

# THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS

1

2020

Claire  
Huangci

*Camaraderie  
at Paris  
Play-Direct  
Academy*

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THE WORLD FEDERATION  
OF INTERNATIONAL  
MUSIC COMPETITIONS



C. BECHSTEIN

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# EDITORIAL

## *Camaraderie!*

We are delighted to present the third edition of our magazine about the intricate and exciting world of piano competitions. No less delighted are we to witness that more and more of these institutions are evolving from battlegrounds into festivals or trying to, where in a spirit of camaraderie (as Claire Huangci states in this magazine) young artists can present themselves to the public and those who can help further their careers.

The competitive element will always remain but as Gerrit Glaner, head of C&A at Steinway, points out, the moments when candidates help each other and forget about the rivalry, are to be cherished.

Similar to previous editions, we take a closer look at competitions from different perspectives, and we are very pleased to do so with a team of international experts. We would like to express our gratitude to our partners: World Federation of International Music Competitions, European Union of Music Competitions for Youth, Alink-Argerich Foundation and Piano Street. We wish all those involved in competitions the best of luck and much joy in their work, and the young artists especially lots of success!

### ERIC SCHOONES



#### **Henk Brüger sr., Founder/Owner PIANIST**

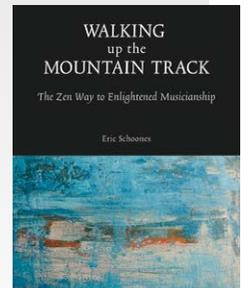
His firm BCM publishes over 40 magazines, especially in equestrian sports (*L'Année Hippique*, *Horse International* etc.) and music (*Luister*, *Jazzism*, together with North Sea Jazz Festival).

Henk organized 18 international equestrian events every year in Berlin, Frankfurt, Monaco, Paris, Brussels, and last but not least the *Pavarotti International* at the request of Pavarotti himself, who had a great passion for horses. For 22 years Henk worked with the *Spanische Hofreitschule* in Vienna, world famous for its combination of dressage and music. Henk Brüger founded the World Cup for Dressage *Kür on Music*.



#### **Eric Schoones, Editor-in-chief PIANIST**

Trained as a pianist and musicologist, he has been writing about music for decades. Recently, he published *Walking up the Mountain Track – The Zen Way to Enlightened Musicianship*, a book on the fascinating links between music making and Zen Buddhism. He is active as a pianist and lecturer, and is frequently invited as a jury member to international piano competitions. At present, he is engaged in writing his sixth book on sustainability and the circular economy. In his program *Sustainable Notes*, together with jazz-singer Sofie Dhondt, Eric explains the principles of this new economy through music.



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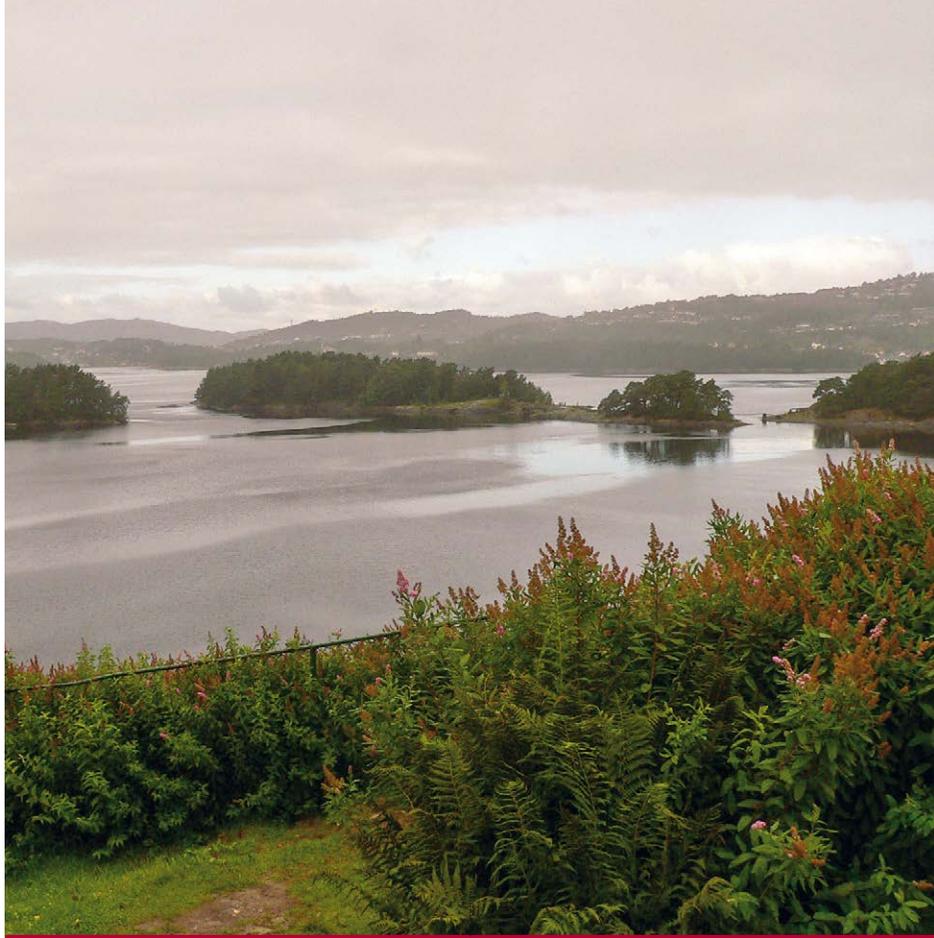
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### Stay updated!

For upcoming application deadlines etc. check:

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THE WORLD FEDERATION  
OF INTERNATIONAL  
MUSIC COMPETITIONS

### WORLD FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL MUSIC COMPETITIONS

The World Federation of International Music Competitions is dedicated to establishing a global network of internationally recognised organisations that discover the most promising young talents through public competition in the great tradition of classical music and further their careers by presenting them before distinguished juries, general audiences, the media, and the rest of the music community. The WFIMC is a Member of the International Music Council and some 122 of the world's leading music competitions belong to the Federation. A number of important international music organisations are associate members of the WFIMC.

[wfimc-fmcim.org](http://wfimc-fmcim.org)



European Union of Music  
Competitions for Youth

### EUROPEAN UNION OF MUSIC COMPETITIONS FOR YOUTH

EMCY is a network of national and international music competitions for young people across Europe. We believe that music competitions stimulate passionate musicianship. For many, they're a first glimpse of performing in public, playing in ensembles, or of breaking out of orthodox repertoire. They foster a sense of healthy self-assessment, can help conquer nerves, and motivate practise. Young people can be inspired by experiencing fresh interpretations and discovering new works and other European cultures. We do not think of competitions as the end of the learning process: for us, they are the beginning.

[www.emcy.org](http://www.emcy.org)



### ALINK-ARGERICH FOUNDATION

An independent and objective Information and Service Centre for Musicians and Competitions, founded by Gustav Alink together with Martha Argerich. AAF supports musicians and competition organisers and gives them assistance and advice. AAF focuses specifically on the International Piano Competitions worldwide. More than 190 international piano competitions and organisations are affiliated with AAF as AAF member competitions. They are all included in the annual AAF catalogue. Gustav Alink and also other AAF staff members frequently visit piano competitions, report on them and are constantly available to provide assistance whenever needed to the organisers, jury members and participants.

[www.alink-argerich.org](http://www.alink-argerich.org)



### PIANO STREET

PianoStreet.com operates worldwide from Stockholm in Sweden and was formed from the administrative base of Piano Forum, the world's largest discussion forum on piano playing on the Internet (more than 600 000 postings). The resource is Internet based and provides a sheet music library, all pieces in the digital library are connected to recordings in Naxos Music Library. There also are pedagogical materials. Members can also enjoy e-books, autograph manuscripts, mobile sheet music, the Audio Visual Study Tool (AST), a music dictionary, practice tips, etc. Piano Street has over 200 000 members worldwide.

[www.pianostreet.com](http://www.pianostreet.com)



The International Edvard Grieg Piano Competition (IEGPC) is a biennial competition, hosted by the Edvard Grieg Museum Trolldhaugen in Bergen, Norway. With concert opportunities, prize money, quality video recordings and visibility, IEGPC aims to be an important stepping stone for young professional pianists on the verge of international careers.

# International Edvard Grieg Piano Competition

Three preliminary rounds are held in the Troldsalen concert hall, neighbouring Edvard Grieg's original villa from 1885. Sitting at the Steinway grand piano, one has a view over the lake and over Grieg's little red composer's hut. This humble and historic atmosphere creates special moments between the performer, the piano and the audience. We are excited to offer these experiences to 30 pianists from all over the world. And with a dedicated team to stream the competition online, we invite the world to Bergen between September 12 and 20, 2020.

The preliminaries have free admission, and the audience is invited to take part in the daily Listeners' Forum. The Final takes place in the Grieg Hall with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra. Three finalists will compete for a total of 62,000 euros in prize money and engagements.

Participants who are not admitted to the second or the third round, are offered paid concert opportunities, and semi-finalists who are not admitted to the finals, receive 1,500 euros. Special prizes are given for a complete opus by Grieg, and the commissioned work *Notturmo* by Norwegian composer Ørjan Matre.

All jury votes are published in order to ensure the highest level of transparency, and IEGPC practices strict rules regarding impartiality. IEGPC provides equal opportunity for all, and holds itself to the highest standards of a modern musical competition.

IEGPC strives to be more than just a competition. Bergen is a city with age-old musical traditions, and all activities are centred around the openness and hospitality that the populace is rightly famous for. The candidates stay with host families, and the competition week is filled with excursions, lectures, master classes and social events.

The competition has been a member of the Alink-Argerich Foundation since 2004, and has also been a member of the World Federation of International Music Competitions since 2017. The competition is made possible by the generosity of the foundation Stiftelsen Kristian Gerhard Jebsen.

**Application deadline:** April 20, 2020

**Competition dates:** September 12-20, 2020

[www.griegcompetition.com](http://www.griegcompetition.com)

# A UNIQUE CONCEPT

## Paris Play-Direct Academy Orchestre de Chambre de Paris & Steinway

More and more soloists are leading the orchestra from the piano, but pianists are rarely equipped with even basic conducting skills. Now the Paris Play-Direct Academy – a joint initiative of the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris and Steinway – are setting out to change that having given four young pianists a unique opportunity to work intensely with an orchestra. Claire Huangci who won the first prize and Gerrit Glaner, president of the jury, tell the story.

