



Assaff Weisman  
First Place



Sean Kennard  
Second Place



Dmitri Shelest  
Third Place



Pei-Yeh Tsai  
Fourth Place



May Phang  
Fifth Place



Harout Senekeremian  
Sixth Place

## Israeli Wins Iowa Piano Competition

Sioux City (IA) – **March 9, 2006** –

Christian Richardson - Sioux City Journal

It was a competition New York pianist Assaff Weisman almost didn't attend, fearing his performance would be lackluster.

However, the 28-year-old Israeli showed and won, taking home the \$7,500 cash prize and the glass plaque Saturday night in the second annual Iowa Piano Competition.

Weisman was among a trio of men who advanced to the final round and performed movements from Beethoven's and Mozart's concertos at the Orpheum Theatre.

When speaking of the finalists, Doug Gerhart, Sioux City Symphony Orchestra executive director, told of their professionalism

"They're tremendous artists but also fine human beings," Gerhart said.

Contest finalist Dmitri Shelest, a Ukraine native, said, "it's always nice to be in a good, friendly environment."

Prior to the winners being announced the trio of Weisman, Sean Kennard of Philadelphia, and Shelest of Highland Heights, Ky., hung out backstage as a close-knit group.

When it was announced that Shelest took third place the crowd gave a rousing applause.

Kennard then stepped forward to take second place, receiving a pat on the back from Weisman, who told him, "I'll see you out there."

It is unknown when the three musicians will meet again. But when they do, Weisman said, "the results will be different. I was surprised that I won."

At 6 p.m. the three finalists had performed selections from Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 and Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23.

A panel of three judges from the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester, N.Y., Juilliard and the University of Michigan deliberated as the Sioux City Symphony Orchestra, which is hosting the competition, performed Brahms.

This year's contest drew more than 70 applicants from 21 states and six countries, Gerhart said.

They come to perform with an orchestra, for the \$14,000 in prize money and the quality of judges, he said.

The finalists were among a field of 12 when the competition commenced Thursday at Morningside College's Eppley Auditorium.

On Friday evening six pianists performed a movement from a quintet during a chamber concert with the Maia Quartet -- the quartet in residence at the University of Iowa.

The inaugural contest last year drew 11 international pianists with Michael Mizrahi of New York winning the contest.

Mizrahi credits the Iowa Piano Competition for landing a performance at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Gerhart said the annual contest will continue next