

# THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS

1

2019



Anna Vinnitskaya

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experience*



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## W E L C O M E

### *Dear readers,*

Pianists need pianos. Pianos need pianists. It is for them that we build our instruments. We regard every player as important, from the celebrated legend to the beginner. Our field is on the concert stages of the world as well as in music schools and private homes – anywhere piano music is cherished.

Steinway believes in tradition not only in craftsmanship but also in artistry. Since the early days, we have been in close contact with pianists of whom a great number became Steinway Artists. It is essential for us to be on speaking terms and in direct exchange with pianists. Who else can better teach us whether our instruments fulfil players' wishes and tell us what we could improve to reach our aim to always build the best piano possible and to meet the highest expectations?

Talents and options rise up daily and everywhere. But how do you get recognition, concerts and an audience? For that – not only, of course – competitions are good platforms. Here we want to be supportive for those who are not known yet and assist them in emerging. Steinway has always done so. The names of Argerich and Pollini, Uchida and Zimerman, Yuja Wang and Lang Lang, Fliter and Levit etc. are evidence of this.

With the Steinway Prize-winner Concerts Network we have established our own activity focusing on the cooperation of competitions, venues and festivals. Together we are stronger, gaining more concerts and emotionalizing more audiences. I would be glad if this inspired others to act similarly. The more such projects exist, the better!

Piano music, especially live, is incomparable and can be a great source of joy for players and listeners. We all should strive to allow as many people benefit from it as possible. For that, this edition of *The World of Piano Competition* is an excellent form of encouragement. I hope its message spreads widely!

I wish everyone much joy reading it and, later on, attending a concert!

**GUIDO ZIMMERMANN**

PRESIDENT STEINWAY & SONS EUROPE



## THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS

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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)



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### 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.

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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)





Lukáš Vondráček, first prize in 2016

# Queen Elisabeth Competition – Royal initiative

Established in 1951 on the initiative of Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, as a successor to the Eugène Ysaÿe Competition, the Queen Elisabeth Competition very soon became one of the leading international competitions for violinists, pianists and singers.

In 2017, for the first time in its history, the Queen Elisabeth competition organized a competition devoted to cellists. Held in Brussels, the Queen Elisabeth Competition owes its reputation in part to its extremely strict regulations, but also to its outstanding juries composed of performers and educators of international renown.

The Queen Elisabeth Competition aims above all to assist talented young musicians in launching an international career, by offering them the opportunity to perform for radio and television and by developing contacts and networks that can lead to concerts all over the world.

Laureates of the competition over the past fifty years have included Leon Fleisher, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Jaime Laredo, Gidon Kremer, Mitsuko Uchida, Vadim Repin, Frank Braley, Cristina Gallardo-

Domás, Nikolaj Znaider, Baiba Skride, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Sergey Khachatryan but also, Anna Vinnitskaya, Denis Kozhukhin, Ray Chen, Andrey Baranov, Boris Giltburg, Sumi Hwang, Ji Young Lim, Lukáš Vondráček, Victor Julien-Laferrrière and Samuel Hasselhorn.

The next edition for piano is to be held in May 2020 and is devoted to young pianists who will work with the Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Stéphane Denève in the final round in the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.

General information, audio and video archives, regulations can be found on [www.qeimc.be](http://www.qeimc.be)



A view in one of the rooms of Edvard Grieg's home

# *Edvard Grieg International Piano Competition, Bergen (Norway)*

Every two years, in September, the Edvard Grieg International Piano Competition takes place in the idyllic city of Bergen, Norway. The house at Trolldhaugen, where Edvard Grieg lived and worked, is perfectly conserved and has become a wonderful museum that has already been visited by many people. There is a concert hall too, where the first three rounds of the competition take place. The performer as well as the audience can look out through a huge glass window over the green surroundings and the lake. It offers a spectacular view and the pianists find this very inspiring.





Marc-André Hamelin and Leif Ove Andsnes both served on the jury in 2012

The idea of having a Grieg Competition came from Norwegian pianist Einar Steen-Nøkleberg, who already started it in Oslo in the year 2000. It was held annually and the competition always attracted a good field of contestants. After the 11th competition 2010, it was decided that the competition could be even more meaningful if it were to be hosted in Bergen. This was indeed realized and since 2012, the competition has become biennial. The prize money was increased significantly: at each edition the first prize winner receives 30,000 Euros! For the other two finalists, there is 20,000 and 10,000 Euros respectively. Since 2012, the competition has consisted of four rounds. Naturally, several works by Grieg have to be performed. As of 2014, the semi-finalists have also had to accompany a singer.

The 16th Edvard Grieg Competition took place from September 1 to 9, 2018. This time, the finalists had to prepare two piano concertos: one by Grieg plus another one, to be chosen from a list of 13. No less than 133 pianists, aged between 17 and 33 applied. After a preselection by video, 30 were selected to come to Bergen. Many of them had already won other competitions. All the participants receive something: those who are not admitted to the second or the third round, are given an extra concert opportunity in or around Bergen, for which they receive a fee of 500 Euros. The ones who reach the semifinals, but not the finals, get 1500 Euros. Host families provide accommodation for all contestants during the entire event. The organizers arrange much more than just a competition. There are several guided tours to historic places with music, lectures, lunches, talks, and also master classes by some of the jury members. Famous Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes was twice on the jury and this year he contributed with a personal talk and gave the season opening concert with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, two days before the



Competition director Sigurd Sandmo and jury member Ya-fei Chuang

orchestra accompanied the finalists. Another big extra is the solo recital by another great pianist: this year it was Sergei Babayan. In 2016, it was Seong-Jin Cho (winner of the 2015 Chopin Competition in Warsaw) and in 2012 piano virtuoso Marc-André Hamelin, who also served on the jury.

## The organizers arrange much more than just a competition.

Sigurd Sandmo, director of the Grieg Competition, is a passionate advocate of total transparency at music competitions. Students of jury members are not allowed to take part in the competition, and after the competition is finished, all the points by the jury members are published on the competition website, so that everyone can see how the voting was done and how the jury arrived at the results. The 2018 competition was won by Ryoma Takagi (25, Japan). Matyáš Novák (20, Czech Rep.) was the youngest finalist, a great talent. He received the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize. Alexey Trushechkin (28, Russia) was 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**GUSTAV ALINK**

Apart from the magnificent location and the impressive prize money, there are several other aspects that make this competition particularly attractive. During the competition, there is a high-quality webcast of all performances and a selection can still be heard on the website as "video on demand": <http://griegcompetition.com/archive/2018/videos>

*“The repertoire  
is very important  
to our festival.”*

Franz-Xaver Ohnesorg

## Not necessarily the first prize



Prof. Franz-Xaver Ohnesorg was appointed Artistic Director of the Ruhr Piano Festival in 1996, and 2005 he also became the director of what is now recognized as the most important yearly piano event worldwide. Last edition counted 66 800 visitors and over 60 concerts. Ohnesorg also created the Ruhr Piano Festival Education Projects.

“In our festival we host a series of concerts with prize-winners called *Die Besten der Besten*. This year we had Jeung Beum Sohn (First prize Internationaler Musikwettbewerb der ARD 2017), Mao Fujita (First prize Concours International de Piano Clara Haskil 2017), Yekwon Sunwoo (first prize Van Cliburn International Piano Competition 2017) and Fabian Muller (second prize Internationaler Musikwettbewerb der ARD 2017).