Claire Huangci: “In the end it was not really a competition. We were only four candidates and there was a good feeling of camaraderie, it was more like a festival atmosphere and I learned so much.

It was my first time conducting, but I use the word ‘conducting’ very loosely. I have always enjoyed observing conductors when I play concertos. I was fascinated by what they do and I wondered how it felt. They make it look so easy, so natural. But when I faced the orchestra myself for the first time, I realized just how big a responsibility I had. When playing a concerto, I know where all the main entries come in; I know when the solo clarinet has a theme, and when you must have eye contact with the second violins, but this is merely the tip of the iceberg compared to what a conductor must do. A conductor has to inspire, and live in the moment and

yet always has to think a split second ahead of the orchestra. That first day, I was astonished at how much conducting goes beyond knowing the score perfectly. Conducting is a way of communication and finding the balance between confidence and open dialogue with an orchestra, finding an interpretation together. There is a lot of compromising without speaking so much, which makes music the universal language. It’s something you cannot learn without doing. This Academy was indispensable and without it, I might never have been able to realize my dream of leading an orchestra.

Leading and playing with the Orchestra Chambre de Paris was one of the most exhausting experiences! I think it was also one of the most immersive music-making experiences that I have ever had. Not a split second goes by in the piece where you’re not 100%

## Claire Huangci

began her international career at the tender age of nine with concert performances and competitive successes. A student of Gary Graffman and Arie Vardi, she won first prizes at the Chopin Competitions in Darmstadt and Miami in 2009 and 2010. She also became the youngest participant to receive second prize at the International ARD Music Competition in 2011. In 2018, at the Geza Anda Competition, she won first prize and Mozart prize. She is also one of the pianists who will be performing the Beethoven Liszt Symphonies in the upcoming Ruhr Piano Festival.

involved. About one week after Paris, I played the Clara Schumann piano concerto, which is very physically demanding, yet it felt so easy with the conductor taking that part of the responsibility. I have always had very good experiences with conductors in competitions. They react so quickly, never was there the feeling we didn't have enough rehearsal time. They understand the high pressure atmosphere and try to support the candidates in the easiest way possible.

Playing for the first time with orchestra in a competition can be hard, but it can also be refreshing. For me, playing with an orchestra is an exhilarating experience: you get so much energy from the orchestra, just from the excitement of sharing a stage with so many musicians. My first experience was when I was eight in America, and I remember thinking this is so much more fun than playing alone!

I genuinely believe that being in competitions helps you gain confidence as a musician and gives you the ability to perform your best with extremely high stakes and to be judged by professionals.

There are a few very lucky people who go to competitions and always win. But I learned defeat, and am thankful for those moments. The best lesson is when you learn humility, how to pick yourself up from being in a dark place and see the positive things that come out of that experience. I've been to some of the biggest competitions, and after preparing for six months to a year, it is a very big fall when you don't make it to the finals. What you learn from the aftermath, that is what helped me grow a great deal personally. I agree when people say you need to have nerves of steel to compete. However, you also need to be human and open – that is indispensable for making music.

There was a time when I hated competitions, but today, looking back at them from a broader perspective, I feel only gratitude. Taking part in competitions is never a pleasant experience, but by pulling yourself out of your comfort zone... great things can come of it! Today, there are so many competitions and winners. It's an issue on how to differentiate one from the other, but where there is a will, there is a way!"

From left to right: Mario Häring, participant; Lars Vogt, Artistic Curator; Lydia Connolly, Harrison Parrott; (covered by Claire Huangci: Aglaja Thiesen, Mahler Chamber Orchestra); Claire Huangci, participant; Christian Merlin, Le Figaro; Dinara Klinton, participant; Gerrit Glaner, Steinway & Sons; Théo Fouchenneret participant; Sebastien Surel, Concert Master; Emmanuel Hondré, Philharmonie de Paris; Rachel Cheung, PPDA Winner 2017; Chrysoline Dupont and Nicolas Droin, both Orchestre de Chambre de Paris.



BERNARD TALGO



## Gerrit Glaner,

Head of C&A at Steinway in Hamburg was chairman of the jury who selected the candidates from four competitions of the Steinway Prizewinner Concerts Network: Claire Huangci (first prize Géza Anda Competition, 2018), Mario Häring (second prize in Leeds, 2018), Dinara Klinton (third prize in Cleveland, 2018) and Théo Fouchenneret (first prize Geneva, 2018).

## Gerrit Glaner, Steinway & Sons

“Today the discipline of conducting as a soloist is not taught at a high level anywhere. Obviously it is difficult to organize as you need an orchestra that really is open to this. But in Paris you have this incredible professional orchestra, 42 chamber musicians, who devote themselves entirely to four youngsters for a whole week. All soloists played one movement of a concerto, so that they could really get to the core of the music.

The competitive element was not the most prominent matter and although there is rivalry at competitions, one can stay respectful and friendly and everybody should be. At competitions I often see that musicians help each other, even when the other one is better and one gets eliminated oneself. Those moments should be cherished. Another advantage here was that all candidates could listen to each other with the orchestra and learn, as they only had one movement of a concerto to play and study. Lars Vogt, highly experienced himself at playing and conducting simultaneously, was the Master of Ceremony so to speak and he did a great job as their mentor. The competition element was not that serious, it was not like getting 30,000 bucks in Moscow. It was a different story. And it works both ways: competition winners get to be part of this academy as a prize, and they also get concerts from the academy. Already in January 2020, Claire Huangci has played her first Steinway Prizewinner Concert in the excellent concert series of the Louisiana

Museum of Modern Art in Denmark. Three more will follow at the Società Filarmonica Trento, The Edvard Grieg Museum Trolldhaugen at Grieg’s original Steinway grand and in the series of the Dubai Concert Comitée.

We didn’t have only first prizewinners. In sports number one is objectively the best, but in music a ranking between the first three in a competition doesn’t really make sense. The best proof is the question: ‘who was the better pianist: Horowitz or Rubinstein?’ Everyone has his own answer – and it is right.

I try to please everyone, competitions, pianists, concert organizers, but after all, our main target group is the audience. I have seen competitions with 50 people in the hall – shouldn’t it be full?

We have to make our concerts rich and interesting, the concert goes more curious about the youth. At almost every concert at the Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, for example, people from the audience ask us to please continue with our Steinway Prizewinner Concerts in the next season. That is the best possible response! Of course we do!

The PPDA it is something special. For organisers this is a completely different kettle of fish, but I would like to export this excellent idea of the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris to other orchestras because it puts everyone involved in a different limelight.”

**ERIC SCHOONES**

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# Bechstein- Bruckner Competition

CAROLINE DOUTRE

Michel  
Dalberto

C. Bechstein Pianoforte AG will organize the Bechstein-Bruckner Competition Austria on May 25th and 26th, 2020 in cooperation with the Brucknerhaus Linz. The competition serves to promote young pianists from a total of nine Austrian music academies and conservatories, which offer a course for “piano solo”. The auditions are public and will take place free of charge.

The winner can look forward to a concert engagement as part of the C. Bechstein piano evenings at the Brucknerhaus Linz on June 10, 2020 with a guaranteed fee of 3,000 euros. The second prize is 2,000 euros and the third prize is 1,000 euros. In addition, in the first round, the organizers will award a special prize worth 500 euros for the best interpretation of the compulsory piece, the *Fantasie G major WAB 118* by Anton Bruckner, and in the second round a special prize worth 500 euros for the best interpretation of the obligatory piano sonata in F major KV 332 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

The competition jury consists of three top-class pianists, Prof. Michel Dalberto (Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse de Paris), Prof. Roland Krüger (University of Music, Drama and Media Hanover) and Prof. Konstantin Lifschitz (Lucerne School of Music). These piano professors do not teach in Austria and have no personal relationship with any of the participants.

Each of the institutions had the right to nominate a participant for the Bechstein-Bruckner competition in advance. The participating pianists, conservatories and universities:

- **Joseph Haydn Conservatory of the State of Burgenland/Eisenstadt**  
**Julian Yo Hedenbor** from Salzburg (Austria),  
taught by Prof. Dr. Stanislaw Tichonow
- **University of Music and Performing Arts Graz**  
**Anfisa Bobylova** from Russia, taught by Libor Novacek
- **Tyrolean State Conservatory/Innsbruck**  
**Valentina Erler** from Tyrol (Austria), taught by Prof. Shao-Yin Huang
- **Carinthian State Conservatory/Klagenfurt**  
**Jeongsun An** from South Korea, taught by Lorenzo Cossi
- **Anton Bruckner Private University Linz**  
**Sebastian Galli** from Freistadt (Upper Austria),  
taught by Clemens Zeilinger
- **University Mozarteum Salzburg**  
**Su-Yeon Kim** from South Korea, taught by Prof. Pavel Gililov
- **Vorarlberg State Conservatory/Feldkirch**  
**Nicola Schöni** from Switzerland, taught by Anna Adamik
- **Music and Art Private University of the City of Vienna**  
**Hugo Alonso Llanos Campos** from Rancagua (Chile),  
taught by Klaus Sticken
- **University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna**  
**Irma Gigani** from Tblisi (Georgia), taught by Prof. Stefan Arnold

The auditions will take place on May 25 and 26, 2020 from 10 a.m. to around 5 p.m. in the Brucknerhaus Linz. Admission is free.

## Gilles Ledure

After various positions at La Monnaie, the Belgian National Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, the Orchestre National de Lille and the Lille Piano Festival, Gilles Ledure has been managing the Flagey house of culture in Brussels. And last year's violin edition at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels was his maiden trip as the Chairman of the Jury.



