three and the violin at age eight. She won the gold medal at the Korean National Children’s Music Competition at the age of nine. After making her solo debut at age twelve, Ms. Kim has won numerous prizes including the first prize at the Moon-Wha-Il-Bo Competition in Korea, the first prize at the Montreal Classical Music Festival Competition, a top laureate at the 2007 Stradivarius International Violin Competition, and the winner of 2009 Allentown Symphony Orchestra Schadt Competition.

Ms. Kim continues to be a very active soloist and a chamber musician, having performed throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. She has performed in New York City’s most prestigious concert halls including Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, and Frederick P. Rose Hall, where she performed in the Lincoln Center’s Great Performers Series in 2008. As a chamber musician, Ms. Kim has especially worked closely with the members of the Juilliard String Quartet, and the Emerson String Quartet, as well as collaborations with artists such as Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Midori Goto, Cho Liang Lin, James Dunham, Lynn Harrell, Roberto and Andres Diaz.

Ms. Kim earned her Bachelor of Music Degree and Master of Music Degree at the Juilliard School with Cho Liang Lin and Naoko Tanaka as a recipient of the Irene Diamond Graduate Fellowship, Jerome Greene Fellowship, C.V. Starr Scholarship and the Juilliard Alumni Scholarship. Previous teachers have included David Halen, Nam-Yoon Kim, Eleonora Turovsky, David Kim, and Hyo Kang. She is currently pursuing her Doctor of Musical Arts Degree at Rice University’s Sheperd School of Music with Cho Liang Lin.

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META WEISS (Third Prize; winner of the Allen R. and Susan E. Weiss Memorial Prize for best performance of the commissioned work)

Twenty-one year old cellist Meta Weiss made her international debut at the age of seven in Utrecht, Holland at the International Cello Congress. Since then, she has become a versatile artist, performing music spanning all periods from classical to jazz. She has been a featured soloist with the Fremont Symphony, Reading Symphony, Peninsula Youth Orchestra, and the Phillips Academy Chamber and Amadeus Orchestras. Ms. Weiss has also won top prizes in the New England String Ensemble String Concerto Competition, the Nova Vista Concerto Competition, the Fremont Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition, the Peninsula Youth Orchestra Concerto Competition, first prize in the senior division of the 2008 TexASTA Solo Competition, an honorable mention at the 2009 ASTA National Solo Competition. She also received the 2008 Yamaha Young Performing Artist Award. She has also been featured on National Public Radio on the shows A Prairie Home Companion and From the Top.

Raised in San Francisco, CA, Ms. Weiss began the cello at age four and has studied with Irene Sharp, Joan Jeanrenaud, and Michael Reynolds. Now in her senior year at Rice University's Sheperd School of Music where she studies with Norman Fischer, she has been on the President's Honor Roll since she matriculated in 2005. Ms. Weiss is currently the recipient of the Ralph A. Anderson, Jr. Memorial Scholarship.

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