With major competitions like the Tchaikovsky in Moscow, Chopin in Warsaw and Arthur Rubinstein in Tel Aviv, we have an agreement to engage a prize winner, but I value our freedom to invite the second prize winner for example if we consider that pianist more interesting. Sometimes jury members favour their own students and I want to stay away from that.”

### Duty

“Regrettably it is impossible for me to do talent scouting at many competitions; I simply don’t have the time, but I get valuable advice from old friends I may say, such as Andras Schiff, Daniel Barenboim, Elisabeth Leonskaja and Martha Argerich.

Fabian Müller was introduced to us by Pierre-Laurent Aimard. He played at our festivals many times already before he was successful in competitions, and we highly value his commitment to our educational projects. We re-invited Lucas Debargue who, as is well known, did not get the first but the fourth prize at the Tchaikovsky Competition. He now enjoys a splendid career, like many of his colleagues who never won a major competition. Hélène Grimaud is the perfect example.

Joseph Moog is another and he offers us not often played repertoire, which is also very important to our festival.

The sheer number of competitions makes it hard for us to support a pianist over the years, because next year there will already be another first prize winner. Still, I consider it a duty to find and help extraordinary talents, whether they have been in a competition or not.

Our last concert this year will be our evening with Sophie Pacini. She is simply wonderful, completely independent from any prize winning. The concert is sold out.”





*“Losing  
can also be  
a win.”*

Barbara Szczepanska

## Finding the right doors

Prof. Barbara Szczepanska studied in her hometown Warsaw and in Moscow. As a performing artist, she toured extensively while teaching at various institutions in Warsaw and Münster. She was appointed as a Professor at the Robert Schumann Hochschule Düsseldorf in 1989, where she also initiated the Robert Schumann Competition. Severin von Eckardstein studied with her for seven years in his teens.

“Playing in a competition is a special challenge, especially for young musicians. And from a pedagogical point of view this can be very beneficial, because they learn to prepare in the best possible way and practice with more focus. Learning to deal with stressful situations, playing before a professional and critical audience, and learning to organize their work can be lessons for life. Moreover, mastering new repertoire and meeting deadlines can be a valuable experience. Of course there are competition tourists: students who participate in many competitions, always playing the same pieces. Unfortunately, that is harmful to their development.”

### Early years

“Naturally, everybody wants to win, to be the best, but losing can also be a win, because it gives you a chance to reflect upon your own talent compared to others. It is very important to make the right choices for your career and future life. In this respect the feedback from the jury can be very helpful too in finding ways to do better. Times have changed: a first prize is no longer a guarantee for a long career. You need personality, stability, presence

on the stage, and also a great amount of luck. Life can be unfair and a solo career is definitely one of the more difficult careers. In an artist's development many factors are crucial, not only talent, also environment, family and school. As a teacher working with young talents, I try to help foster the best possible circumstances. These early years are very important and I try to help with all my heart.”

### Inner urge

“Severin von Eckardstein was with me from age 10 to 17. Already as a child he had a character and personality. When he was 12 he said he wanted to play Rachmaninoff, so he went to a competition and won a piano! He really has this inner urge to play and with his extraordinary talent he felt the music instinctively. Now when I see him perform, I can still see the child Sevi from long ago. Artur Schnabel said ‘a teacher can only open the right door at the right moment. The student has to go through himself.’ That is so true, and I see it as my task to find the right doors. This was also my motivation to start our competition in Düsseldorf.”



STUART ISACOFF

Van Cliburn & The Tchaikovsky Competition

# The Mother of All Competitions

Political divisions between the right and the left seem to be intensifying daily. Yet, current tensions pale in comparison to those felt in the darkest days of the Cold War – a time when nuclear disaster seemed imminent. It was a time when, for a brief moment, a single classical musician miraculously opened the door to peace between feuding superpowers. The world, at least temporarily, breathed a collective sigh of relief. It signalled the power of music to transform human souls, and simultaneously marked the launch of one of the world's great music contests.



# Van Cliburn swept the Moscovites off their feet

It was 1958, a year after the Soviets unveiled their space satellite Sputnik, and Americans were bracing for the possibility of bombs falling from the skies. The United States' attempt to answer by launching a satellite called Vanguard was a disaster: the rocket merely sputtered and fizzled (the embarrassing headlines in the United Kingdom were "Stay Putnik," and "Oh, What a Flopnik"). While savouring their victory, the Russians set in motion plans for yet another propaganda coup. They intended to show the world they were also superior in the arts by announcing the creation of the Tchaikovsky International Music Competition. Officials preselected the winner, a Georgian pianist named Lev Vlassenko. But, against all odds, a lanky, 23-year-old brilliant Texas pianist named Van Cliburn swept the Moscovites off their feet and captured first prize, stunning the world and momentarily reshaping political reality.

## Johann Strauss

Though the story is nearly 50 years old, it still has resonance today, because then, as now, the ideological battles seemed intractable. From the early days of the twentieth century, when Maxim Gorky visited America and returned with a dystopian vision of the nation as greedy and artless, the antipathy was deep seated. Nevertheless, the allure of America's vibrant culture continued to infiltrate life in the USSR – including fashion, music and film. American adventure movies, detective stories, and zany comedies were popular in the Soviet Union. Even Stalin adored an American film, "The Great Waltz," about the life of Johann Strauss.

## Charisma

By 1957, young Muscovites were listening to banned music as well. They danced the jitterbug, smoked Camels and Pall Malls, and addressed each other as "darling" and "baby." The official Soviet view of America's artistic life as worthless was weakening on all fronts. In 1956 the Boston Symphony had arrived in Moscow to perform, and hearing them proved to be a revelation. So when an American pianist from Texas with the charisma of a movie star arrived, Moscow was primed to welcome him. Economic pressures were also coming to bear: Communist officials decried America's "rotten capitalist foundation," but their nation was in serious need of some of that capital. The Tchaikovsky Competition was first proposed in 1951 by a man named Nikolai Bespalov, but his vision of a festival and competition was too grand. By 1956, however, when promoting trade and tourism became a truly crucial goal, a scaled-back version of Bespalov's proposal seemed attractive.

## Freedom

Moscow's audiences, meanwhile, were seriously hooked on the tenderness and honesty of Cliburn's playing. Critics felt they detected in it the face of freedom. His sound was golden, and in his

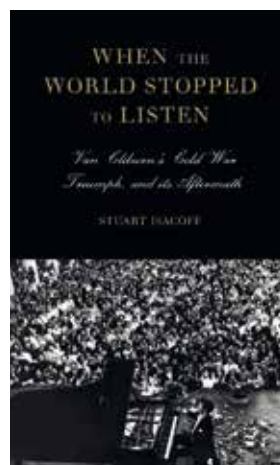
hands the piano seemed to be whispering intimate secrets. At the end of the pianist's concerto round, jury chairman Emil Gilels went backstage, brought Cliburn out again, and kissed him in public. Gilels requested permission from Nikita Khrushchev to give the gold prize to Cliburn. The official story has Khrushchev agreeing without hesitation: "Was he the best? Then give it to him." In truth, Khrushchev's advisors engaged in a vigorous debate over the issue – with advocates of a "thaw" with the West, like First Deputy Minister of Culture Sergei Kaftanov, standing in opposition to nationalists like Mikhail Suslov, the hardliner known as the "Black Cardinal."