LANDER LOECKX

# Patience, prudence, long-term thinking

**Mr Ledure: a perfectly bilingual, exemplary Belgian who has an obvious love and taste for the piano. Two clear reasons for making you the Chairman of the Queen Elisabeth competition's jury.**

*Moreover the piano is the instrument I play myself. But indeed: this somewhat forgotten, charming bilingualism, which is typical for those institutions that cherish the Belgian communities' equality, is a great advantage around here. Equally important are the facts that, turning 50 this year, I'm not a rookie anymore, and that as a music programmer, I know virtually everybody who sits on the jury, or who qualifies for it. That is with the exception of the opera and singing world, which is so highly specific that Bernard Foccroulle has been asked as Chairman of the Jury for the singing competition. Funnily enough, Bernard was my first boss, 25 years ago at La Monnaie. We have been organisers for a quarter of a century. That makes us doers in the first place, while working as a Chairman of the Jury mainly requires talking and using diplomacy. The competition starts long before people are entering the hall. Everything is discussed in advance: which parameters are to be assessed? What about old music? What about music after Rachmaninov?*

**Is there a policy to avoid that, as we once did with the Germans in football, because in the end it's always Rachmaninov 3 or Prokofiev 2 who win?**

*Policy is a heavy word. One can make a recipe that is perfect theoretically, but in the end it is the quality of the ingredients that you depend on.*

**Does the jury deliberate, having actual discussions?**

*No. Everyone gives points and delivers them. Sometimes the result is quite surprising, precisely because no compromises are negotiated. Discussions on aesthetics are endless and highly subjective. Moreover, members of the jury who are opponents instead of colleagues, rarely come back next time.*

**But one must not ignore the different kinds of prejudice that jury members bring to the table. They all have perfect ears, but nevertheless their opinions often are miles apart.**

*That is true. In order to rule out this kind of thing as much as we possibly can, we make sure the jury is large and varied. By the way: finding a jury is not always easy. Members have to be available for*

*quite a long period, which is less than obvious for musicians with a busy concert schedule. Being on a jury is tiresome, and of course a financial drain in comparison to concert life at the top.*

**Which qualities are important for a chairman?**

*Patience, prudence, long-term thinking. It's all a kind of new to me, come to think of it (laughs).*

**Being an organiser is about sharing the things you cherish. A competition has important features that are explicitly non-musical. There is no rival in a real-life concert situation.**

*As a matter of fact, there is, in a way. Of course, you don't play music in order to be better than the others. Great winners, by the way, don't even do so in a competition. In fact, that's why they are great winners. But there is a reason most people don't become musicians: standing naked in front of 2,000 listeners requires quite a special psychology. I'm not talking about narcissism, I'm talking about danger, audacity and courage. You want to be on stage? Then live up to it. You cannot be a surgeon if you can't stand the sight of blood.*

**Surgeons don't have to decide who does the 'best' pancreas surgery.**

*I think most people don't do what they do because of the pleasure of beating someone. But in any profession that can be practiced right or wrong, one will be compared eventually. You will end up in the arena.*

**That is the human condition, of course. But making it the name of the game is something different, don't you think?**

*I don't agree. I listen to about 150 concerts a year. At Flagey I know virtually everybody. Each night there are people thanking me, and others who are asking me why on earth I put this evening's show on the programme. The public is heterogeneous. No doubt there is a slightly mundane side to this kind of competition. But I have been following the Queen Elisabeth Competition myself since I was ten, and I never wondered nor speculated about my favourite player's chances or strategy. I just went from musical discovery to musical discovery.*

**How is it to be the very poster boy of it?**

*It might be the greatest gift that has ever been given to me.*

**RUDY TAMBUYSER**



Gilbert Varga conducted the finals at the Queen Elisabeth Competition from 2001 to 2012, working with first prize winners now well established, such as Severin von Eckardstein, Sergei Khachatryan and Anna Vinnitskaya.

**Gilbert Varga**

studied violin from the age of four with his father, Tibor Varga, a famous Hungarian violinist and conductor. He is chairman of the jury of the International Violin Competition Henri Marteau. Varga has conducted most of the world's finest orchestras during his career and has held titled positions on many continents. He is currently Principal Conductor of the Pannon Philharmonic Orchestra in Pécs, Hungary.

# Listen!

My first recollection of a competition was of my father's violin competition in Switzerland. I was a kid, selling tickets, and at that time I learned to hate competitions. I was well aware of the horrible situation for candidates from the communist countries. I remember vividly, I was 13 at the time, after the final rounds of one of those competitions there was a young girl from Bulgaria crying, saying "if I don't get a prize I will not be able to leave my country anymore". There was huge stress especially for the Russians for political reasons, and jury members were under pressure as well. I never participated, and much later I became more and more aware of the fact how important competitions are. All competitions have to be perfectly organised, on the highest level, to give participants the best circumstances and best opportunities. Moreover, the orchestra has to play in the best possible way and give the candidates the feeling they are loved and supported.

In Brussels I devoted myself exclusively to this competition for one month. Preparing the orchestra, pushing the musicians to play softer and softer, to allow the candidates to be heard. I also visited all the candidates in the Chapelle Reine Elisabeth, but I was not allowed to discuss the new piece they had to prepare in a week's time. We only talked about the romantic concerto. The orchestra had the advantage of knowing the new piece a bit longer: we had a rehearsal with the composer and we even recorded the piece for the jury, so as not to give the candidates of the first evenings the disadvantage of the jury not knowing the piece.

The candidates could choose any concerto, but in the piano session we had Rachmaninoff's Third, Tchaikovsky's First, and Prokofiev's Second and Third Concerto, sometimes multiple times. And that is a real challenge! I had a different score for every candidate, but the orchestra musicians did not. What made it even more complicated: while one candidate played in the evening, we had a dress rehearsal in the morning for the candidates of the following day. That resulted in different candidates possibly with the same concerto on one day. That could be very confusing for the orchestra, so I marked all the differences on a paper: subito piano for candidate A but forte for candidate B, for example.



FELIX BROEDE

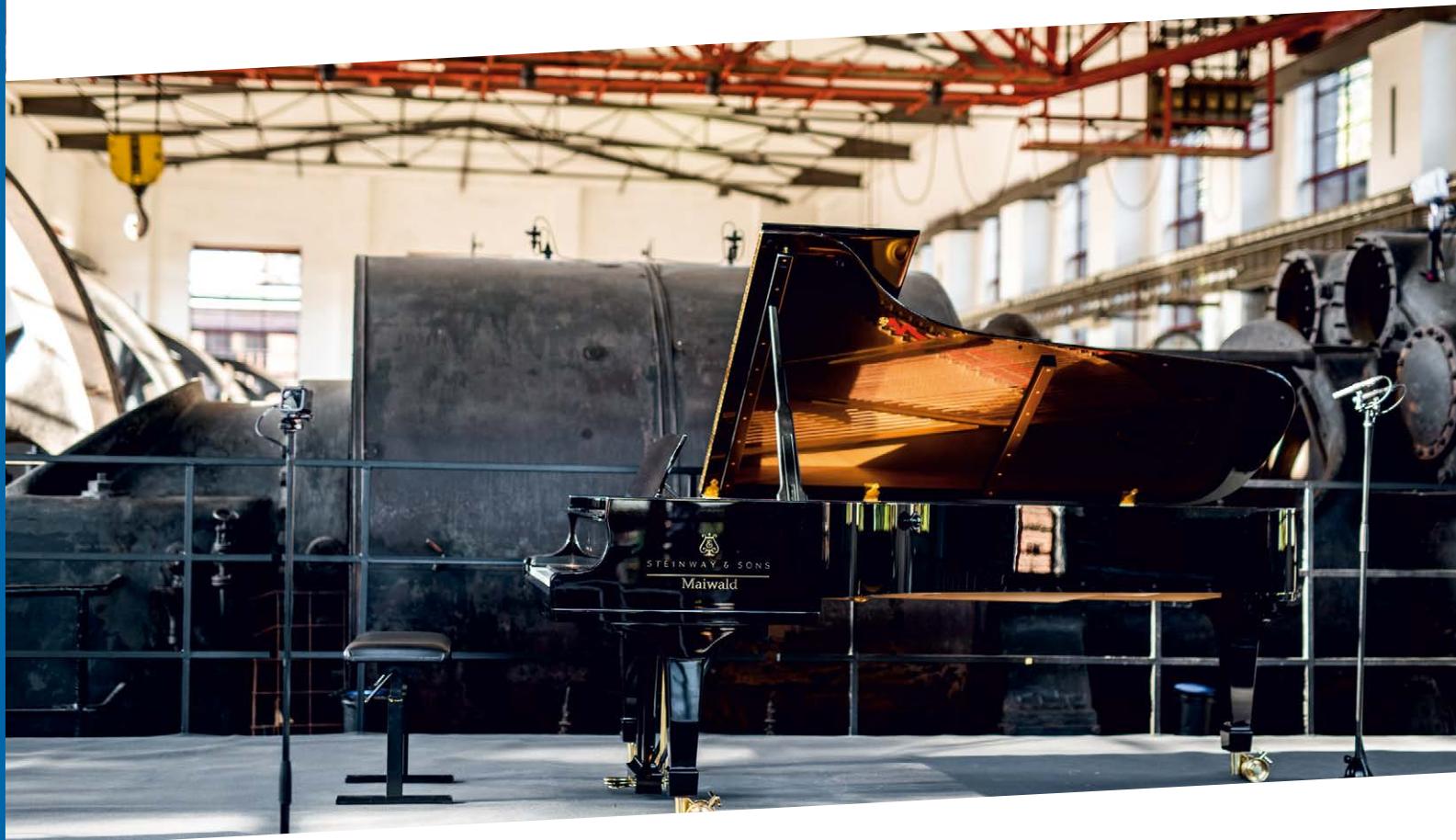
The organisation did this in the best interest of the candidates of course, to allow them to rest between rehearsal and performance. The all-important element in orchestral playing and especially at competitions is to listen! If you say "Listen!" at a rehearsal, people immediately play differently. I learned this from Sergiu Celibidache; the colours, the transparency of his sound are inimitable.

Yes, it would be an interesting thought to give the orchestra or the conductor a vote in competitions. But in Brussels I always agreed with the jury's choice for the first prize anyway. They always whispered the winner's name in my ear ten minutes before the official announcement. And all the winners I worked with are wonderful artists enjoying a successful career.

In Belgium there are two institutions that hold the country together: the kingdom and the competition. There are many things that sadly separate this wonderful country, but those two bring all Belgians together. The royals always attend practically every session and I remember lovely hours with Queen Fabiola and the present queen as well, who is always very supportive. The importance of the competition is beyond the musical aspect, it is like a national glue.

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BRUNO VESSIEZ

Peter Head

## Being on standby all the time

Steinway Concert Technician Peter Head has been with Piano's Maene in Belgium for 15 years now and he is responsible for the piano at the upcoming Queen Elisabeth Competition.

### It will be your fourth competition?

Yes, possibly there might be one more in the future, but the competition is only part of my job of course. I enjoy working at Maene very much, a very interesting company with the restoration projects and I was also involved in building the first Barenboim piano.

