

## Encouraging Excellence

Second Annual Helen Brown Music Competition is slated for June 7 at Tarbut V'Torah.

By Ilene Schneider

When the first annual Helen Brown Music Competition was held on June 22, 2008, at Tarbut V'Torah Community High School in Irvine, its objective was to encourage excellence in music performance among today's Jewish students. It was a great success with 50 entries from both Orange and Los Angeles Counties and high standards of performance.

The jury was made up of three prominent mu-

sicians: Leonid Levitsky, Kevin Bachelder, and Phillip Levy. The first three winners in each category received cash prizes, and fourth place winners received commemorative trophies. It was an inspirational event for many, and it has received positive reviews from parents and students, as well as teachers and audience members.

The idea was launched through the collaboration of two OC music teachers, Inessa Khurgel and Jennifer Goldin. Jennifer Goldin

comes from a family where music played a big role. Her mother, Helen Brown, after whom the competition is named, not only nurtured a love of music in her own family but also worked in the broader community, helping run performing arts events and competitions. Inessa Khurgel, who also studied music from early childhood, is founder of a successful concert series, Classical Music Encounters of Orange County. Her efforts have brought first-rate musicians and mu-

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These four students were winners in the youngest age group (under 9) in last year's Helen Brown Music Competition. They are Ariel Hirschberg, Clara Rosenberg, Kevin Tavangari, and Benjamin Krasner.

sic-loving audiences together since 2000.

Jews have been well represented in the world of classical music: Isaac Stern, Yehudi Menuhin, and Yitzhak Pearlman, to name a few. Will this gift of beauty and inspiration from the Jewish community continue? Goldin believes that "Our children are no longer that serious about playing an instrument excellently or in fact about playing at all. In a world of short attention span

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and plenty of variety of after school activities, from cheerleading to basketball to video games, learning to play a musical masterpiece really well is just too time consuming and not rewarding fast enough."

Both teachers felt that the standard of performance among our students needs a boost. Dedication, discipline, and passion to succeed often seems to be missing, they decided. To continue a tradition of musical excellence, adults need to step in and encourage the love of beauty in music and spiritual enhancement through music, according to Khurgel. Thus, Helen Brown Music Competi-

tion aims to turn the attention of the community to classical music performance in a fun and competitive way, and to encourage Jewish music students to achieve excellence in performance.

Entries and audition registration forms are due by April 20, and the final round of the competition will take place at TVT on June 7. At this event, finalists will perform in front of a live audience and judges. Then winners will be announced and awarded cash prizes. All participants will receive adjudications on their performance.

Categories include all instruments as well as vocal performance, ensembles, and choirs. There are five age categories from age 9 and under to adult. Early intermediate, intermediate, and advanced students are all welcome to audition.

For inquiries and to request brochures with application forms, please contact Jennifer Goldin at (949) 262-1124, Inessa Khurgel at (949) 509-7766 (phone) or (949) 509-7076 (fax), or email: Helenbrowncompetition@hotmail.com.



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