



International Violin Competition Returns

Indianapolis hosts 10th quadrennial classical music event

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The Circle City is home to the Indy 500, the eighth largest encyclopedic art museum in the U.S., and the world's largest children's museum. But for classical music aficionados worldwide, none of that really matters. What matters to them is the International Violin Competition of Indianapolis.

This year is a milestone for the organization. It's their 10th quadrennial, taking place from Aug. 31 through Sept. 16.

It's no walk in the park. The mere entrance requirements of this quadrennial competition are intimidating. Hundreds of applicants sent in, along with a letter of recommendation from a recent teacher, an MP4 video of a concerto in its entirety (there are 21 to choose from), one caprice by Paganini, and two contrasting movements of Bach.

Those hundreds from all over the world are then winnowed down to 40 laureates. They hope to make through three rigorous rounds, to be crowned the gold medalist, have the use of a Stradivarius violin for four years, a nice chunk of change, and something that sets the Indianapolis competition apart from others: complete management, if desired.

For four years, the IVCI (which has a staff of four) will manage a winner's career, from booking performances with orchestras, to building a website, to learning how to run masterclasses—essentially anything a young soloist needs to make it in their budding career. This is not common with most competitions, and it puts the IVCI on a whole other level.

“We're very proud of our laureates across the globe”, said Zack French, Director of Communications and Artistic Advancement. “We're proud to have been instrumental in furthering their success, with our program of career management for four years”.

Past winners of the IVCI have gone on to make names of themselves, and then some. There is indeed much for them to be proud of. 2006 Gold Laureate Augustin Hadelich won a Grammy in 2016, and has played with every major orchestra in the US. The most recent gold laureate, Jinjoo Cho, has made a significant name for herself as a teacher, recently joining Oberlin Conservatory

and Cleveland Institute of Music as part-time faculty, and founded ENCORE Chamber Music, a music program for high school and college students in Cleveland. (Fun fact: one of her own students this year made it as a laureate). 2002 fourth place laureate Frank Huang is now the concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic, and 1994 Bronze laureate David Chan is concertmaster of the Metropolitan Orchestra. There's a pattern, clearly. In addition to the management of careers, there's another component that sets the IVCI apart, and it's almost quaint.

"We add an element of Hoosier hospitality," says French. "Every laureate is placed, if they wish, with a host family. If the laureate likes peace and quiet, if they have allergies to pets, whatever it is, we make sure they are well matched. They are given a place where they get to focus on the music, on the competition."

French went on to say how many laureates from as far back as the 1980s have continued a friendship with their host families. "I think that is something Indianapolis can be very proud of," he said of that hospitality. It also can be proud of the involvement of volunteers who are essential to the smooth running of such a large event, from ticketing, to page turners for pianists, transportation, and so forth. Over 300 people are involved in all aspects of the IVCI.

The IVCI doesn't just produce well-rounded musicians; it contributes to the violin repertoire. The newly commissioned piece specific to this year's competition which all semi-finalists play, is Sonata no. 3 for Violin, by National Medal of Arts, Pulitzer Prize, and Grammy Award-winning composer William Bolcom. Past composers include Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, Joan Tower, and Ned Rorem, among others, and many of these works are very much alive in the violin repertoire.

You can hear the Bolcom live if you want, just like you can hear every stage of this competition. It's all open to the public, which is not just nice for fans, but great for the laureates gaining experience playing for a live audience. It's also live-streamed across the globe.

The preliminary and semi-final rounds are held at Indiana History Center, with the Classical Finals, accompanied by the East Coast Chamber Orchestra, at the Howard L. Schrott Center for the Arts at Butler University. The finals are with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Leonard Slatkin at Hilbert Circle Theater.

Chances are you'll be hearing a future concertmaster, Grammy winner, or esteemed educator.

If You Go

WHAT // International Violin Competition of Indianapolis of Indianapolis

WHEN // Aug. 31 - Sept. 16

WHERE // Various locations

TICKETS // \$15 - \$40

violin.org