### Is tuning at a competition stressful?

Brussels with exclusively Steinway, is not as bad as the Chopin in Warsaw where technicians of different brands work all through the night in shifts for weeks. In Brussels the first rounds are in the Flagey, a fantastic sounding studio and then the piano is moved to the Bozar, a much bigger hall. So then the piano voiced perfectly for the Flagey now has to fill the Bozar. I wish they would use a different instrument but I understand this is to accommodate the candidates and the jury. All candidates play the same piano and in the try-out with 85 pianists each playing for ten minutes, they all try the big stuff, the Rachmaninoffs, and the piano has like ten years use in three days! The Russians usually are very happy just to have a piano in tune, but the Europeans are spoiled.

### You alone are responsible for the piano in the hall?

Yes, colleagues take care of the practice pianos and those with the

families who have the candidates living in. I start tuning at seven in the morning and my day ends around midnight. I am on standby all the time, and in the meantime I also function as a release valve for the candidate when they get stressed. We tried tuning with different technicians but it was disaster, because we all tune differently.

### Should a technician know how to play himself?

I didn't train as a musician but [laughs] I can make it sound like I know what I am doing. I really enjoy the very interesting discussions with the jury: they try the piano to know what the piano is capable of, and what candidates are capable of or not. I don't really know if the candidates play everything correctly, but from the sound they produce I can almost pick out about three-quarters of those who make it in the competition.

### You mean colours, like Severin von Eckardstein has?

Ah, yes, he is a classic example. Some pianists can do miracles. Once we had a pianist sounding just awful and Von Eckardstein was coming the next week. I prepared myself for a lot of work on the piano, but when he touched it, it sounded magical. I feel very privileged knowing artists like that.

ERIC SCHOONES

# Play it safe or commit to being personal?

Bela Bartók once stated that competitions are for horses and not musicians. He had a valid point: the very concept of a “winner” runs counter to the essence of creativity and inspired musical interpretation.



Ivo Pogorelich

With so many factors contributing to a great performance, how are jurors to decide that one reading is ‘better’ than another. While the mechanical elements can be easily graded, how does one ‘score’ an interpretation’s emotional content and conceptual cohesiveness, particularly when musical taste is subjective? Differences of opinion are a matter of fact in art – as the saying goes, *De gustibus non est disputandum* (“In matters of taste, there can be no disputes”) – but competitions require agreement amongst jurors. Performers wanting to win need to ensure that their readings do not go against any of the judges’ preferences, and it might be more than just a disagreement about one’s approach that leads to a lower score: Charles Rosen stated that Rosalyn Tureck voted against Andras Schiff at the 1975 Leeds Competition because “he played Bach better than she did.”

If a musician’s prime intent shifts from doing justice to the composer’s intentions and revealing the depth of a musical creation to wanting to ‘win’ because the prize can help their career, the flavour of their playing changes radically. The pianist will usually ‘play it safe’ by toning down a more individual use of *rubato* or other expressive nuancing that one juror might like but that another



Dinu Lipatti reading

DINULIPATTI.COM

might find too extreme – more than one competitor has told me that they avoid doing anything ‘too personal’ for this reason. If musicians are groomed to play ‘safely’ in order to win, does this approach not seep into their artistry even when not playing in competitions? Can they really play one way for a jury and another way in concert? What is the impact if the culture of classical music normalizes an ‘agreeable’ standard of musical performance as opposed to rewarding a range of individual but musically informed styles? After a university lecture in which I presented historical recordings by legendary pianists, an acclaimed musicologist in attendance stated that he believed that eight of the ten musicians we’d heard had styles so personal that they would not get past the first round in a competition today. There have been persistent allegations of some competitions being rigged in favour of a given performer’s nationality or the importance of their teacher, leading to calls for increased transparency, such as banning secret ballot voting and forbidding teachers whose students are participating from being jurors. Having competitors play anonymously would be one possible solution and would not be without precedent: the 1910 Blüthner Prize had the judges

screened from all pianists and the BBC used to hold auditions by having musicians play behind a screen. There have also been suggestions of separating jurors from one another to limit any communication (verbal or otherwise) in order to render their voting completely independent.

The value of competitions has been questioned since musicians who win don’t always develop a successful career, while those that don’t win don’t always languish in obscurity. In some cases a lower ranking might have actually increased an artist’s recognition: Dinu Lipatti, Michel Block, and Ivo Pororelich all had major jurors (Alfred Cortot, Arthur Rubinstein, and Martha Argerich respectively) protest their colleagues’ assessments, and other non-winners have had respectable careers. More recently, the evolution of technology has given a voice to the general public that a complement to the jury’s selections and could favour the underdogs. Lucas Debargue became an audience favourite when the 2015 Tchaikovsky Competition streamed online, and despite having only placed fourth, his career has taken off more than those of the higher prize winners. Despite their flaws, competitions can most definitely be tremendously beneficial to budding musicians. The capacity to play under

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pressure is tested and can be developed (that said, it was disturbing to hear one juror state that they weren't interested in finding a star artist but rather someone who could survive the process and therefore succeed in the industry). Additionally, those who get through to the final round will also have an opportunity to play with an orchestra, an experience of immeasurable value to aspiring musicians. Learning a breadth of repertoire that needs to be performed in a short space of time is also of great benefit.

The importance of the social element of such events should not be underestimated. Many participants have forged lifelong friendships thanks to their shared love of music and camaraderie as competitors. Important business connections can also be nurtured. One participant who won an honourable mention casually said hello to someone at the post-competition gala: she had already

enjoyed his playing and his personable nature sealed the deal, leading her to immediately invite him to appear in her concert series, which then led to further engagements. As Debargue said, "It's the competition, but it's also what is happening around the competition."

There are a lot of factors that contribute to a musician's success. Legendary violinist Jascha Heifetz said that "vitality, concentration, tact, and stamina" are required to live "the strenuous life of a concert artist." Business acumen and good management are also necessary for career success. While winning might not guarantee a great career, competitions can provide musicians with an opportunity to hone their skills and develop important relationships that can help them on their path.

MARK AINLEY

NEWS

# Fairness and integrity

In August 2019, the Board of Directors of the Geneva-based World Federation of International Music Competitions (WFIMC) appointed Florian Riem as Interim Secretary General.

Reporting to president Didier Schnorhk and the board, he is currently the sole executive of the federation and will lead the organisation until a new Secretary General is announced in May 2020.

Born in Munich, Germany, Florian Riem is also CEO of the Tongyeong International Music Foundation, its international music festival, and the Isang Yun Competition in Tongyeong, South Korea, a position he has held since 2014.

Originally a cellist, Riem holds a M.A. from Indiana University in Bloomington (USA), where he studied with Janos Starker. He worked as General Manager for Gidon Kremer's Kremerata Baltica Chamber Orchestra, as Managing Director



Florian Riem

SHOON KIM

for Jessye Norman, and as Chief Executive of the South-West German Philharmonic Orchestra in Germany before taking on his position in Korea.

"Representing most major competitions around the world, WFIMC sets standards and guidance to ensure that its member competitions are held at the highest artistic and operational level. Young musicians from around the world expect and appreciate the values WFIMC stands for: artistic excellence, flawless organisation, fairness, integrity. In safeguarding and sustaining these values, I am honoured to serve the Federation and its illustrious, distinguished member competitions."

## International Franz Liszt Piano Competition

# Everything in the interest of the pianists

The Utrecht Liszt Competition is evolving into one of the major events for young virtuosos. The competition has been developing new ideas constantly, and director Rob Hilberink recently pulled another rabbit out of his magical hat: a conducting competition, based on the same principles as the Liszt Competition, serving young musicians and their careers.

**The Liszt Competition has a new formula. Before the finals, nobody is sent home.**

*Yes, all candidates present themselves in three rounds. While not so many competitions have this system, it turned out very well. You know, it is such a disappointment to travel home, sometimes to the other end of the world, after only playing for 20 minutes. We also noticed candidates are better prepared knowing they are obliged to play three rounds; it is worth the investment of their time. I always have the interest of the young pianists in mind. We see the competition more like a festival, where young people can play for the public and connoisseurs. This effect is greatly enhanced by our livestream, which, with new partners in China and Korea, will probably get over one million views.*

**In your brochure it says the jury is looking for imaginative programming and repertoire choices. The repertoire has a reputation as being highly demanding.**

*With Liszt the focus is automatically on virtuosity, but also on lesser known repertoire, which is interesting for the public and a test for the candidates as well, who will likely be asked to play unusual repertoire later in their career as well. We also get fewer pianists who are hopping from one competition to the next with the same repertoire, because for our competition you really need to prepare for months.*

Second election round in New York (from left to right): Jean Dubé, Mariangela Vacatello, director Rob Hilberink and Christiaan Kuyvenhoven, the jury consisting of former Prize winners.

**In 2020, we will be awash with Beethoven and now the Liszt Competition, which was exclusively devoted to the works of Liszt, will include Beethoven in the program, so we will not be given a moment's break from this overdose of Beethoven?**

*[laughs] The fact that we are in March may perhaps be a sort of consolation. But, I think we are highlighting things that nobody else is doing this year. And do prepare yourself for the next edition, because we will have another composer next to Liszt from now on.*

**You are not going to tell me who I suppose?**

*No, but you can probably guess. Liszt was always promoting other*





Yamaha, Steinway & Sons, Fazioli and Maene on stage

*composers and it shows him from a new angle. It will be interesting to see how the other composers influenced Liszt's own development.*

**You plan the repertoire together with Leslie Howard, who knows the composer inside out.**

*Yes, we have a few very special things: three finalists will all play the piano concerto Liszt based on Beethoven's Ruins of Athens, and it's probably the only time this year it will be played. But there will also be original works by Beethoven, the Hammerklavier Sonata and his Piano Trios.*

**Are you trying to move away from attracting the super virtuoso type of pianist?**

*Of course with Liszt virtuosity is a key element, but we are interested in people who can transcend the digital acrobatics and simply tell a story, make music.*

**Of the 57 pianists who played in the selection rounds 14 are invited to participate in the competition. That puts a huge responsibility on the jury of the pre-selection. Are you happy with the result? I know you are probably not going to tell me.**

*[laughs] As a director I don't have an opinion on the individual candidates, but I am happy with the overall level and statistics; ten different nationalities including new countries like Peru, Croatia and the Czech Republic, and eight men and six women. Some have been successful in other competitions, for others it is their first time. In past editions we have always seen a huge difference between the ranking of the*

*Selection Rounds and the actual competition. So that means the nine months of preparation can give young artists a real boost!*

**You also selected the jury using special criteria.**

*Yes, all our jury members have a special affinity with Liszt, and this year, with all Beethoven/Liszt Symphonies in the repertoire, we have pianists who recorded all the symphonies: Cyprien Katsaris and Leslie Howard. But in general I want the jury to be open to help young talents and not come with hidden agendas of helping their students for example.*

**And you are hosting the Alink-Argerich Foundation conference?**

*I am very excited about that, and I am looking forward to meeting many colleagues from other competitions. We do see a competition as a festival, and try to include as many interesting side activities as possible. For instance, we also have lectures and an exhibition of the five pianos Beethoven owned in his lifetime.*

**Candidates can choose from four brands of pianos: Yamaha, Steinway & Sons, Fazioli and Maene. It sounds like a competition for piano makers too?**

*It may seem like that, but our goal is to facilitate young pianists in every possible way. That is why we also have host families for them: they have a good piano ready for them 24/7 and they enjoy the moral support of people caring for them.*

**ERIC SCHOONES**

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16 JAHRE.  
8 PREISTRÄGER.  
1 KONZERT.

