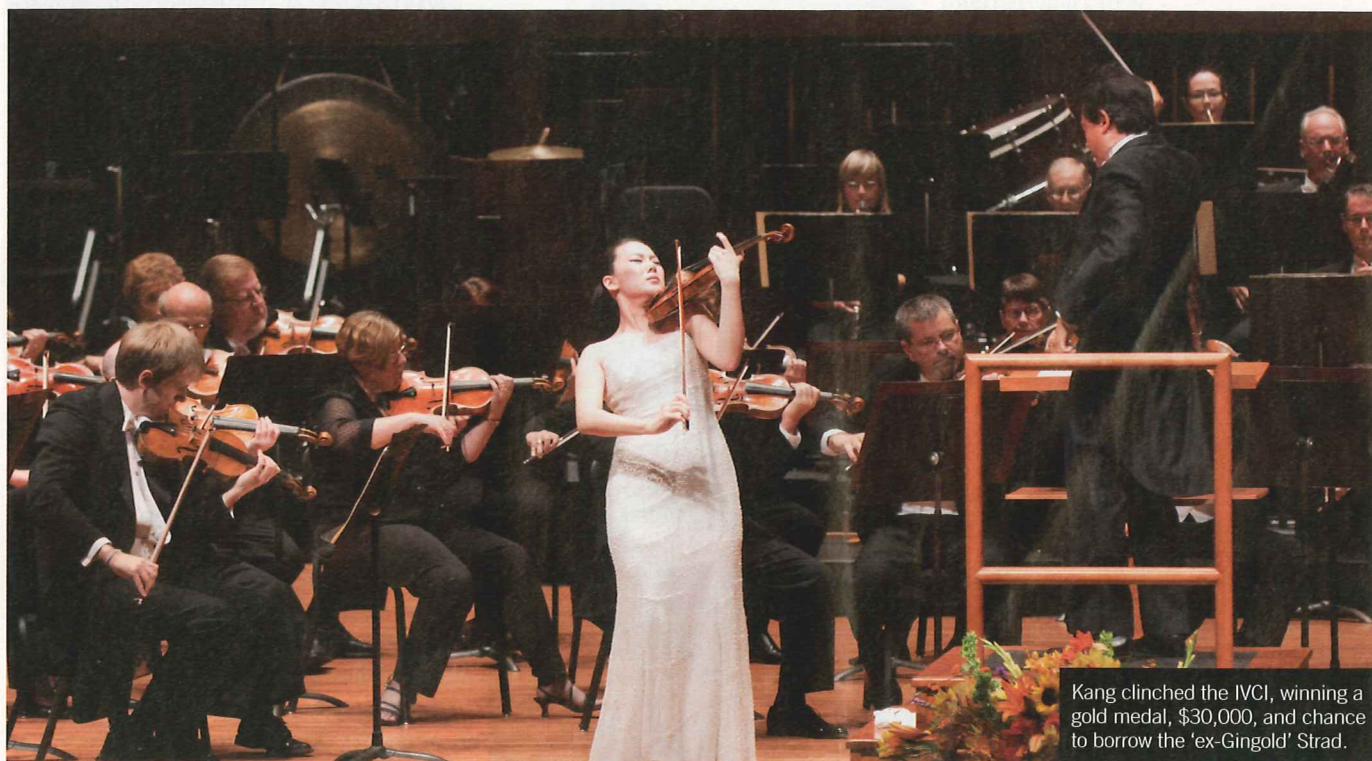


# Clara-Jumi Kang Wins 2010 Indianapolis Violin Competition



Kang clinched the IVCI, winning a gold medal, \$30,000, and chance to borrow the 'ex-Gingold' Strad.

Contestants' intensity and musicality thrills the audience—and the judges

By Heather Kurzbauer

**INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA**, boasts no fewer than ten professional sports teams, but it also offers an equally impressive array of highbrow happenings—it's just the kind of place where brawny Colts football fans rub shoulders with culture vultures heading to the quadrennial **International Violin Competition of Indianapolis**, known as the Olympics of the violin world.

"I'm loving it," gushed a young audience member at this year's IVCI. "Tonight I'm cheering for great music and tomorrow I'll root for America's best road team, the Colts."

