

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **KING AWARD FOR YOUNG ARTISTS PIANO COMPETITION ANNOUNCES MEDAL WINNERS**

The Salina Symphony's 1<sup>st</sup> annual King Award for Young Artists Piano Competition, held April 3 & 4 at Kansas Wesleyan University, awarded \$8,500 in cash prizes to three medal winners.

The top prize went to Gold Medal winner Behzod Abduraimov, who was awarded \$5,000 and will return to Salina in the fall to perform with the Symphony at its 2009-2010 season opener on October 11.

Originally from Uzbekistan, Abduraimov has made public appearances in the United States, Italy, Russia and Uzbekistan. At just 18 years of age, he has won numerous competitions all over the world and was named "Musician of XXI Century" by the International Competition in Kazakhstan. Abduraimov is currently pursuing his bachelor of music degree at the International Center for Music at Park University in Parkville, Missouri, studying under Van Cliburn International Piano Competition Gold Medalist Stanislav Ioudenitch.

The Silver Medal and a \$2,500 cash prize was awarded to Nicholas Susi, age 21, currently a senior at the University of Kansas. Susi won the Spire Piano Competition in Omaha, Nebraska, in 2008 and will solo with the Omaha Symphony Orchestra in April.

Claiming the Bronze Medal and a \$1,000 cash prize was Dr. James Cockman III, age 26, a student at the University of Kansas. Cockman won both the MTNA Young Artists Missouri State Competition and the Naftzger Competition (Wichita, Kansas) in 2008.

This year's competition invited pianists between the ages of 18 and 26 studying at universities in Kansas, Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska or Oklahoma to enter. Plans are underway to add additional categories for next year's competition. For more information, contact the Salina Symphony at 785.823.8309.

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Photo information: Pictured (l-r) are King Award medal winners James Cockman III, Behzod Abduraimov and Nicholas Susi.