



Lady Anna Cowen presents Yehonatan (Yoni) Margolin with his award at last year's B'nai B'rith Jewish Youth Music Eisteddfod.

Photo: Peter Haskin

B'NAI B'RITH JEWISH YOUTH MUSIC EISTEDDFOD

Young performers strive for musical excellence

PETER KOHN

SOME 50 soloists and 20 ensembles, comprising around 125 young musicians, are taking part in this year's Jewish Youth Music Eisteddfod organised by B'nai B'rith Victoria.

The recipient of the grand prize, valued at \$1000, will be decided at a finals concert to be held on September 2.

This year's competition comprises various sections, including classic and contemporary vocals, a Hebrew and Yiddish choir, a vocal ensemble, an instrumental ensemble, classic and contemporary woodwind, classic violin, viola and cello, and classic and contemporary piano, with each section catering to various age brackets.

Andrew Kolb, the eisteddfod's coordinator, who in 2014 revived the annual competition, a traditional B'nai B'rith event for many years, pointed out it is the only Jewish eisteddfod in Australia and does not replicate what any other Jewish organisation is doing.

As most Australian eisteddfods are held on Saturdays, observant Jewish musicians are unable to participate, and the officially recognised Jewish Youth Music Eisteddfod gives them that opportunity, Kolb explained.

Furthermore, he said, the competition, in line with B'nai B'rith's values, "acts as a bridge through all streams of Judaism".

"Our main purpose isn't that it's a contest, but that the vocalists and musicians can perform to a live audience, they get some feedback from the adjudicators," Kolb told *The AJN*.

"It's especially good for the years 11 and 12 students, as it's just before their music exams, so the feedback they get from the adjudicators might help them with the pieces they're performing for the exams."

For Yehonatan (Yoni) Margolin, who attends Bialik College, the Jewish Youth Music Eisteddfod has been a very positive experience. The 13-year-old, who was born in Israel, began studying music at the

age of six.

Yoni, whose grandfather was first trumpeter with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra for 40 years, won first place in the classical piano section of the 2016 eisteddfod and in the contemporary piano section of last year's competition.

"Winning the competition [in 2017] ... was probably one of the happiest moments in my life," he said.

"Apart from winning, the whole eisteddfod was one magical night and it was all thanks to the organisers, my teacher who also accompanied me, and the supportive, shining audience."

Yoni counts Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 21* and *No. 24* and Rachmaninoff's *Concerto No. 3* as among his favourites.

The 2018 B'nai B'rith Jewish Youth Music Eisteddfod will be held at the main auditorium, Glen Eira Town Hall, Sunday, September 2 at 2pm. For further information, contact Frances Stiglec, B'nai B'rith Victoria, (03) 9576 1116; council@bbvic.org