## Glasnost

The decision rested on a comment Khrushchev made to pianist Vera Gornostaeva: "The future success of this competition lies in one thing: the justice that the jury gives," she told me he had said. "I don't know who told him that," she added, assuming that he couldn't have reached that conclusion alone. It is likely Gilels, who also informed the country's leader that giving the award to Cliburn could end the Cold War. That moment in April of 1958 opened wide the channels of cultural and diplomatic exchanges between the two superpowers. Mainstream publications began to celebrate "The Arts as Bridges." Educational exchanges expedited even greater change. Even the fact that most of the Soviet "students" who arrived in the United States were KGB agents didn't detract from the positive gains that ensued. In the fall of 1958, Aleksandr Yakovlev was one of four Soviets sent to Columbia University. He liked what he saw, and after returning home Yakovlev, working with President Mikhail Gorbachev, became known as the godfather of glasnost.

Could it happen again? It's unlikely – Cliburn's victory was the result of very special circumstances. Then again, no one could have predicted the outcome in 1958 either.

STUART ISACOFF



Stuart Isacoff  
**When the World Stopped to Listen:  
 Van Cliburn's Cold War Triumph  
 and Its Aftermath**  
 Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2017

# PIANIST

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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 two years ago at the request of the Ruhr Piano Festival, and we maintain a close cooperation with the festival.



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*“PIANIST is a quality magazine of great value to our branch. It is a true asset!”*

**GUIDO ZIMMERMANN**

PRESIDENT STEINWAY & SONS EUROPE



## 9<sup>th</sup> International German Piano Award 2019 March 30 – April 1 · Alte Oper Frankfurt



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*“The pianist’s career is my main consideration.”*

Rob Hilberink

## The key element is Objectivity

Three years ago Rob Hilberink became director at the International Franz Liszt Piano Competition, after more than five years as manager of production and career development for this competition. He is also a board member of the World Federation of International Music Competitions, based in Geneva.

“I think it is a good thing there are so many competitions all over the world, so that young pianists can benefit from the experience of entering a competition in their own country or region. They have the opportunity to enter different markets around the globe. And luckily competitions differ greatly in their profiles and the way they are organised. Some focus on national talent, or young pianists, or amateurs or specific repertoire, like contemporary music. Some are the personal initiative of one pianist, or of an institution that mainly depends on one artist, and these competitions primarily reflect a specific artistic vision. Besides that, there are institutions that create a competition more from a management point of view, focussed on how to help young musicians and at the same time connect to the public and market (concert organizers, venues, impresarios, festivals, etc.).”

### Three hours of Liszt

“With the Liszt Competition we belong to the latter category so to speak. We try to further the career of young musicians in a competitor-friendly way and help them become established as musicians in an extensive and all-round three year program with our finalists.

Our choice of repertoire forces young pianists to take our competition very seriously: they need six months to learn three hours of Liszt! That repertoire will stay with them after the competition and will add to their personal profile after the competition. For organizers we can offer new and interesting programs with every competition because there is no other great composer with such a varied and huge output for piano. Of course there is the virtuosity in his music, but we have to add something to that, because virtuosity alone is not enough to become a successful pianist and the career of the young pianist will always be my main consideration.”

### Jury

“Although there have been well-known incidents, personally I don’t see a real problem with jury members having a student in the competition; the question is how the organisation and all involved go about it. The key element for an organizer is objectivity. You need to be as objective as possible, and assemble a jury that can be trusted and do its job for the right reasons—that is very important. Winning a competition with a questionable decision does not help a young musician, quite the contrary.”

Using technology to enhance the experience

# Piano Competitions in the Digital Age

A key feature of the digital distribution of media is the unique possibility to combine formats. At Piano Street, a leading web-based resource from Sweden in the field of classical piano music and piano playing, they work with major platforms, which enables them to create content with the aid of YouTube, iTunes, Amazon, Spotify, Vevo, Naxos Music Library along with web-produced articles from the international press and libraries. In recent years they also interact and create events via social media.







*Competitions are  
“reinventing”  
themselves*

Livestreaming at Debussy Festival Stockholm 2018



Patrick Jovell

The world's 800 piano competitions are themselves involved in massive competition, “reinventing” themselves in order to stand out and receive attention. Rather than trying to produce the super-stars of tomorrow, competitions are increasingly focusing on the present. The line between the competition and other classical music organizations is increasingly blurred. Ambitious programs are therefore created for both the contestants and the audience. Out of the Van Cliburn's operating budget of about USD 7 million, only half goes to the actual competition. The rest goes to concerts, outreach and promotion, including live broadcast of its finals to movie theaters around the world. The Cliburn co-produces around 250 concerts a year.

Technology during the last ten years has created an interesting base for the distribution of music and we have seen bookstores and record labels moving out into the Internet, forming new core activities for distribution and sales. Concert halls have done likewise where major actors such as Berlin Philharmoniker's Digital Concert Hall, in close collaboration with today's AV technology, has created a fantastic opportunity to experience hi-end concerts via streaming technology on-line. Other concert halls have followed and a large number of international symphony orchestras offer their concert programs through Play Functions on their web sites. Their motivation is to entice the audience and educate a new generation to come to live concerts or to earn money in a pay-per-concert-based system. Both are successful and Berliner DCH have had 20 million visitors since 2009. In 2016 there were more than 800 000 registered members and 40 000 paying.

### Catching “the now”

The reasons for the increasing number of international piano competitions engaging in online transmission can certainly be traced to the wish to expand geographical borders, but can also be seen as a general attempt to catch “the now”. Racing to win, like in sports, certainly creates momentum. The digital interactivity also

gives the online audience a chance to react and a chance to vote for the Audience Prize winner, as recently was the case in the Leeds. As media producers we see the values of piano competitions. The quickness of producing simultaneous media is crucial. Piano competitions offer direct news value and contribute to a richer cultural life.

Piano Street is able to combine digital media and we have been able to do so in the form of collaborations and article writing. In a collaboration with Berliner Philharmoniker's Digital Concert Hall, we have offered access to live and archived concerts allowing our members to experience for instance, Martha Argerich in the Schumann concerto live from the Philharmonie in Berlin. Covering major events in the world of classical piano, we have followed major piano competitions and in, for example, the International Chopin Competition and The Cliburn we have offered playlists of all live performances with attached sheet music from our digital sheet music library. We can see how piano competitions today more than ever provide an online experience as a vital part of the competition's whole profile. We also see how competitions focus on the technological side to safeguard transmission quality, as well as communicating modernity and even competition transparency. When recently covering the Leeds and the new 1st Chopin Competition on period instruments in Warsaw, the concerns and ambitions of the arrangers could not be overestimated. Pioneer in the field of online coverage is The Cliburn, who opened up transmissions via Internet in 2001. The impressive number of online viewers at the Van Cliburn in 2009 – 231 265 visits from people in 132 countries – has now definitely been outmatched nine years on. Consumer trends in online video and streaming show a constant increase and statistics show that in 2020 the number of digital video viewers in the United States for example, is projected to surpass 236 million. Piano competitions around the world will assuredly want to work to secure their future position among digital video consumers.

**PATRICK JOVELL**

# 8. International Piano Festival 'Klaviersommer Geilenkirchen'

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Impressions 2018

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*“Competitions are asking people to start at the top.”*

Leslie Howard

## Think beyond the competition

Pianist, musicologist and composer Dr. Leslie Howard is best known for being the only pianist to have recorded not only 50 CDs with repertoire from Beethoven to Stravinsky but also the complete piano works of Franz Liszt on 100 CDs, including over 300 premiere recordings. He himself never entered a competition.