Indeed, great music was elevated to sports-fanatic levels September 10–26 at the eighth edition of the quadrennial IVCI, and so were emotions. For the 40 contestants chosen to compete in the preliminary rounds, and for those who moved onto the semifinals and the finals, the stakes were high and the skill level even higher. In addition to exposure, contestants gunned for more than

\$250,000 worth of prizes, the loan of the 1683 "ex-Gingold" Stradivari violin, and the coveted Josef Gingold 24k Gold Medal.

Jury president **Jaime Laredo** and his peers had their work cut out for them.

Rising above her fellow competitors, German/Korean violinist **Clara-Jumi Kang** took home the gold medal, \$30,000, a Carnegie Hall recital, a Naxos CD recording deal, and a Berg Bows gold-mounted "Tourte-Voirin" model.

Kang, 23, might well be the perfect representative of a new age of competition winners. Her teachers have included **Nam Yun Kim** of the Korean National University of Arts, **Zakhar Bron**, and **Dorothy DeLay**—all of whose influence could be heard in Kang's playing. Her admirable mix of

**ONLINE** For a complete list of IVCI winners, visit the online version of this article at [AllThingsStrings.com](http://AllThingsStrings.com).

perfectionism and musical scholarship led to poised, stylish performances in both concerto rounds.

Kang was the only contestant to pass that ultimate challenge—the Classical concerto event—by executing Mozart with grace and injecting just the right dose of humor. Her Beethoven concerto, during the Romantic finals, displayed a beautiful second-movement cantilena and a closing cadenza taken at a fast, flashy tempo. This earned her, among other awards, the special prize for Best performance of a Beethoven sonata.

**Soyoung Yoon**, another student of Kim and Bron, won the silver medal. Yoon, 25, has won several other major competitions, including the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels, the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, the Menuhin International Violin Competition, and the Odessa International David Oistrakh Violin Competition.

Her closing performance of the Sibelius Violin Concerto won over the discerning audience. Exuding a radiant stage presence in a shimmering gold dress, Yoon emphasized the dark side of the Finnish masterpiece as she spun a tale of deep suffering and

astonishing dynamic contrasts. To many, this was the competition's golden concerto performance not only in terms of extraordinary technical accomplishment, but also interpretative freedom.

US violinist **Benjamin Beilman**, whose teachers include **Ida Kavafian** and **Almita** and **Roland Vamos**, took the bronze medal. Beilman, who won first prize at the 2010 Montreal International Music Competition, may well have taken too much of a risk by attempting two major competitions within a short period of time. Hugely gifted and exuberant in terms of presentation, he was the clear audience favorite moving toward the finish line. While his choice of the Haydn Concerto No. 1 was a refreshing change from Mozart's warhorses, his joyful leadership during a solo performance took its toll in terms of intonation slips and slides. Beilman's Sibelius concerto brought well-crafted phrases to the fore, but, once again, flawed passagework marred the performance. Undoubtedly a performer to watch, one cannot help but wonder why the 20-year-old did not wait for the next competition to enthrall listeners with his originality.

Meanwhile, fourth place winner **Haoming Xie**, of China, caused a stir among international violin bloggers in the final round. A young performer with limited Western exposure, the 20-year-old Xie was the only finalist who performed on a subpar instrument. Although his Mozart was a shot in the dark replete with false accents, his Tchaikovsky concerto had spellbinding moments. Xie, on his maiden voyage to America, reached out and won the listener's hearts with a sweet legato and a brilliant finale taken at a breakneck tempo that rivaled Anne-Sophie Mutter's pace. His Ysaÿe sonata was also enough to win him a special prize.

Waking up on Sunday morning after a long night of competition post-mortems, I could not escape the sounds of the Bartók Violin Concerto No. 2's haunting slow movement—a musical memory that will last a lifetime. Hungarian violinist and fifth-place winner **Antal Szalai's** magnificent tone production, and mastery of “less is more,” spun moments of pure magic during his hour of glory at the contest. The 29-year-old's stoic stage presence may have cost him a top prize but the pathos of his Bartók was the stuff of which dreams are made. ■

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Cello faculty and renowned performers Julie Albers (center) and Christopher Rex (right) work with a student on the stage of Mercer's Fickling Recital Hall.