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Named “The Empress of the Piano” by French newspaper *Le Figaro*, Rena Shereshevskaya is responsible for the boost and success of the young French pianist generation. Pedagogue and coach to renowned prize-winning pianists, such as Lucas Debargue, Rémi Geniet, and the latest winner of the prestigious XVI International Tchaikovsky Competition last summer, Alexandre Kantorow, makes the world wonder about the person behind the successes.

## Rena Shereshevskaya

# It's not about winning

On January 14, Shereshevskaya received the honor “Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres” by the French Ministry of Culture. With a professional background at the Moscow Conservatory and the Ippolito-Ivanov Institute, Shereshevskaya was invited to Collar International Music Festival in France in 1993 to form classes and workshops for talented young pianists. This was a pioneer's project and it took 15 years before such an initiative was introduced in France by French institutions. A Paris resident she now functions as professor at École Normale de Musique de Paris, “Alfred Cortot” and is a regular centerpiece at the Festival International de Piano La Roque d'Anthéron every summer. With such an impact it's easy to think in terms of a “magic formula”, but Shereshevskaya prefers to think in terms of creative questioning concerning the musical works, to decipher them as literature, philosophy or theatre pieces. To follow the composer's thoughts, ideas in details and to fully understand leads to a process recreating the music again together with the composer.

Shereshevskaya encourages her students to do the same and when the idea – the sense of a musical work – becomes clear for them, students may have their own ideas of interpretation. She points out

that the teacher is for the student and not the other way around and that the student must believe in her as a musician.

As a stellar pedagogue we find many of Shereshevskaya's students participating in competitions around the globe, but what really does a competition mean to the student? She says it can differ. It can be a way to win a ticket to a career, even go for prize money as sums nowadays are elevated or get a stimulus for concentrated work. There may be another approach though: not to think about the financial or career aspects but to have a desire to plunge into the culture of another country, to play as well as possible in concert halls one was dreaming about, or to get closely in touch with a competition that belongs to history.

Shereshevskaya points out that a piano competition, as a competition in any other profession, requires the highest perfection. Only the aspiration to perfection and the very hard work it requires can create a real professional. The most important is to touch through your interpretation; but to achieve this the interpreter must first of all be touched by the music himself and not at all think of winning a prize.

**PATRICK JOVELL**



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Adam Gatehouse

Conductor and former BBC Producer and Editor Adam Gatehouse has been working with young musicians ever since he was a young musician himself and together with Paul Lewis, he took over the Leeds International Piano Competition in 2015 from the legendary Fanny Waterman, who founded it in 1963. He now is the sole artistic director. Lots of things have changed.

## Reaching out to the World

Adam Gatehouse: “The competition has a great reputation with a very impressive list of laureates, but we wanted to make it much more outward facing, relevant to the public and more significant to young musicians, who today are very different from the young musicians of 30 years ago. A very important step to reach a wider audience was to offer a free internet stream of the competition. We work with Medici.tv, and we reached 190 countries, and one million views, which is crucially important. We also organised the first round in Berlin, Singapore and New York. That was big success and we will be taking that further in 2021.

The competition is held every three years, and instead of going to sleep between two editions, we set up a festival presenting a series of concerts both in Leeds and in London. Starting from this year, we will have an international piano series throughout the season that no longer is in a concentrated span of time and mainly in Leeds. We don't offer huge, but still very respectable, cash prizes, but much more crucially we can offer serious valuable career-building opportunities. For the competitors who don't make it to the finals we also want to make it a more holistic experience, with master

classes, concerts, and advice on lots of aspects of the profession. I think what is unique in the world of competitions is our partnership with Askonas Holt, who will take on the management of a finalist. Warner Classics will be producing a prize winners' CD shortly after the competition and Warner also has signed Eric Lu, who is now presenting his second CD and enjoying a really serious international career. Furthermore, we partner with important venues like Wigmore Hall and Southbank.

In the best interest of young artists, you now have to be 20 to enter the competition, and even that is very young. The demands of the concert life are not to be underestimated. A winner has to be ready and I remember Murray Perahia telling me after he won he had to take off six months just to learn new repertoire.

We see a huge appetite in the world for the piano and we want to reach out to the world. We have developed a strong education programme, using digital technology and for this we partner with Lang Lang and his organisation, and the University of Leeds. So, yes indeed, we want Leeds Piano to be a springboard for other activities, not just a competition.”

# Paderewski Competition, Bydgoszcz (Poland)

Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941) was extraordinary: he was pianist, composer and statesman. He had studied piano at the conservatory in Warsaw and also in Vienna (with Theodor Lechetizky). He had great successes with his performances in Europe and in the USA.

In 1960, to mark the centennial of his birth year, the first Paderewski Competition was established and held in Bydgoszcz in November 1961. In 1998, the Paderewski Competition had its 4th edition, and became international for the first time. As many as 59 pianists had applied and the winner was Tomomi Okumura from Japan who went on to win prizes in Cologne and Zürich (Concours Geza Anda). Since 1998, the Paderewski Competition has been held every three years and steadily developed into a prominent international piano competition in the music scene. Henryk Martenka has been the competition director since 1998 and Piotr Paleczny the artistic director. With the 7th competition in 2007, a big step was made when the prize money was doubled. There were four rounds instead of three, and many more pianists applied: 157. At the next competition, in 2010, the prizes were increased even further, so that the first prize became 30,000 euros. Ever since, the competition has always been at a high level, in terms of prize money, organisation and performances.

A record number of 185 pianists applied for the 11th competition in 2019. To make a fair preselection of all applicants, live auditions were organised (and have already been since 2007) in various cities around the world. 56 pianists were admitted to the competition.

Nowadays, there are so many competitions that it is unavoidable some overlap. Unfortunately, the Paderewski Competition overlapped with the Long-Thibaud-Crespin Competition in Paris. Thus it happened that one pianist (Alexander Panfilov) was accepted to both competitions. He chose to go to Paris (like many others, he believed that he could have the opportunity to play for Martha Argerich). For various reasons, ten other pianists also withdrew their participation in Bydgoszcz, which was a pity, because they were also excellent pianists, who had already received major awards. The 45 pianists who came to Bydgoszcz prepared their repertoire for the four rounds of this competition: two hours of solo repertoire plus two piano concertos. Naturally, some works by Paderewski had to be performed as well as a commissioned piece by Michal Dobrzynski, but the rest of the solo repertoire was totally free. All rounds were broadcast live on the internet and can still be viewed at the competitions website. The competition has already had 537,000 views on the internet!

The jury consisted of nine experienced musicians from all over the world: Poland, Russia, Georgia, China, Japan, Canada and Brazil. The hall was full for the five selected finalists, and after the last performance, while the jury had its final deliberation, the audience



JAROSLAW PRUSS

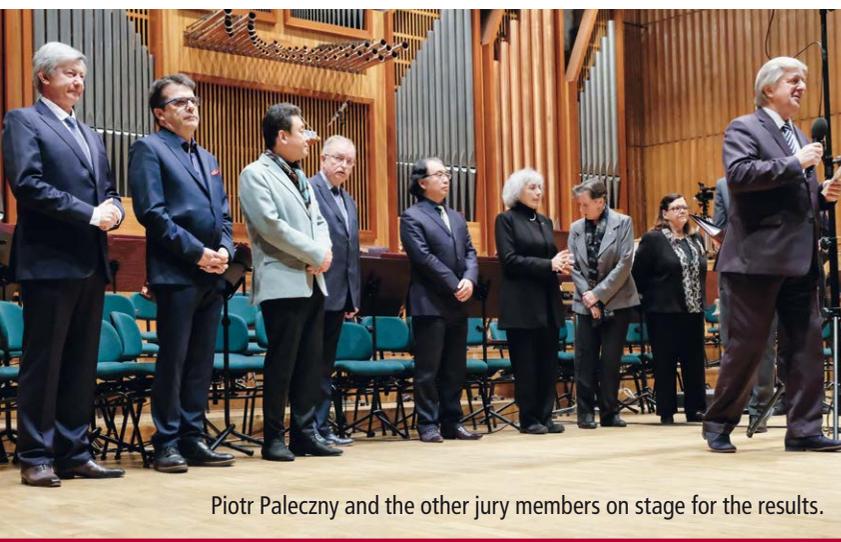
Winner Philipp Lynov during his performance in the finals.

was entertained by Krzysztof Herdzin, a professional jazz pianist. When the results were announced, two of the five finalists were bound to be disappointed, as there were three main prizes. Sergey Belyavsky was one of them. The next day, right after the official award ceremony, all five finalists were to perform one or two pieces. Sergey came on stage, sat at the piano, but did not play. He explained to the audience that he could not accept the results of this competition. What had happened? Some jury members had told him that he had been very close to winning the first prize. In fact, he needed only one more vote. Not receiving any of the three main prizes was hard to understand. However, Belyavsky received several special prizes. This was the 9th international competition he had entered in 2019. A month earlier, he had been finalist in Hong Kong and he had also won prizes in other competitions, the years before. Naturally, the results of competitions fluctuate. It depends on many factors and a pianist's performance might be more or less

inspired at different moments. Sergey posted his opinion on the internet and many reactions appeared in the social media, some of them quite strong. The competition issued an official statement and published all the points given by the jury at every stage of the competition: <http://konkurspaderewskiego.pl/en/statement>. It could thus be seen that the jury had followed the rules. These were very clear, but some people suggested that the jury rules need to be reviewed. Winner of this 11th Paderewski Competition was Philipp Lynov (Russia). Kamil Pacholec (Poland) received 2nd prize. According to the rules, these two would be directly admitted to the famous Chopin Competition in Warsaw (for which more than 500 pianists applied!).