“The only competitions I got involved in were the ones that have special repertoire. I enjoy working with the Utrecht Liszt Competition by far: I am on the board and I am the principal setter of the repertoire. We are never going to run out of ideas. Combining the Sonata with the fiendishly difficult Rondo Fantastique *El Contrabandista* did not scare off pianists. On the contrary, it gives them a good second-half concert closing piece that nobody plays and it turned out to be a big hit with the audience.

In the upcoming edition of the competition we shall focus on Beethoven; of course Liszt was an important disseminator of Beethoven all his life and by playing a Beethoven symphony arranged by Liszt one can show all the talents needed for a Beethoven sonata.”

### Imagination

“My advice to young people entering competitions would be: think of life beyond the competition, think of repertoire you really care about. In your future career you need to entertain people for an entire evening and you have a point to make. I often help young kids when they have been asked to put a recital program together. The lack of imagination is frightening. How would it be when you

dared to play more than one Haydn sonata? In general I would be very impressed if somebody would play Granados' complete *Goyescas* or the twelve transcendental etudes by Liszt. Chamber music is vital. If you have never accompanied a song or played a trio, you have limited the way you are going to play the piano. Working with a singer makes you understand phrasing and breathing like nothing else.”

### A kind ear

“Competitions more or less invite pianists to start at the top, and do not accommodate those who want to start in a quiet way. One organisation that tries to help those is the Keyboard Charitable Trust. It was set up, in the first instance, to look at pianists who had won competitions and then had disappeared entirely. I am on the board and we send people around surreptitiously to go and listen, and arrange gigs. Most ordinary music societies are interested in putting together a programme which balances over a year, and introduces some new people. I also often did recitals together with young artists, which is a very nice thing to do. That way the audience will give the newcomer a kind ear.”

# Convinced of your Personality

Anna Vinnitskaya



“Although I was not a beginner – I had already had a management since 2003 and I was playing concerts – the Queen Elisabeth Competition changed my life completely. I had so many concerts directly after the competition, it was just too much. I felt I could not go on like that; you cannot give yourself fully night after night. Now I play about 45 concerts every season and that is enough, because I also teach. I never could have imagined teaching would be so interesting. I have many talented students with many innovative and interesting ideas, I constantly learn from them too. Now I work with every student in a different way, but I had to learn that. I tell my students only to consider a career if you absolutely cannot live without music. Do you really want to devote your life entirely to music? I also have students who don’t want to take part in competitions. I had one student who went on to have a career in politics-there are many wonderful and fulfilling things you can do in life. I respect that, when someone really knows what he wants. Winning a competition doesn’t guarantee you will have a career, or find an agent. It’s a lottery. It is also a matter of taste: one jury will like you, another won’t. And then, of course, there is the terrible fate of some pianists who disappear after winning a competition, some totally squeezed like a lemon; next year the managers will find a new lemon.

Preparing for a competition can bring you lots for the future: you learn how to work in an organised way, which is a major asset. You need discipline and talent, and you need to be convinced of your personality. However, it shouldn’t be too much because nowadays there are many pianists today who show little respect for what the composer wrote. And yet, there is nobody who can play Rachmaninoff’s piano concertos like he himself played them.

ERIC SCHOONES

She won her first international competition at the age of 12. Among her most prestigious prizes are an award at the Busoni competition in Bolzano in 2005, the first prize at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels in 2007, as well as the Leonard Bernstein Award of the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival in 2008. One year later, she was appointed professor at the Hamburg Conservatory, aged 26: the youngest in Germany.





HARALD HOFFMANN

Seong-Jin Cho

# My dream

He won a string of international competitions: the International Fryderyk Chopin Competition for Young Pianists (2008), the Hamamatsu International Piano Competition (2009), and Third Prizes in the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Russia (2011) and the Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition in Tel Aviv (2014). But he finally rose to fame after winning the International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw, becoming the first South Korean pianist to do so.

The Chopin competition really started off my career. I got so many opportunities after that: I was able to release my album through Deutsche Gramophone and I got to meet many people. Although of course some pianists make it without winning a competition, for me it was useful, as I didn't have contacts with famous conductors for example.

I hate competing-it is definitely not my favourite thing to do and so after my last competition I was very happy I didn't have to do it ever again. At a competition the atmosphere is cold, there is no applause. I could not be as spontaneous compared to when I play concerts, where I feel much freer to express my feelings. The Chopin was particularly difficult: there are so many great historical performances of his music but somehow you have to bring something fresh to the music.

Having a career was my dream, but especially the beginning was stressful. I had to make difficult decisions, about management, recording, and lots of other things. To judge the 30-page recording label contract, I had to hire a lawyer; I never imagined I would ever need to do that. Luckily, I did nothing wrong.

Although Asians may be dominating the competitions, in Europe you see more European and American pianists in recitals. Winning a competition is no guarantee to have a career: you have to play well and be strong in many ways, physically and mentally. The travelling doesn't disturb me so much. I am an only child, so I was used to being alone, and my mother sometimes accompanies me on tour. I can't predict the future; I don't know how long I will be able to continue my career, so I do my best.

As a beginner it's difficult to refuse an engagement, because you fear you will not be re-invited. But that is my manager's job, I don't care now. If want to keep a high quality of playing, it can be very demanding. Before a competition I would often go to a museum, as I live in Paris, but now I have too little time – I hardly have time to relax and hang out with friends.

I can say I really enjoy my life now, and I definitely don't want to go back to how things were before the competition. If I were to be in a jury, I would be looking for a pianist who has something personal to say. Hitting the wrong note is not a problem. For one thing I would really understand the situation the pianist is in.

ERIC SCHOONES

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A portrait of a young man, KaJeng Wong, with short dark hair, wearing a light grey suit jacket over a white shirt and a light grey tie. He is sitting and looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a plain, light grey wall.

KaJeng Wong

# Competing for Artists

Even with all its promises and beautiful moments, the path to becoming a professional pianist can be daunting. Young piano students flock to the best conservatories and teachers, they practice way beyond the 10000-hour mark, and not even the most studious scientists can question their devotion. But with nearly 300 international piano competitions per year, shouldn't we agree that the musical world must be thriving?

It takes more than hard work and talent to forge a sustainable career. As a young pianist in my mid-twenties, my experiences travelling to festivals and competitions have made me realise that there are no bad pianists. Everyone is simply very good! A lot of the pianists I met have something different or even special in their piano playing. Away from the competition platforms, those who have yet to win a big competition can still invoke deep introspection in audiences and provide them with memorable moments. Perhaps we can say that only through this intense and merciless competitiveness can the industry churn out the most qualified and distinguished pianists onto the market. But is it true? Are the eliminated candidates any less deserving of a career that would allow their musical thoughts to be heard?

It takes courage to be a professional pianist, because even the most obvious paths do not guarantee any long-lived result. It is easy to say that the industry is shrinking, audiences are fading, there are more pianists than concerts, and thus competitions are necessary to select only the best of the best. But the world is a fast-developing one, perhaps soon the audiences and the market will decide that not only the winners are deserving musicians. After all, we are looking for the true artists, are we not?

