

The Kendall National Violin Competition recently featured, see below, in the UK based *Gig* magazine. *Gig Inc International Arts Manager* (IAM) is the pioneering fortnightly news and recruitment magazine for classical music and performing arts executives. Following *Gig's* merger with *International Arts Manager* magazine, approximately 20,000 industry professionals including chief executives, managers, directors and administrators read *Gig* every two weeks.

When hunting for sponsorship, most organisations turn to government arts councils or private donors for help. Australia's Kendall National Violin Competition (KNVC), however, asked for funding from an obvious yet often overlooked source – the timber industry. 'I had the idea that the forestry department should be the very people interested in the use of Australian timber, and this would have to be the most wonderful use you could give to it' recalls Elaine van Kempen, president of the Competition. When she met with the Director General of Forests NSW, a division of the Department of Primary Industry, she took various pieces of a violin in a case. "I said, I've got a good idea for you. People in the timber industry talk about value-adding, and is this not the best piece of value-adding you've ever seen?" He said, "You're absolutely right, we're in!" The department has been sponsoring the competition for the last 12 years.

Soon after, van Kempen approached Australian Solar Timbers, a timber mill 100 km away – 'which isn't far in Australia' – to ask them about sponsorship as well. "They also happen to be music lovers", she explains. While they have contributed funding since the beginning to assist with the general running of the competition, they offered to do more a few years ago and introduced the AU\$4,000 (€2,600) TimberLay International Travel Scholarship so that a young violinist could take a masterclass with a leading musician in Europe.

A former timber milling village, Kendall is on the mid-north coast of New South Wales, about four hours' drive north of Sydney. The community atmosphere runs high, with just 750 residents; van Kempen adds that a number of private residents and local organisations sponsor additional \$500 prizes (such as audience choice) for finalists.

Open only to Australian citizens and residents, the KNVC has its roots in 1998 when Kendall resident and luthier Graham Caldersmith offered to donate an Australian wood violin as a prize for a small local competition started by a few community members interested in classical music. Associate Professor Goetz Richter at Sydney Conservatorium, then also Chair of the String Unit, insisted that the competition be national and KNVC was born. Soon after, Richter played the violin to Yehudi Menuhin, who agreed to be the first patron.

"We went after music schools in Australia and music teachers, and it was obvious from the response we got that there was a need for this and we were filling a gap", van Kempen says. Today, about 20 violinists aged 23 or younger from around the country apply to take part in the Competition where Caldersmith donates a concert violin as the winner's prize. Semi-finals are held at Government House in Sydney but the four finalists always perform in the Kendall School of Arts. "The Kendall hall can only hold 160 people; if you don't get your tickets early, you don't get in", van Kempen states. "And that's fine, we don't want it to be bigger than that, we want to retain that intimate atmosphere that everybody responds to, including the young violinists." In addition to other prizes, the winner is also given a recital tour in Sydney and Newcastle the following April.

Since the competition started, many of the winners and finalists have gone on to international careers with orchestras such as the Hallé, the Concertgebouw and the Berlin Philharmonic. The 2005 winner, Ray Chen, won last year's Queen Elisabeth Competition in Belgium. 'People here follow their careers with great interest' van Kempen notes.