**GUSTAV ALINK**

A beautiful documentary of the competition was shown on Polish Television and will also be available on the competition website.



Piotr Paleczny and the other jury members on stage for the results.



Philipp Lynov receives the first prize.

## Innovations at the Chopin Competition 2020

# New Reality in Warsaw

The upcoming International XVIII Chopin Competition in Warsaw's 2020 edition is now introducing Virtual Reality (VR) as a means to experience the event in a completely new way, possibly setting a new standard for piano competitions to come.

The everyday newsflow on the Internet allows us to come across a wide variety of musical experiences, ranging from new album samples, old recordings with forgotten musicians, videos, entire concerts and documentaries from now and the past.

Much like the rest of the entertainment and music world, piano competitions are keeping up with technology with a firm wish to entice new audiences, expand geographically and to increase availability. Old and new worlds meet when classical music and virtual reality come together and provide new ways of accessing classical music, not least for the younger generation which finds technology easier to relate to. Some even call virtual reality the saviour of this timeless music scene.

The Philharmonia Orchestra was the first UK orchestra to launch its "The Virtual Orchestra" in 2017, bringing a full hall experience providing the best possible seat: up on stage with the orchestra, facing the conductor. However, orchestras in general do not see VR as a silver bullet of ticket sales but rather as "audience development". New experiences are a constant goal for orchestras, and often one of the leading motivations when we see orchestras or classical music organizations engage in high-tech ventures.

In Warsaw the VR camera will be located on stage in the National Philharmonic, close to the pianist, providing a similar view to the perspective of the performing artists themselves. A separate channel is being prepared to allow VR streaming and will be available at





At the Chopin Competition

the competition website: [chopin2020.pl](http://chopin2020.pl). This requires a VR headset for those who want to watch the VR streaming at home. If you don't have a VR headset and still would like to experience the spatiality of the stage and the hall, special "Listener Zones" will be prepared all over the world, with seats to watch the competition through VR technology.

### The outreach background

With a new high of over 500 competition applicants, the Chopin Competition attracts audiences everywhere. Tickets quickly get sold out and the YouTube platform where the competition is streamed live already has 120,000 followers. 56.1% of these are between 13 and 34, and represent a generation raised in digital technology. Over 60 million views during the 2015 Competition proved the worldwide online interest more than ever before. Therefore, the aim now is to put a special focus on the multimedial aspect with a new web design, introducing a compendium disposition with vast amounts of information – about participants, jurors, competition news, video materials, photos, archival sources, and an all auditions archive. For interactivity, two apps have been created for smartphones and tablets: iOS and Android plus the SMARTtv app. Thus, users will be able to comment on the materials live, exchange opinions, etcetera. These applications will be the base for the streaming of the entire Competition. Furthermore, transmission quality is enhanced

and broadcast will be in 4K quality. Until now, 4K live broadcasts have been used mainly for the most important sport events, such as the football World Cup or the Wimbledon tennis. When new technology emerges, it is looking for content that shows why it offers a new experience. In this respect, the versatility and scale of a concert hall performance – with anywhere from 70 to 100 musicians and dozens of colours and sounds to experience – is uniquely suited to show off the possibilities of the VR technology. But the tech market's increasing wish to visualise music experiences raises the question whether visuality removes the focus from the actual listening. Which audible effects will altered spatial navigation and reality have on the listeners' senses?

Since movie theatres and streamed concerts have moved into private homes, amazing development of technology in 3-D sound has blasted our senses compared to "normal listening" at concert venues. In the long run, will it be hard for the traditional concert experience to compete with the supernatural sound of high-end sound and video technology? The question is perhaps how conservative are audiences when it comes to how they want the music to be presented? With piano competitions moving into the future it will most certainly be exciting to experience the new technological dimensions of the XVIII Chopin Competition in Warsaw 2020.

**PATRICK JOVELL**

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A big applause for Jean-Baptiste Doulcet when he receives the Audience Prize.



First prize winner Kenji Miura together with Martha Argerich.

# Long-Thibaud-Crespin Competition evokes many emotions

The Concours Long-Thibaud was one of few competitions that emerged during the 2nd World War. Its first edition in 1943 was both for violin and piano, and had to be a national event. Samson François was the winner in the piano competition. Soon after the war had ended, the 2nd edition in 1946 was international already. No less than 56 pianists took part. They all played anonymously in the first round. A large jury of 17 musicians, chaired by Jacques Ibert, included pianists, composers and conductors (Eduard van Beinum). Pierre Barbizet was among the finalists, but the 1st prize went to Hédya Schneider (Hungary). The next Long-Thibaud Competition for piano took place in 1949. It proved to be an extraordinary year: the jury was even larger than before with 24 (!) personalities, including several composers (Andriessen, Enescu, Halffter, Malipiero) and all the prize winners went on to have great careers: Aldo Ciccolini, Ventsislav Yankoff, Daniël Wayenberg, Paul Badura-Skoda, just to mention the top four of the 10 finalists. The competition continued to grow and peaked in 1953, when the jury counted no less than 27 very distinguished musicians, including Arthur Schnabel, Jascha Horenstein, Guido Agosti, Lev Oborin and

many others. The number of participants was 89, the highest it would get in the history of this competition. That year Philippe Entremont shared the 2nd prize with Yevgeny Malinin. In those years, the competition was a glorious event: whenever it took place, large reports and articles appeared about it in the music magazines. Its success was overshadowed by the tragic death of Jacques Thibaud in an airplane crash on September 1st, 1953. Until 1983, the competition was held for piano every other year, but then assumed a three-year cycle, with a festival of laureates after every two years of violin and piano competitions. In 2011, a new step was made with the introduction of a competition for singers, named after Régine Crespin, and thus the Long-Thibaud-Crespin was born. The future of the competition was unclear after 2015; the organisers strived to restore the glory of the past. With the commitment of Renaud Capuçon, the 2018 competition for violin again had a very impressive jury. The same was tried for the piano competition in 2019. Martha Argerich was announced to chair the jury, which included other great musicians such as Marc-André Hamelin,



After his victory, Kenji Miura is interviewed by the media.



When the competition is over, jury, contestants and others can meet and greet.

In November 2019, the Long-Thibaud-Crespin Competition (LTC) was open for pianists again. It promised to be a very exciting event. The formerly named Concours Long-Thibaud (after the famous violinist Jacques Thibaud and pianist Marguerite Long) has a long history.

Jean-Bernard Pommier, Anne Queffélec, Marie-Josèphe Jude and Xu Zhong, as well as fine pianists of the next generation: Bertrand Chamayou, Yulianna Avdeeva and Kirill Gerstein. The first prize of 25,000 euros was also very attractive (though until 2009, the prizes had been even higher).

Many pianists wanted to take part and many applied. A preselection was carried out by live auditions in 10 major cities around the world. A few other international music competitions also do this, but it was quite unusual that the preselection for the Long-Thibaud-Crespin Competition was done by one single person: Marie-Josèphe Jude took this responsibility and heard all the pianists. After this preselection, 50 were admitted to the main competition, and 43 came on stage for the first round at Salle Cortot in Paris. Among the ones who did not come was Alexander Gadjiev who had won the Hamamatsu Competition in 2015. Naturally, all pianists were excited to be able to perform for such a distinguished jury, and it was fully understandable that the disappointment was great when they saw that Martha Argerich was absent. Bertrand Chamayou – also artistic director of this edition – took over the chairmanship.

The competition repertoire was very special: not Chopin's 2nd Sonata (1st and 4th movement) which had always been compulsory (as one of the conditions in Marguerite Long's will), but Haydn's Variations, Hob. XVII-6, in the first round. More solo (including one piece by a French composer) as well as chamber music in the 2nd round. The finals were held at Radio France: a 60-minute recital and a concerto with orchestra. Martha Argerich joined the jury for the finals with orchestra. The hall was full. Violinist Gidon Kremer was also in the audience. Alexandra Stychkina (Russia, 16) was the youngest of the six finalists. First prize went to Kenji Miura (Japan, 25), who gave a fine musical interpretation of Chopin's piano concerto No. 2, for which he also received a special prize. The audience prize went to Jean-Baptiste Doulcet (France, 26), who was ranked 4th by the jury.

GUSTAV ALINK

[www.long-thibaud-crespin.org/concours/piano-2019.html](http://www.long-thibaud-crespin.org/concours/piano-2019.html)

Fourth edition of International Competition

# PIANO VAL DE TRAVERS

Neuchâtel Switzerland

2021

24-28 February 2021

Junior Categories  
up to 15 years old

28<sup>th</sup> February

to 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Category  
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Application deadline: 20 December 2020

Total prize fund 13'000 CHF, special prizes and concerts



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From left to right: Nicolas Comi (third prize ex-aequo), Katja Avdeeva (artistic director of the competition), Roman Fediurko (first prize), Bohdan Terletskyy (third prize ex-aequo), Sofia Grishcheva (diploma)



Yang Yang Ruan playing in the finals 2019.

VADIK ZIBROV

# International Competition Piano Val de Travers-Neuchâtel

The fourth edition of the Piano Val de Travers-Neuchâtel-competition will take place in the romantic Swiss city of Neuchâtel. The great concert hall Temple du Bas with 700 seats and the huge auditorium of the conservatory will welcome candidates from all over the world.

Some of the prizewinners will be invited to give further concerts in Switzerland and abroad. The legendary pianist, Eduardo Delgado, will be happy to come back for the third time and be chair of the international jury. The jury will work according to the competition rules established by the EMCY. The world-famous pianist, Katja Avdeeva, who has organized many international projects and has inside experience of international competitions will personally supervise the organisation of the competition and ensure that the conditions are optimal. Free family accommodation and other facilities will be provided for each candidate.