**KJ WONG** is a versatile pianist and writer. Recently, he won the Alaska International E-Piano Competition 2018.





ANNE LAURE-LECHAT

Jury and prize winners in Geneva on stage

# Concours de Genève - International Music Competition

The Concours de Genève is one of the most established international music competitions. It has a long tradition that spans nearly 80 years. Let us take a brief look at the history of this competition.

It started in 1939 under the name *Concours International d'Exécution Musicale*. At that time, a 19 year-old Italian pianist by the name of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli travelled on a 3<sup>rd</sup> class one-way train ticket from Brescia to Geneva, to take part in the competition. The competition's jury consisted of seven pianists, including Alfred Cortot. They awarded Michelangeli the first prize. During the war, the competition still continued, but as a national event. In 1946, it resumed its international status and the competition has been held each year ever since. It has been open for various instruments. Until 1978, pianists could apply every year. Between 1978 and 1982, a piano competition was held only in even years. When viewing the list of past laureates, we see the names of great

musicians: Martha Argerich, Friedrich Gulda, Maurizio Pollini, Maria Tipo, Ingrid Haebler, Malcolm Frager, Gerhard Oppitz (finalist), Christian Zacharias, but also many others who competed in one of the other disciplines: Maurice André, Aurèle Nicolet, Myung-Wha Chung, Heinz Holliger...

A very impressive list indeed! Among the jury members, there have also been great personalities such as Alfred Cortot, Nadia Boulanger, Robert Casadesus, Federico Mompou, Carlo Zecchi, Nikita Magaloff, and also past prize winners.

Interestingly, some of these musicians competed in Geneva more than once. Maurizio Pollini was two times finalist (in 1957 and 1958) and won the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize both times! Cécile Ousset was a finalist



GUSTAV ALINK

One of the contestants in the second round in Geneva, 2018

First prize winner Dmitry Shishkin during his final performance



ANNE LAURE-LECHAT

three times in Geneva and Ingrid Haebler even managed four times! Michael Ponti was also a pianist who never gave up and did competitions many times: he was a finalist three times in Geneva. (It has been said that he took part in the Busoni Competition 10 times, and in the end he indeed managed to win the first prize!) In the earlier years, the first round used to be anonymous: the contestants played behind a curtain. Martha Argerich remembers that she almost came too late for her performance: the jury was already going to leave the hall, but she was still allowed to play. Another remarkable aspect: until 1963, the prizes for male and female participants were separate. Therefore, when Martha Argerich won in 1957, she did not compete “against” Pollini. That year, the jury decided to award the first prize in the male section to Dominique Merlet. When Pollini came back in 1958, the first prize was not to be his and he again received the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize.

If you want to participate in the *Concours de Genève*, you need to be an all-round musician. Traditionally, a modern composition by a Swiss composer is compulsory. This used to be required in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round, but this year (2018), the *Spiegeltoccata* by Victor Cordero had to be performed by all contestants in the first round. This was quite a challenge for the jury as well. Besides that, the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage recital has an emphasis on modern music, as it must include a piece written after 1950. Chamber music is part of the semi-finals. (This year, Mozart’s quintet for piano and wind players, KV452.) The three finalists perform a piano concerto in the Victoria Hall with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande.

There is considerable prize money: apart from the main prizes (CHF 20,000 for the winner), there is CHF 12,500 in special prizes. Another attraction of this competition is the career development programme for the winners: two years of concert management, CD recordings and workshops lasting one week with professionals in the field of career development, health, image and social media. This year (2018), many were impressed by the high-level performances by Dmitry Shishkin. In the end, all those who could vote, seemed to be unanimous: he received the Audience Prize, the Young Audience Prize and also the Student’s Prize. The professional jury decided to let him share the First Prize with Théo Fouchenneret. At the award ceremony, organiser Didier Schnorhk stated that the rules for the Concours de Genève are very transparent (and indeed published in the programme book), and on stage, he even remarked that one of the finalists had his teacher on the jury, who may not vote for him (during the preliminaries). At many competitions, this is always a hot topic. The competition in Geneva was very generous by doubling the first prize and to give both winners a Breguet watch.

GUSTAV ALINK

The competition also provided a high-quality webcast, which can still be viewed:

[www.concoursgeneve.ch/section/multimedia/videos\\_photos](http://www.concoursgeneve.ch/section/multimedia/videos_photos)





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*“As a child  
I had a toy piano.”*

With his unique sound and charismatic personality he touches all who hear him. Yaroslav Bykh is 22 years old now, and studying with Prof. Balázs Szokolay at the University of Music Franz Liszt Weimar. His story is quite exceptional.

TATIANA GUZHOVA

Yaroslav Bykh

## *That's why I do it!*

Although not caused by the tragedy in Chernobyl, a mere thirty kilometres from Chernigov, his home town, Yaroslav Bykh was affected by trauma at birth, he was unable to move his arms. Taken to a special hospital, his left hand was soon cured, his right hand needed much more time, and is still restricted in movement. But that did not stop him from pursuing his dreams. “When I was 3 or 4 years old, I heard a teacher in Kindergarten play the piano and from that moment on I knew what I wanted to do. In my family nobody played an instrument, and I was given a toy piano. I don’t remember exactly how I played, but I learned to read music. Teachers in the music school didn’t know how to teach me, until I was nine, when I finally met a teacher who wanted to try. That was in May and after the summer holidays I played twenty pieces for her I had learned all by myself. My teacher was very surprised and now she encouraged me even more. She was not afraid and I am very grateful to her. My hand improved, piano playing turned out to be a good therapy.”

At 17 he went to the conservatory in Kiev, and his progress was remarkable, with him playing Rachmaninoff’s third piano concerto last year, shortly after his final exams.

### Honesty

In April 2018, he started his studies at the Liszt Academy in Weimar and found a kindred soul in Balázs Szokolay. Both professor and pupil agree that playing honestly – Yaroslav: “That’s why I do it” – is what music making is all about.

Szokolay: “I was immediately impressed by his incredible sensitivity and his very special sound. Many students play loud and fast, without real meaning, Yaroslav is different. Taking time to learn is not so popular now perhaps, as young people want an instant career. But Yaroslav chose the right way, the long way. He is an honest artist, he does not want to copy others nor depend on tradition. He is not the kind of artist eager to satisfy the public, but more like those who wish to educate and elevate the public, to develop its taste and that is not easy.”

Yaroslav won a second prize in Riga in 2017 and a first this year in the Euregio Piano Award in Geilenkirchen. “I have no fixed plans for competitions yet. I have to see what is happening in the music world. Perhaps in the summer...”

ERIC SCHOONES

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From left to right:  
Mario Häring (Second Prize),  
Ulrich Gerhartz (Steinway's  
Director of Concert and  
Artist Services), Lang Lang,  
Gerrit Glaner, Xiyu Wang (Third Prize),  
Eric Lu (First Prize) and  
Aljoša Jurinić (Finalist),  
at the Leeds International  
Piano Competition 2018

## Steinway Prize Winner Concerts Network

# A helping hand

Gerrit Glaner, head of C&A at Steinway in Hamburg, is passionate about his job. He travels the world, attends many competitions and knows about the problems young pianists are facing. His answer to the question above? “You would have missed the beginning of the career of Martha Argerich...”

