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Date Lines

Joshua Kosman, Heidi Benson, Jesse Hamlin, Robert Hurwitz
Friday, June 13, 2008

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String showdown

Eight string players ranging in age from 18 to 23 will compete this weekend for the \$10,000 first prize in the 23rd annual Irving M. Klein International String Competition at San Francisco State University.

The competition's semifinal round is from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, followed at 4 p.m. Sunday by the finals. Both rounds are at the McKenna Theatre, 1600 Holloway Ave.

The semifinalists were selected from an original pool of 74 entrants representing 11 countries. They include violinists **Siwoo Kim**, **Tessa Lark**, **Robin Scott** and **Ying Xue**; violist **Emily Deans**; cellists **Char Prescott** and **Meta Weiss**; and bassist **Benjamin Jensen**.

Tickets: \$5-\$20. Call (415) 282-7160 or go to www.kleincompetition.org.

- Joshua Kosman

Zen and romance

San Francisco author and educator **Joe Pulichino** says the love poems and illustrations in his new book, "Illuminated Heart: Love Songs of a Zen Romantic," combine to tell "a love story that traces the arc of a relationship from beginning to end." Pastels by Mendocino illustrator **Julie Higgins** are paired with the poems, which were written by Pulichino over a 30-year period. The book was among the top three finalists in the fiction category for the annual Ben Franklin Award for Best First Book, announced last month by the **Independent Book Publishing Association**.

- Heidi Benson

Jazz up your night

Hey, jazz fans. If you've got the itch to hear something live this weekend, singer **Carla Zilbersmith** will be at the Jazzschool in Berkeley at 8 p.m. Saturday, getting into a wide range of material from her latest disc, "Extraordinary Renditions," which roams from **Prince's** "Kiss" to **Isham Jones'** "Crying Again," a taste of **Joni Mitchell**, **Sammy Cahn**, "Cold Sweat" and an old English folk song. Zilbersmith's band features saxophonist **Michale Zilber**, bassist **Kai Eckhardt**, drummer **David Rokeach** and **John Burr** at the keyboard. \$20 will get you in the door at 2087 Addison Str., Berkeley. (510) 845-5373,



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Sunday at Jazz at Pearl's, at 8 p.m., saxophonist **Madeline Duran** steps out with her longtime mate, guitarist **Eddie Duran**, playing stuff from her new disc, "Simply Mad," with drummer **Alan Hall** and bassist **John Witala**. A few Duran originals will pop up among "Begin the Beguine," "Fools Rush In" and other durable numbers. \$15. 256 Columbus Ave., San Francisco. (415) 291-8255, www.jazzatpearls.com.

- Jesse Hamlin

Conductor honored

San Francisco Symphony Associate Conductor **James Gaffigan** was one of two winners of the Helen M. Thompson Award, presented by the **League of American Orchestras** in alternate years to recognize an emergent young music director.

Gaffigan, who in addition to his San Francisco post leads the orchestra **CityMusic Cleveland**, shared the award with **Alondra de la Parra**, founder and music director of the **Philharmonic Orchestra of the Americas**. The award was presented in Denver on Wednesday night during a concert by the **Colorado Symphony**, part of the National Performing Arts Convention.

- Joshua Kosman

Promising pianists

Six teenage pianists will compete Saturday in the 11th annual Ross McKee Piano Competition. Vying for the \$3,000 first prize are **Henry Burnam**, 14, of San Francisco; **Catherine Fu**, 15, of San Ramon; **Alison Lee**, 16, of Fremont; **Pauline Nguyen**, 16, of Fremont; **Mayumi Tsuchida**, 16, of Mill Valley; and **Jason Zhang**, 17, of Palo Alto.

The competition is at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Recital Hall, 50 Oak St. Admission is free. For information, call (530) 758-2299.

- Joshua Kosman

A playwright cometh

A familiar face on almost every major and midsize stage in the Bay Area, **Nancy Carlin** is heading to Connecticut and the **Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's** annual National Music Theater Conference, not as an actor but as a playwright. "Max Understood," a musical about an autistic child that Carlin wrote with composer **Michael Rasbury**, is one of four new projects selected for development this year. An intensive set of rehearsals will culminate in two staged readings, July 11 and 13.

"Needless to say," Carlin says, "it's going to be quite different and thrilling to be there as a playwright." A member of one of the Bay Area's leading theatrical families, Carlin is the daughter of well-known actor and director **Joy Carlin**, and is married to popular performer **Howard Swain**. - Robert Hurwitt

Line items

-- **Marin Theatre Company** has extended its season-ending production of "Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris" through June 22. Tickets at (415) 388-5208, www.marintheatre.org.

-- **The Marsh** has extended **Jeff Greenwald's** "Strange Travel Suggestions" through June 28. Tickets at (415) 826-5750, www.themarsh.org/strange_travel.html.

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