After her studies in St Petersburg, Katja Avdeeva came to Switzerland, where she studied with Marc Pantillon in Neuchâtel and Thomas Larcher at the Basel Music Academy. The recording of her final recital of Rachmaninoff's complete *Études-tableaux* was produced by Sony. She has been a champion for contemporary music, working with legendary musicians like Pierre Boulez, Harrison Birtwistle and Heinz Holliger. At the last recital of her festival, she paid homage to two composers from Neuchâtel: Jean-Philippe

Bauermeister and Adolphe Veuve who are less known to the greater public.

In an interview, the winner of the first prize of 2019 Yang Yang Ruan said that he was surprised by the high level of the performances given by the candidates. The Swiss public was very happy to attend his concert again, when he came back six months later to contribute to the WE-piano festival. He was very pleased by the open mindedness of the members of the jury who – after the performances – engaged in detailed analyses of the performances of each candidate in a very friendly atmosphere. They further were available to give a master class to each young musician if he or she was interested. In fact, this event is not only a competition, but a big musical family gathering.

**Concours International Piano Val de Travers-Neuchâtel**

February 28 – March 4, 2021

Application deadline: December 20, 2020

[www.piano.international/en](http://www.piano.international/en)

A view of the Great Hall in the Liszt Academy.

# Bartók World Competition

GÁBOR VALUSKA

Chopin, Beethoven and Liszt Competitions are many, but Bartók Competitions are few. In Hungary, there is the traditional Budapest International Music Competition, established as a Liszt Competition in 1933.

Since 1956 it has been open for piano every five years and has sometimes been held as a Liszt-Bartók competition. But in 2017, there was a completely new addition: the World Bartók Competition was launched by the Liszt Academy in Budapest. Alternatingly, the competition would be open for violinist, pianists and chamber music and in between, there would be composition competitions. The winning composition would then serve as a compulsory piece for the next instrumental competition.

It started in 2017 with a violin competition, followed by composition (2018). In 2019, pianists could apply for the 3rd World Bartók Competition. To be admitted, the pianists had to provide an application video. The recording had to show their performance of the 1st or 2nd piece of Bartók's Suite Op. 14, and an etude by Liszt. The preselection was carried out by three professors at the Liszt Academy. After this preselection, 38 pianists were admitted. Ten of them withdrew, so 28 came on stage for the first round in the Solti hall of the Liszt Academy, where they had to play Bartók, Liszt and a piece by Ernő Dohnányi or a ballade by Brahms.

The semi-finals also took place in this nice hall. There was great interest in this competition; the hall was always full with an enthusiastic audience. Naturally, people had their own favorites among the Hungarian contestants: Krisztián Kocsis (son of Zoltán Kocsis), Ádám Zsolt Szokolay (nephew of Balázs Szokolay, an excellent teacher and concert pianist) and Ádám Bálogh, but also Balázs Demény, Benedek Horváth and others. They had to compete with excellent young pianists from other countries such as Peter Klímo (USA), Alena Klyavina (Russia), Tomáš Vrána (Czech Rep.) and great talents from China, Japan and Korea. The competition offered substantial prize money: 30,000 euros first prize, and 20,000 and 10,000 euros for the second and third prize winners.

This World Bartók Competition consisted of four rounds. In the 2nd round (semi-finals), a piece by Bartók had to be performed (Improvisations, Suite or Sonata), one or two movements of a classical Sonata, and one of the two contemporary compositions that had won the previous composition contest. The advantage of having



The first round and semifinals were held in the Solti Hall of the Liszt Academy.



The three winners (from left to right):  
 Peter Klimo (USA, 3rd),  
 Ádám Zsolt Szokolay (Hungary, 1st),  
 Ádám Bálogh (Hungary, 2nd).

four rounds is that the jury can fully assess the level and artistry of the candidates in different styles of repertoire. Another advantage at this competition: no major cut after the first round. (At some two-round competitions the number of participants can drop from more than 60 to 6). In Budapest, 14 of the initial 28 contestants passed to the next round.

The jury consisted of nine excellent pianists, of whom only three Hungarian, but all of them had great affinity with Bartók's music. Interestingly, the jury was not chaired by a Hungarian, but by Kenji Watanabe (Japan), who had lived and studied in Budapest and who had been a prize winner of the 1981 Liszt Competition, just as Muza Rubackyte who also served on the jury. Very well-known is, of course, Tamás Vásáry, but three much younger pianists were jurors too: Alexander Moutouzkine (Russia/USA), Andrei Korobeinikov (Russia) and Klara Min (Korea/USA). Six contestants were admitted to the 3rd round: the solo finals, which had to include some Romantic repertoire as well as music by French or Russian composers. Three Hungarian participants

made it to these solo finals, together with Peter Klimo (USA, but with Hungarian ancestry), Daria Dadykina (Ukraine) and Alberto Greer Menjón Bohanna from Spain. This round, as well as the Grand Final with orchestra, was held in the magnificent concert hall of the Liszt Academy. It has a great history and a wonderful atmosphere. Originally, the organisers had proposed that one of Bartók's three piano concertos had to be performed in the finals, but the choice was widened to include Liszt as well. A pity that Bartók's Rhapsody for piano and orchestra (Op. 1) was not on the list.

Peter Klimo performed Bartók's Piano Concerto No. 3 and got the 3rd prize. Ádám Bálogh played Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2 and received the 2nd prize. Ádám Szokolay gave a very fluent, lively interpretation of Bartók's first piano concerto with which he won this competition. On one of the free days during the competition, the organisers arranged a visit to Bartók's house, which now is a beautiful and very interesting museum.

GUSTAV ALINK



Porto . Portugal

# 22<sup>nd</sup> Santa Cecília

# Piano

## INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

### MAIN CATEGORY

**Director** Álvaro Teixeira Lopes (*Artistic Director*)  
**Ages** Up to 32  
**Place** Casa da Música  
**Date** 11<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> July 2020  
**Prizes** **1<sup>st</sup> PRIZE** 10,000€ (Prize Câmara Municipal do Porto) / Recital Engagements  
**2<sup>nd</sup> PRIZE** 6,000€  
**3<sup>rd</sup> PRIZE** 3,000€  
**SPECIAL PRIZE** Concerts with orchestra  
**Deadline** 05<sup>th</sup> April  
**Final round with Orquestra Filarmónica Portuguesa**

### JUNIOR CATEGORIES

**Ages** 06 to 18 years old  
**Place** Fundação Manuel António da Mota  
**Date** 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> July 2020  
**Deadline** 29<sup>th</sup> May

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**Porto.**





Cunmo Yin is the winner in Bonn.



The three finalists together with Pavel Gililov.

DAN HANNEN

The international Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn was launched in 2005, with Pavel Gililov as artistic director. It is different from the traditional Beethoven Competition in Vienna (established in 1961), which focuses exclusively on Beethoven.

# The International Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn

In Bonn, the competition repertoire is predominantly Beethoven, but the participants must also play Bach as well as Romantic and modern compositions. The competition in Bonn is held every two years. December 2019 was the 8th edition.

After an initial preselection, 28 pianists are admitted to the main competition, which has four rounds. Not only solo works are played. The finals are in two parts: in the first part, Chamber Music is performed and in the second part a concerto for piano and orchestra. This time, the Chamber Music consisted of a piano trio by Beethoven, performed together with the excellent Beethoven Trio Bonn: violinist Mikhail Ovrutsky and cellist Grigory Alumyan. Usually, the pianist of this trio is Jinsang Lee. This time, he was member of the preselection jury, and together with his musical colleagues of the trio and the main jury, they decided who would deserve the special award for the best Chamber Music performance. Speaking of special distinctions, there is one very unusual aspect of the Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn: everyone who follows the competition on the internet (all rounds are live streamed), may cast a vote online. After the first round (and also after the 2nd round), the pianist with the highest number of online votes will pass to the

next round, even if the professional jury did not vote for him or her! (It is not published though, who received this privilege.) In the hall where the competition takes place, the audience may also vote during the semi-finals and finals, and decide who receives the Beethoven-Haus Award (for the best semi-finalist) and the Audience Prize (among the three finalists).

The participation in this 8th Telekom Beethoven Competition was fully international, and when Pavel Gililov announced the results, he underlined the fact that all three finalists came from Asia. The music by Beethoven is truly universal. Cunmo Yin (China) won the first prize, Yuto Takezawa (Japan) got 2nd and the audience prize. Shi-Hyun Lee (Korea) came third. The beautiful programme book of the competition showed a long list of more than 40 fixed concert engagements for the winners in 11 countries around the world.

**GUSTAV ALINK**

[www.telekom-beethoven-competition.de](http://www.telekom-beethoven-competition.de)

Videos of all performances:

[www.telekom-beethoven-competition.de/itbcb-en/media-library/video](http://www.telekom-beethoven-competition.de/itbcb-en/media-library/video)



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DANIEL DELANG

Jury and winners in 2017

The ARD International Music Competition takes place every year in four alternating categories, the piano competition within every three years. The first one started in 1952.

# ARD International Music Competition

The next piano competition will take place from September 5 to 13, 2020. At the moment there are six jury members who have confirmed their cooperation: Janina Fialkowska, Nikolai Demidenko, Imogen Cooper, Ragna Schirmer, Cyprien Katsaris and Michel Béroff.

Moreover, Marton Illes is composing a commissioned piece.

The premiere will take place at the semifinals on September 11. The participants will receive the score after the pre-selection, with the invitation to take part in the competition.

Every participant has to present a huge repertoire during the four competition rounds – from Bach and Scarlatti, in the first round, through Mozart, romantic sonatas and contemporary music in the following rounds, to the big concertos by Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin, Ravel or Rachmaninov in the final round.

Two very prestigious orchestras will accompany the competition: the Munich Chamber Orchestra at the semifinals and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra at the finals.

Because of its scale and prestige, the competition offers a unique opportunity to the participants to test their musical mettle against other world-class players, and also offers networking opportunities.

They have the chance to meet agents and music executives looking to sign up the next big talent. In Munich, the competition is the first major event of the new concert season. From the first round, almost every place in the concert halls is occupied. It creates a great concert atmosphere and makes it a little more comfortable for the participants.

The winners will be invited to take part in the chamber music tour – the Festival of ARD Prize Winners, which was established in 2001 and communicates the desire of the ARD International Music Competition's administration to transform the obvious confrontational situation, at least at the end of the event, into the experience of making music together. With the Festival of ARD Prize Winners, a concert series has been developed, at which musicians (former prizewinners) from all over the world join forces to rehearse and perform chamber music works in a number of different places. Many of the former prizewinners found long-term chamber music partners this way.