Glaner is very practical: “There is talent, it just needs to be given a chance to grow, to manifest itself. And we happen to be in a world that is dominated by marketing: people tend to stick to what they know. When people don’t trust their own judgement, a recommendation can do miracles: ‘She is not so well-known yet, but ten years from now, you will be sorry you missed her! Go and you can tell your neighbours, you were at her debut!’ A career depends first and foremost on contacts that have a direct line with the piano world. That is more important than any prize money. Young musicians need to play, they need the experience, and they need to establish their name.”

Competitions, well aware of this problem, contacted Glaner and he decided to help. So he developed a collaborative network between piano competitions, concert organisers, festivals, radio stations and Steinway.

What if someone had told you, back in 1957:  
“Come to the concert tonight! A young lady  
from Argentina is playing. Her Chopin is super,  
and she won a prize!” Would you have gone?  
How many would have?

Glaner: “At first, my idea met with a lot of enthusiasm, but nobody dared to take the risk until I spoke to my old friend, Andreas Schulz, the director of the Gewandhaus in Leipzig. Andreas told me about his problem selling piano solo recitals in Leipzig. He said: ‘I can’t sell any recitals here, only if we have big names like Lang Lang, Uchida or Brendel.’ So we developed this idea to add to the four subscription recitals with famous artists two unknown prize winners. Eventually, Andreas even took three, and offered the public a package deal: buy two tickets for the regular concerts with piano, including those with the Gewandhaus Orchestra, and get one for free to a prize winner’s concert. We made sure the young artist received a fair fee with all expenses paid.” That was 2007 and since then there have been concerts with specially selected and highly recommended pianists at an early stage in their careers in Germany, Belgium, France, Luxemburg, Spain, Denmark, England, Finland, Italy, Canada and Korea.

**ERIC SCHOONES**

Check [eu.steinway.com](http://eu.steinway.com) and go to  
**Concert & Artists Prize Winner Concerts**





Three of the six finalists on stage after their performances on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the finals

# The First International Chopin Competition on Period Instruments, Warsaw, 2018

Everybody knows the International Chopin Competition in Warsaw as one of the oldest international piano competitions; it has been held since 1927. (Actually, the Naumburg Competition in New York, which started in 1925, is a bit older.) The Chopin Competition in Warsaw is definitely one the most famous competitions, not only because of its dedication to the wonderful music by Chopin, but also because of the long list of past winners who became world-famous musicians: Martha Argerich, Maurizio Pollini, Garrick Ohlsson, Krystian Zimerman and many more.

The Chopin Competition in Warsaw is held only once every five years. The next one will be in October 2020. Apart from the competition, there are many other high-level classical musical events in Warsaw. Every year, for three weeks in August, the festival “Chopin and his Europe” is held. This is an incredible event,

One immediately feels the wonderful atmosphere of this great tradition.

which started in 2004: one or two concerts every day, with altogether 90 main performers in 2018 (36 pianists), including stellar artists such as Gidon Kremer, Mikhail Pletnev, Elisabeth Leonskaya, Nelson Freire, to mention just a few. In addition, Martha Argerich has usually been present at this festival – she was there each year between 2009 and 2014. In 2010, she performed as a duo with Maria João Pires.

Artistic director of this wonderful festival is Stanislaw Leszczyński. For many years, he also cherished the wish to organize a Chopin competition on period instruments: to hear Chopin's music on the original instruments for which it was composed. This year, it was realized: from September 2 to 14, 2018, the First International Chopin Competition on Period Instruments took place at the Philharmonic in Warsaw. It was quite a challenge: 19 historical instruments and precise copies thereof were made available for the contestants to practice and to perform on, with beautiful fortepianos by Graf, Broadwood, Buchholtz and, of course, also Pleyel and Erard. The competition repertoire was mainly Chopin, but also included a Prelude & Fugue by Bach in the first round; there was the option to perform a Polonaise by Józef Elsner, Karol Kurpiński, Michał Ogiński or Maria Szymanowska. It is understandable that not all pianists who spent most of their lives playing a modern piano, would try their luck on a historical instrument. Not only is the sound totally different; you also need a different touch and technique to play it. Yet, 58 pianists applied for this competition, and 30 of them were selected to take part. The first two rounds were held in the Chamber Hall of the Warsaw Philharmonic. On stage there were those beautiful instruments, and the young performers changed between the pieces to play them on a specific instrument. The jury was chaired by competition director Artur Szklener and consisted of 10 experienced concert pianists, including fortepiano specialists Andreas Staier and Alexei Lubimov. The finals were held in the concert hall of the Warsaw Philharmonic (where the big Chopin competition is held



Everybody is awaiting the results. The four prize winners are seated between the 10 jury members.



GUSTAV ALINK

First prize winner Tomasz Ritter with jury member Claire Chevalier

too – one immediately feels the wonderful atmosphere of this great tradition). The Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century accompanied the six finalists excellently, with the special sound of their instruments. In the end, Tomasz Ritter (23) was awarded the first prize.

**GUSTAV ALINK**

The Chopin Institute maintains its high reputation and made all the video recordings of the competition performances available on its website:

[www.iccpi.pl/en/iccpi/multimedia\\_videos](http://www.iccpi.pl/en/iccpi/multimedia_videos)

Moreover, all the votes by the jury in every round were also published:

[www.iccpi.pl/en/news/id/138](http://www.iccpi.pl/en/news/id/138)



# Bechstein Jazz Piano Solo

## Summit of young talent

Reinel Ardiles Lindemann was awarded a first prize.



This year, for the first time, the Carl Bechstein Foundation organised a piano competition for “Jazz piano solo” at the Kulturstaal of Schloss Britz in Berlin. The high-ranking jury with Prof. Wolfgang Köhler as chairman consisted of four jazz pianists and one journalist. From 2 to 4 November, the experts experienced so many talented contestants between the ages of eleven and nineteen that finally ten young pianists were allowed to present themselves in the winners’ concert. All in all, prizes valued at around € 7,000 were awarded. It was rather a pity that this was a *men only* event. Even though there were no girls among the participants, one could at least have found a woman for the jury; artists like Julia Hülsmann, Olivia Trummer or Anke Helfrich would have been suitable for this, so hopefully that will change next time. Adrian Surojit Müller was among the outstanding talents of the age group up to 14 years old, who impressed with an original free improvisation; in the group of the older participants, the 16 year-old Vincent Meißner wowed the audience with colourful playing and great stylistic diversity.

CARL BECHSTEIN STIFTUNG / ANDREAS TSCHINK

# International German Piano Award

## Rigorous assessment

The purpose of the International German Piano Award, under the patronage of Valery Gergiev and Lars Vogt, is to promote outstanding pianists.

The International Piano Forum, the initiator and organizer of this piano competition, was established in 2008 by friends and promoters of classical piano music in Germany. It offers opportunities for discussion and debate, as well as being a platform for an international career. Recipients of the Award are helped with engagements, recordings and development of a website. The rigorous assessment process for the Award means that even being nominated is a considerable honour: The Nomination-Jury elects the shortlist of the six nominations and a second jury, the Laureate-Jury, independent of the first, consisting of conductors and festival



artistic directors who vote for the Laureate in the great hall of the Alte Oper Frankfurt. Great pianists such as Lukas Geniušas, Eric Lu, Dimitri Levkovich, Hans H. Suh, and Yekwon Sunwoo were laureates in the past.

