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**Dr. Inder Verma and Osvaldo Golijov  
Named Recipients of  
the 2008 Vilcek Foundation Prizes**

**Prizes to be Awarded at Annual Awards Dinner on Wednesday, March 26, 2008**

**New York, February 4, 2008** - The Vilcek Foundation has announced the names of the recipients of its annual prizes in biomedical research and in the arts. **Dr. Inder Verma** is the prize recipient for biomedical science; the prize recipient for the arts is composer **Osvaldo Golijov**. The Vilcek Foundation Prizes are awarded annually to foreign-born individuals for extraordinary contributions to society in the United States.

In explaining the motivation for the awards, Dr. Jan T. Vilcek, President of The Vilcek Foundation said, "We should not have to be reminded of how much America owes to people who were born abroad, but we do. Historically, the United States has innumerable foreign-born individuals to thank for establishing it as a leader in the sciences and arts, and in many other fields as well. In awarding The Vilcek Foundation Prizes, our primary objective is to raise awareness of that reality. We should not forget that so much of what this country takes credit for is the achievement of immigrants."

Marica Vilcek, Vice-President of the Foundation, added: "As the only foundation to recognize the outstanding contributions of foreign-born individuals to the biomedical sciences and the arts, we are in a privileged position to shine a spotlight on leaders such as Dr. Verma and Mr. Golijov, whose achievements we are pleased to honor this year."

A \$50,000 cash award and a commemorative trophy created by designer Stefan Sagmeister will be presented to Dr. Verma and Mr. Golijov during The Foundation's third annual awards dinner on Wednesday, March 26, 2008 at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in New York. The two prize winners were chosen by independent panels of experts.

**About the Prize Recipients**

**Dr. Inder M. Verma** is an American Cancer Society Professor of Molecular Biology in the Laboratory of Genetics at The Salk Institute in La Jolla, California and one of the world's leading authorities on the development and use of engineered viruses for gene therapy. Dr. Verma was born in India, received a master's degree from Lucknow University, and a Ph.D. from The Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovoth, Israel. After postdoctoral study at MIT in the laboratory of the Nobel laureate David Baltimore, he joined the faculty of The Salk Institute at age 26.

Dr. Verma's major research interests are cellular genes whose alteration can cause cancer and the development of techniques for gene therapy. Dr. Verma's group created a vector, or carrier, that is

now used worldwide for gene delivery. The genetically engineered virus is used to insert new genes into cells in a test tube; the cells can then be returned to the body, where they produce an essential protein that the body is missing. Dr. Verma's group is also studying two genes implicated in familial breast cancer, BRCA1 and BRCA2, and recently demonstrated that their action is linked to the cell's division cycle and that BRCA1 regulates gene activity.

When the field of biotechnology was in its infancy, the Government of India invited Dr. Verma to join a task force charged with the goal to position the country as a leader in biotechnology. Dr. Verma has traveled to India every year for the past 37 years; he has lectured there on the topic of gene therapy, visited many institutions and advised a number of colleagues, young investigators and students.

For his many outstanding accomplishments, Dr. Verma was elected to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and as a Foreign Fellow to the National Academy of Sciences, India. Dr. Verma was also elected to the Third World Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society.

**Osvaldo Golijov** grew up in an Eastern European Jewish household in La Plata, Argentina. Born to a piano teacher mother and physician father, Mr. Golijov was surrounded by classical chamber music, Jewish liturgical and klezmer music, and the new tango of Astor Piazzolla. After studying piano at the local conservatory and composition with Gerardo Gandini he moved to Israel, where he studied with Mark Kopytman at the Jerusalem Rubin Academy and immersed himself in the colliding musical traditions of that city. Upon moving to the United States in 1986, Mr. Golijov earned his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied with George Crumb, and was a fellow at Tanglewood, studying with Oliver Knussen.

In 2002, EMI released *Yiddishbbuk*, a Grammy-nominated CD of Mr. Golijov's chamber music, celebrating ten years of collaboration with the St. Lawrence String Quartet. The premiere of Mr. Golijov's *St. Mark Passion* took the music world by storm in 2000. The CD of this work received Grammy and Latin Grammy nominations in 2002. Mr. Golijov and Dawn Upshaw premiered *Ayre* at Zankel Hall and recorded it on a Grammy-nominated CD for Deutsche Grammophon in 2005. In 2006, Deutsche Grammophon released the recording of *Ainadamar*. The record earned two Grammy awards: for best opera recording and best contemporary composition.

Recently completed projects include *Azul*, a cello concerto for Yo-Yo Ma and the Boston Symphony; the soundtrack for Francis Ford Coppola's film *Youth Without Youth*; *Rose of the Winds*, commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; and *Kuai Le (Joy)*, premiered by Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble at the opening of the 2007 Special Olympics in Shanghai. Future works include a new opera, commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera.

Mr. Golijov is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship and several other awards. He was composer-in-residence for the 2007 Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center and is co-composer-in-residence, together with Marc-Anthony Turnage, at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for the next two seasons. Mr. Golijov is Loyola Professor of Music at College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA.

## About The Vilcek Foundation

The Vilcek Foundation's mission is to heighten public awareness of the contributions of immigrants to the sciences, arts and culture in the United States. The Foundation was established in 2000 by Jan and Marica Vilcek, immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia. The mission of the foundation was inspired by the couple's careers in biomedical science and art history, respectively, as well as their personal experiences and appreciation for the opportunities they received as newcomers to the United States.

Former recipients of the Vilcek Foundation Prizes include: the artists **Christo and Jeanne-Claude**; **Dr. Rudolf Jaenisch**, founding member of the Whitehead Institute at MIT; **Dr. Joan Massagué**, Chairman of the Cancer and Biology Genetics Program at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center; and architect and urban planner **Denise Scott Brown**. In addition to awarding annual prizes in the biomedical science and arts and humanities, the Vilcek Foundation will also showcase the work of innovative artists, designers, filmmakers, and others, many of them immigrants who have yet to achieve critical or financial success, at its new headquarters at 167 East 73<sup>rd</sup> Street in New York City.

For more information about The Vilcek Foundation please visit [www.vilcek.org](http://www.vilcek.org).

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