



Miao Hou
First Place



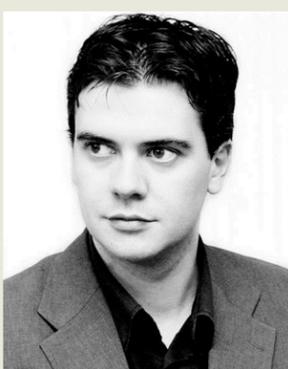
Esther Park
Second Place



Chun-Chieh Yen
Third Place



Polina Bepalko
Fourth Place



Cathal Breslin
Fifth Place



Julia Siciliano
Sixth Place

Pianists offer unique dynamic to solos

Sioux City (IA) – March 9, 2008

Bruce R. Miller, Sioux City Journal

Exhilarating? Encouraging? Exciting?

Yup, that's the Iowa Piano Competition -- easily one of the best evenings the Sioux City Symphony Orchestra offers each year.

Like "American Idol," the contest has the air of suspense, the threat of nerves and the excitement of young talent getting its first big break.

Saturday, none of the three finalists disappointed.

While all played works by Beethoven, each brought a different dynamic to the solos.

Miao Hou, the competition's winner, had an air of confidence that showed throughout her part of Concert No. 4 Op. 58. She shared the piece with Chun-Chieh Yen, who placed third. Esther Park, the second place finisher, handled Concerto No. 2, Op. 19 and tried a different tact to set herself apart -- drama.

Park was probably the most accessible for audience members, visually enjoying the music as she very precisely worked through the allegro and rondo. Easily, you could see how she'd make a fantastic soloist. She engaged the crowd, delighted in her ability and -- get this -- worked the foot pedal better than anyone we've seen in the past three years. She was a solid star.

Yen, though, was a superb technician, able to dazzle with his effortless runs. Interestingly, Park had a better connection with the orchestra. She knew exactly when to join them. She was a better team player than Yen.

And Hou? She knew when to blend and when to shine. The ability was probably key to her win.

The orchestra benefited, too, from guest conductor Susan Haig's work. She was a generous leader who knew just how to make the three competitors feel like they had already won.

While Hou took home the top prize, the real winners were the audience members who got to see such exceptional talent at such an early stage in their careers. All three were fun to watch and deserving of our support.

Now, the future is theirs. Our part in all this? It's just a matter of saying, "I remember them when."

The panel of judges which oversaw all three days of the competition included:

Robert Roux
Rice University

Robin McCabe
University of Washington

Douglas Humpherys
Eastman School of Music

The Iowa Piano Competition is an intensive three-day competition hosted by the [Sioux City Symphony Orchestra](#) in Sioux City, Iowa. For more information visit the Symphony website or call 712.277.2111.