[www.pianoforum-frankfurt.de](http://www.pianoforum-frankfurt.de)

INTERNATIONAL PIANO FORUM



MERC MAESTRO



Final in the Hotel de Ville in Brussels

# Merci Maestro Brussels

## Self-made woman

Nataliya Chepurenko was born in Kiev (Ukraine) into an artistic family of filmmakers and teachers. She started playing the piano at only five years old and soon she was taken to the Lysenko School in her hometown, a special school comparable to the Gnessin State Musical College in Moscow. She finished her studies at the conservatories in Kiev, Liège, and Brussels.

With the ballet always close to her heart – the wonderful tradition of the great ballets already instilled in her as a child – she took to accompanying ballet and when she moved to Belgium to start a new life, she became the principle pianist of the Flemish Royal Ballet for example. But for a pedagogue from Ukraine life was not so easy and so she started her own school in the heart of Brussels: the Tchaikovsky Music School, with only 6 students. Now, 16 years later, her school works with 40 independent teachers providing 500 adults and children from 2.5 years old up, with top-level music education in piano, violin, guitar, flute and singing.

Nataliya Chepurenko: “The school prepares young artists for international competitions and exams. And because I see so many young and wonderfully talented musicians, I wanted to do more to help them with the so important early stages of their development. I see this with my own students: how much they grow from the competition experience.”

Used to taking her future in her own hands, in 2016, she decided to organize *Merci, Maestro!*, her own competition for young talents from all over the world. “I had planned to have about 25 candidates, but the response was so overwhelming, we ended up with 127, from all over the world.”

After three editions, the competition is now recognised as a main event in the city, important not only for the young talents but also for the cultural life in Brussels in general. *Merci, Maestro!* has been supported by the municipality of Brussels in the person of Karine Lalieux (Echevin de la Culture) and by the Mayor of Woluwe Sint Lambert, Olivier Maingain, “I was very happy to be given the opportunity to organise our Gala concert in the beautiful Hotel de Ville in Brussels this year”, Nataliya Chepurenko said. “Also, the strong support of Vincent Lignier of Piano’s Maene Brussels has been invaluable.”

Next competition: April 26-28, 2019  
Application deadline: February 25, 2019  
[www.mercimaestro.be](http://www.mercimaestro.be)  
[www.nataliyachepurenko.com](http://www.nataliyachepurenko.com)





GUSTAV ALINK

One of the participants gives a thrilling performance.



A view from the balcony in the Asam Hall.

These events were mostly open for musicians up to around 30 years old. After a while, competitions were also established that focus specifically on the much younger age groups. The prizes were not as high as those in the major competitions, but the main purpose was to offer the youngsters an international platform: to give them an exciting event, for which they need to prepare and can compare with others to see where they stand. Apart from this, it is wonderful to meet people from various countries and different cultural backgrounds, and to make friendships which are so much needed in life, especially when you are trying to make a living as a pianist.

In the 1960s, the *Virtuosi per Musica di Pianoforte* competition in Ustí nad Labem (now Czech Rep.) was well-known in Eastern Europe and attracted young children up to 15 years of age from Ukraine, Russia, Poland and other countries, who were already very impressive young performers. Naturally, they came with their parents and teachers, and it was always a wonderful, but also intense and very competitive event. The competition in Ustí nad

Labem is held every year and always in November. The 50<sup>th</sup> competition was celebrated in 2017. Over the years, organizers in other countries also realised that a competition for young pianists can

**Highly talented  
young pianists  
come to Ettlingen.**

be very nice and attractive, and so, more and more were initiated. In the Ukraine, there are the Krainev and Horowitz Competitions. In the U.S.A., Oberlin is well-known and of a high level. In recent years, major competitions such as the Cliburn, the Gina Bachauer Competition, Orléans and Cleveland introduced Junior Competitions as well. When comparing all these, there is one that has a rich



# International Competitions for Young Pianists, Ettlingen (Germany)

International piano competitions have been around for more than a century. In 1890, the Anton Rubinstein Competition was the very first international piano competition, though it only accepted male pianists ...! Ever since, the main aim of music competitions has been to award promising young pianists and to help them establish a career.



GUSTAV ALINK



ETTINGEN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION FOR YOUNG PIANISTS

tradition and stands out: Ettlingen (near Karlsruhe, Germany). The Ettlingen International Competition for Young Pianists was launched in 1988 and has been held every two years, in August. It is open for young pianists up to 21 years old, and there are two age categories. For the first competition in 1988, there already was a good number of applicants, but for the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in 1990, the organisers were totally overwhelmed when they received 155 applications from all over the world! Ever since, the competition in Ettlingen has always attracted the attention of many young pianists and their teachers. Looking at the list of past prize winners, one can see many names of pianists who went on to have great international careers and some of them became quite famous. It would take too much space to list them all, but just to mention a few: Lang Lang, Markus Groh, Severin von Eckardstein, Lisa de la Salle, Igor Levitt, Martin Helmchen, Boris Giltburg, Eric Lu and Ivan Krpan.

The fact that they came to Ettlingen and were prize winners there, has much significance. It means that these highly talented young

pianists chose to come to Ettlingen, gave splendid performances, and that the jury in Ettlingen recognized their extraordinary talent and their potential and awarded them. This year (2018), not less than 340 young pianists applied for the competition in Ettlingen! Category B was won by Oleksiy Kanke (Ukraine, 20) and Category A by Yu Lei (China, 13).

Apart from the high level of musical performances, there are also other aspects that make the competition in Ettlingen special. The competition takes place in the Asam Hall of the Castle of Ettlingen, which is a stunning location and worth visiting in itself. The competition is a first-class event and has clearly put Ettlingen on the map. People mark their calendars in August and travel especially to Ettlingen to hear the best young pianists at the beginning of their careers.

**GUSTAV ALINK**

Visit the competition website for more information:  
[www.pianocompetition.org](http://www.pianocompetition.org)



# *International Competition Piano Val de Travers*

from 5 to 10 July 2019  
**Switzerland**



For pianists from 5 to 25 years old  
Deadline 3 May 2019  
Prize fund 10'000 CHF and concerts

<http://piano.international>  
[info@piano.international](mailto:info@piano.international)



# Young artists in Val de Travers

Your own expression

Katja Avdeeva, director of Piano Val de Travers and of the festival *Week-ends du piano* in Neuchâtel, herself a concert pianist and laureate of international competitions in Switzerland, Italy, France and Spain, is committed to helping young talent. “My idea was to create a competition where all participants are equally important. Young musicians come to share their originality and freshness in their personal approach to music making. Having this experience is vital and so we offer all participants opportunities to play before the audience in the Val de Travers region. Also they can take masterclasses with jury members and get advice from them. Competitions are important, but only time will tell who will have a career. Most importantly, I like to help young musicians develop their own personality and find their own individual form of expression.”

VADIK ZIBROV



Milda Daunoraitė playing in last year's competition.



Florian Koltun and Xin Wang

## Euregio Piano Award

Klaversommer Geilenkirchen

Florian Koltun and Xin Wang both enjoy a busy life as concert pianists, touring the world giving concerts and masterclasses. But having a broad interest in cultural life, Florian founded a non-profit management as well. With the same focus, the International piano competition “Euregio Piano Award” was started in 2013 in close cooperation with the city of

Geilenkirchen, which hosts the ‘Klaversommer Geilenkirchen’, an extensive festival with concerts and masterclasses, enthusiastically supported by the local community for seven years now. Every year, 130 participants representing over 35 nationalities are invited to take part and the prize winners play over 25 concerts in venues such as the Berlin Philharmonie and Qintai Concert Hall in Wuhan. Beside this, there are 25 private concerts for non-finalists, chosen by the jury. Past prize winners include Alexey Sychev (Russia), Viviana Lasaracina (Italy), Nejc Kamplet (Slovenia), Alexander Bernstein (USA), Georgy Voylochnikov (Russia), Svetlana Andreeva (Ukraine), Sun-A Park (USA) and Yaroslav Bykh (Ukraine). The competition will take place on the 25th to 28th of July 2019.