More detailed information about this competition is available on our website: [www.br.de/ard-musikwettbewerb/index.html](http://www.br.de/ard-musikwettbewerb/index.html)



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Santa Cecilia International Competition is an event with more than 80 years of history. Based in Porto and organised by the emblematic school Curso de Música Silva Monteiro, this piano competition will enjoy its 22nd edition on July, 2020.

# Santa Cecilia International Competition

In the past years, it has gained the status of the biggest competition in Portugal and simultaneously it has been consistently growing in the international panorama also as a member of Alink-Argerich Foundation. The competition is divided into two sections: the main category (up to 32) and the junior categories (from 6 to 18). There are five junior categories, with their own jury, and the performances take place at Fundação Manuel António da Mota, an important institution of the city. The performances of the main category, for participants up to 32 years old, take place at Casa de Música, one of the most relevant music venues in Europe. Every year, hundreds of candidates are received from all over the world, starting with a video pre-selection. Then, the pre-selected participants come to Porto to compete in two solo rounds and a final with the Portuguese Philharmonic Orchestra in the great Sala Suggia at Casa da Música. Furthermore, a parallel competition is organised every year in China together with the famous magazine *Piano Art*, as a pre-selection for Chinese participants, with hundreds of pianists. The location of the competition (Casa da Música) is not only of an artistic value but it also allows easy access to any

part of the city, including the airport. All the participants have the opportunity to practice during the week and have a piano for warm-up before each performance. The online streaming is available worldwide for the semi-finals and final. With a total prize money of 20 000 euros, the competition offers the winner the chance to play solo recitals and concerts with orchestra, a CD recording and an International Management. To that end, there is joint collaboration with KNS Classical and KNS Artists Management who work together with the winners. With Álvaro Teixeira Lopes as its artistic director, the competition has been receiving prominent personalities for the jury, such as Joaquin Soriano, Carlos Cebro, Guigla Katsarava, Uta Weyand, Akemi Alink, Vovka Ashkenazy and Justas Dvarionas, among many others. The competition has a strong presence in the city with one week of free entry performances, as well as a piano marathon where all the participants are invited to play a 45-minute recital in one of the most

[www.scecilia-competition.com](http://www.scecilia-competition.com)



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# The International Schubert-Competition Dortmund

The International Schubert-Competition Dortmund was established in 1987 and has been held since then at the heart of the Ruhr, invariably with great success. It is aimed at young and talented musicians of the very highest professional standard and is designed to help them as they enter their chosen profession.

Thanks to its programming, the Schubert-Competition also provides a unique opportunity to introduce participants and audiences to Schubert's world of ideas. Take, for example, the third competition round which probably offers the only opportunity worldwide to listen to the six great late Sonatas of Franz Schubert for a whole day, played by the best young and talented pianists in the world. The biennial competition leads young musicians to a repertoire, which decisively enriches them in their artistic range and is often neglected in the university education and in other music competitions. Several award winners, such as Michael Endres, Elena Margolina, Vadym Kholodenko or Samuel Hasselhorn, started a brilliant international career after their participation in the Schubert-Competition, even though, or perhaps precisely because, they spend a lot of time and effort in the introverted music of Franz Schubert.

The competition additionally seeks to add to the cultural variety and attractiveness of the Ruhr and to draw national and international attention to the

Esther Valentin (Mezzo soprano) and Anastasia Grishutina (Piano), first prize winners of the last Lied-Duo competition. Their CD (part of the prize) *Amors Spiel – Cupid's Game*, was published by GWK Records.



region. An important role in this process is played by its high-profile venue of the Laureate's Concert: the atmospheric compressor hall of the Hansa Coking Plant, which is a listed building. It is a location that means that Dortmund's International Schubert-Competition is visibly anchored in a region marked by its former mining industry and heavy industry.

From September 21 to 30, 2020 the Schubert-Competition will hold its 16th piano edition in Dortmund and will award prizes worth more than 40,000 euros. Traditionally, the first prize includes a CD production in addition to the prize money of 10,000 euros. The competition invites all pianists to face the great challenge of Franz Schubert in order to gain a great enrichment of artistic development

as well as furthering their careers. As one of the few music competitions in the world, the Schubert-Competition covers the travel expenses of the competitors and arranges for them to stay with host families, often resulting in a close, long-term relationship. The jury of this year's competition includes Ingeborg Danz, Ian Fountain, Stefan Heucke, Gabriel Kwok, Ewa Kupiec, Oleg Maisenberg, Tamás Ungár, Elisso Virsaladze, Idith Zvi and the non-voting chairman Arnulf von Arnim.

[www.schubert-wettbewerb.de](http://www.schubert-wettbewerb.de)

# Franz Schubert and Modern Music

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

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SCHUBERT  
AND  
MODERN  
MUSIC**

GRAZ / AUSTRIA

The University of Music and Performing Arts Graz has announced its 11th International Franz Schubert and Modern Music Competition, which will take place from February 6 to 15, 2021.



This triennial chamber music competition will be held in the categories “Lied” (evaluated as a duo) and “Piano Trio”. The string quartet section will be held again in 2024. Contemporary music challenges young musicians to be able to connect to today. At the same time, the competition also offers the young musicians and the audience the opportunity to come into contact with a multitude of contemporary pieces along the way. The competition is committed to being as relevant to participants’ profession and future as possible, realizing that the profession is competitive in itself and that a competition therefore reflects everyday professional life.

This competition encourages the creation of new works for these chamber music categories. For the FS&MM 2021, Judith Weir has been invited to compose a Lied that has to be performed during the finals.

The participants, around 200 from 45 nations came to Graz in 2018, as well as the prestigious jury – i.e. Angelika Kirchschlager, Bengt Forsberg, Roberta Alexander, and Elena Cheah – illustrate the quality of this competition.

[relaunch-schubert.kug.ac.at](http://relaunch-schubert.kug.ac.at)



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Each issue includes interviews with leading pianists and rising talent, news, features, analysis, reviews and comment. We also publish in-depth articles on piano recordings and repertoire, piano brands, retailers, master classes on piano technique and interpretation, reports from festivals, competitions, and so on.

Our German edition was launched five years ago at the request of the Ruhr Piano Festival, and we maintain a close cooperation with the festival.

[www.pianistmagazine.nl](http://www.pianistmagazine.nl)  [www.pianist-magazin.de](http://www.pianist-magazin.de)

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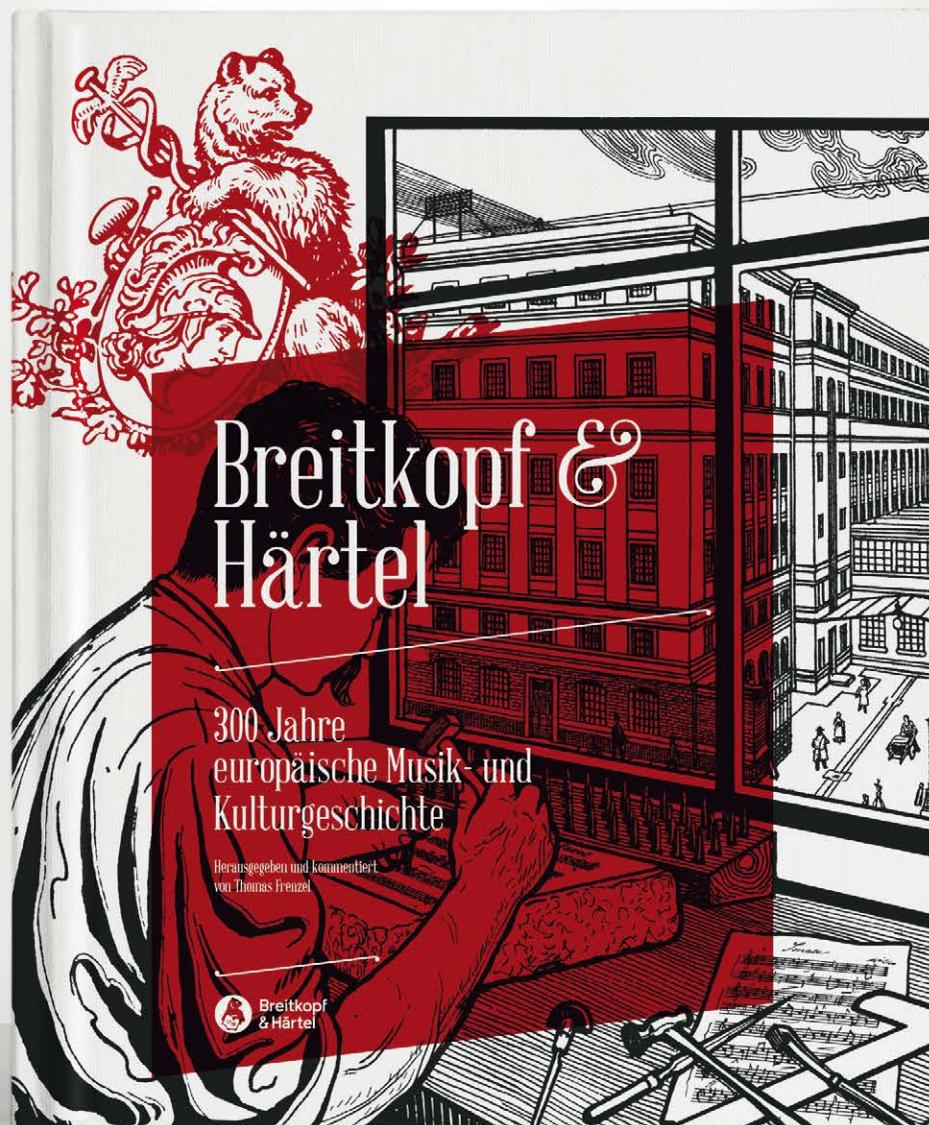
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Violoncello  
Bassoon  
Trombone  
Harp  
French Horn  
Piano Duo  
String Quartet  
Violin  
Double Bass  
Organ  
Guitar

# ARD International Music Competition



JeungBeum Sohn  
1st prize piano 2017



Prizewinners  
piano duo 2015



Aoi Trio  
1st prize piano trio 2018

September 5 to 13, 2020  
Piano solo  
First prize 10,000 €

August 30 to September 8, 2021  
Piano duo  
First prize 12,000 €

September 2 to 10, 2022  
Piano trio  
First prize 18,000 €