



Michael Mizrahi
First Place



Tian Lu
Second Place



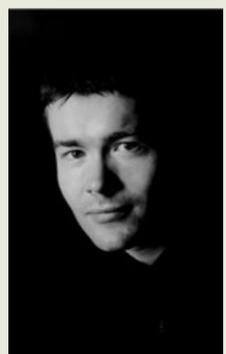
Milica Jelaca Jovanovic
Third Place



Paul Wyse
Fourth Place



Soo Hung Cho
Fifth Place



Jeffrey Brown
Sixth Place

Virginia Native Takes Top Prize

Sioux City (IA) – March 5, 2005

Christian Richardson - Sioux City Journal

Backstage at the Orpheum Theatre nervousness was in the air as three musicians patiently waited to walk before the crowd and find out which of them won the Iowa Piano Competition on Saturday night.

To a rousing applause, followed by a standing ovation, Michael Mizrahi was handed his first place glass plaque. The 26-year-old Virginia native, by now exhausted and thankful, accepted the award.

"It's a tremendous honor," Mizrahi said afterward. "It really hasn't sunk in yet."

Mizrahi, of New York, N.Y., said the three-day competition which brought together 11 pianists fosters friendships among musicians who would often be mere competitors.

"I really would have been happy for either of them had they won," Mizrahi said of the two other finalists -- Tian Lu and Milica Jelaca Jovanovic.

Lu took second place; Jovanovic won third.

The honor in emerging on top comes through being the first to win the inaugural Iowa contest, Mizrahi said. He now feels connected to Sioux City for the rest of his life, he said.

Mizrahi described the contest as unique as it had musicians performing with the Euclid Quartet on Friday and the Sioux City Symphony Orchestra on Saturday. Often pianists perform solos, he said.

Mizrahi took interest in the piano at an early age. Thinking back he remembers his mother at the piano and recalls falling asleep to her playing Beethoven.

When he was about 4 years old, she taught him to play the piano. He said it was unstructured environment. When he was about 10 years old, his grandfather, an amateur violinist, suggested he learn to play a Mozart sonata.

"From then on I just ate up repertoire," Mizrahi said.

His first formal learning came in high school. He's now a doctoral student in music at Yale.

"I would say the passion's always been there," he said

Next weekend Mizrahi heads to the East Coast for the Washington, D.C., International Piano Competition.

The Iowa Piano Competition brought pianists from seven nations to Sioux City. In the opening round, 11 musicians performed in a recital. The semi-finals forced six to play movements from a quintet. In the finals, three people played a concerto with the Sioux City Symphony Orchestra.

A panel of three judges chose the winners. The first-place winner took home \$7,500.