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Timotheus Höttges (CEO Deutsche Telekom AG), Alberto Ferro (1<sup>st</sup> Prize Winner), Ho Jeong Lee (3<sup>rd</sup> Prize Winner), Tomoki Kitamura (2<sup>nd</sup> Prize Winner), Prof. Pavel Gililov (Chairman and Artistic Director of the Competition).

Art unites the world

# Beethoven in Bonn

The International Telekom Beethoven Competition, a major piano competition based in Bonn, will take place for the eighth time from Dec 6–14, 2019.

The competition wants to foster exceptional young artists and assist them with their dreams of realizing an international musical career, but also to use it to contribute to keeping the great legacy of Ludwig van Beethoven alive and active in his native city. ‘Art unites the world!’, said Beethoven, who would have enjoyed seeing the international field of participants in the Telekom Beethoven Competition as they communicate with one another and with the public using the common language of music. The competition – with prize-winners from many different countries – is particularly symbolic for international encounters, and through this for the ideals of Ludwig van Beethoven, who will be celebrated for his 250th anniversary in 2020 in Bonn.

The competition focuses on works by Beethoven from every phase of his creative life. The picture of the master’s music is rounded off with compositions by his predecessors, contemporaries and successors. Along with the compulsory pieces, candidates can each put together a free program to show the jury their individual artistic potential.

The newly established Chamber Music Final will make particular demands. Together with the string players of the Beethoven Trio Bonn, the three finalists will perform one of Beethoven’s piano

trios during a festive concert night. Beethoven’s piano concertos will form the thematic centrepiece of the Orchestra Final, accompanied by the Beethoven Orchester Bonn.

Apart from its artistic aspiration, the competition attaches great importance to a personal atmosphere. The participants are accommodated in host families. There they have the opportunity to rehearse and to get an impression of life in Beethoven’s native city of Bonn. Pianists from all nations as well as stateless persons can take part in the International Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn 2019.

**INTERNATIONAL TELEKOM  
BEETHOVEN  
COMPETITION BONN  
6-14 DEC 2019**

The application deadline is May 10, 2019.  
[www.telekom-beethoven-competition.de](http://www.telekom-beethoven-competition.de)





# 19<sup>th</sup> Century Sound

In 2015, Chris Maene conceived the straight strung grand pianos for Daniel Barenboim in collaboration with Steinway & Sons. The success of this new straight strung concept, based on the historic tradition of 19th century piano manufacturing, has now led to a new development.

Since much of the feedback received from both professionals and audience was so positive, Chris Maene decided to conceive a full family of straight strung grand pianos. Apart from the Concert Grand 284 and its smaller version the Parlor Grand 228, the factory now produces a brand-new and particular model: the Chamber Music Concert Grand 250.

The Chamber Music Concert Grand CM//250 is specifically inspired by the best straight strung grand pianos of the 1860s, such as Bechstein, Blüthner, Pleyel or Erard.

A more delicate design, a thinner rim and soundboard, smaller hammers, a very light and sensitive keyboard and specific stringing make this grand piano's sound refer even more clearly to the glorious

instruments of the end of the 19th century. This model is perfectly suited for chamber music, song recitals, smaller concert halls and/or private collections.

Chris Maene : "In going even further than with the Concert Grand CM//284, we created with the Chamber Music Concert Grand Piano CM//250 a true development from the authentic 19th century straight strung grand piano into a contemporary instrument. By its extremely pronounced transparency and clarity, the colors and the texture of the music are beautifully enhanced. The sound character therefore is rather unique. So far, the feedback from pianists, surprised by the new musical potential of the instrument, is unanimously positive."

Chris Maene  
Straight Strung  
Family



CHRIS MAENE STRAIGHT STRUNG  
CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERT GRAND CM//250

**Specifications:**

- **Dimensions:** L 250 cm · W 157 cm
- **Compass:** 90 keys, GGG – c'''
- **Keyboard:** Kluge, Remscheid, Germany  
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- **Black keys:** Ebony wood
- **White keys:** Non-slippery and non-reflecting composite material
- **Bass strings:** Bespoke brass wound bass strings,  
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- **Action:** Renner action and hammers  
(built according to Chris Maene's specifications)
- **Soundboard:** Patent Chris Maene · Red spruce from the Alps ·  
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**6-14 DEC 2019**

Participants  
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1 <sup>st</sup> prize	30.000 €
2 <sup>nd</sup> prize	20.000 €
3 <sup>rd</sup> prize	10.000 €

plus more than 10.000 €  
in special prizes

**Application Deadline**  
**10<sup>th</sup> May 2019**

**INTERNATIONAL TELEKOM  
BEETHOVEN  
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Photo: © Dan Hannen

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



# Mozarteum University Salzburg

The level of technical competence and stylistic knowledge among young pianists has risen in recent decades so that jury decisions in competitions are largely subjective. Therefore in “Juries in Competition” there will be three independently voting juries. Every candidate can receive a prize from each jury and a positive evaluation from just one jury will qualify the participant for the next round even if the other two juries were to eliminate him or her.

Thanks to the Bösendorfer Enspire System, two grand pianos 280VC can connect online, meaning that the performance of one candidate can be heard simultaneously on two live pianos in another hall without seeing the participant. In this way we can have three independent juries listening to the same playing simultaneously.

## Juries in Competition



Artistic Director Klaus Kaufmann: “We are looking forward to this competition and we are very curious how the results will be. Possibly, the three juries will come to more or less the same results, or they may be rather contradictory. This is the fascinating element of this experiment, which is a world premiere in this form.”

[www.uni-mozarteum.at/en/kunst/jic](http://www.uni-mozarteum.at/en/kunst/jic)

GIONATA GALLONI



Matthias Fischer, winner of the 2018 competition

The International Competition Piano Lovers Over 40® for non-professional pianists over 40 years of age is unique. There are many competitions for “amateurs” and this is the only one reserved for non-professionals over 40 years old. It was born of an idea of Professor Maria Grazia Rossi Vimercati, chairman and founder of Piano Lovers Association. After the first experimental edition in 2012, the competition was happy to welcome an increasing number

## *Piano Lovers Over 40®* New Mind-set

of contestants to an ever-expanding audience. Professor Maria Grazia Rossi Vimercati: “This encouraged us, knowing we are on the right track.” The competition met with much acclaim from the Milanese cultural environment and for the contestants, who perform in various categories, this is a wonderful chance to play for a highly qualified Jury and a listening and appreciative audience. The next edition will take place in Milan, presumably in October 2019. Stay tuned.

[www.pianoloversover40.com](http://www.pianoloversover40.com)



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**Frank Braley, Recording Session September 2017**

*"I've fallen in love with this piano. I want to spend as much time with it as possible".*

**Daniel Barenboim**

*"The straight strung grand pianos of Chris Maene are among the most inspiring instruments I've played in recent years".*

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