

# THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS



THE WORLD FEDERATION  
OF INTERNATIONAL  
MUSIC COMPETITIONS

2

2022

Mao Fujita

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## W E L C O M E

*Dear readers,*

The music world is slowly ascending to its former glory with audiences excited more than ever to attend live performances. The past two years have been a difficult time for us all, there is no doubt. However, that being said, these challenges have also allowed us to explore new avenues, create novel ideas, and reevaluate the role and function of music competitions.

As a presenter of a major international piano competition, we at Piano Cleveland have tasked ourselves to keep innovating during this time for the betterment of our artists. In 2020, Piano Cleveland presented *Virtu(al)oso*, an online piano competition that raised money for pianists through online donations, directly supporting artists and raising significant funds to support them during the pandemic. As live performances began to return, we featured new ways for pianists to demonstrate their creativity and artistry: during our 2021 Cleveland International Piano Competition, we presented a two-piano round for the first time, as well as virtuosic transcriptions of well-known tunes, which were both a challenge for contestants and a thrill for audiences. These types of innovations are crucial for competitions to remain relevant and useful for today's emerging pianists.

As the music world is changing, we must all examine the best ways for competitions to be as helpful to young artists as possible. One obvious way is by providing them with public performances, which is of course extremely important for their career development. However, we must remember that young artists – whether they are 18 or 32 – also need guidance and support in *how* to build a career, by showing them the different paths available to them and how they can get there.

It is a competition's responsibility to provide artists with opportunities to grow skills that would be beneficial for them in the future beyond performance opportunities. We must also work together and emphasise creating new audiences for classical music, which is quite a challenge during this fast-paced age. Building the future of concertgoers is key to making sure young classical music performers can continue to play in front of eager audiences in years to come.

We hope you, our colleagues in other competitions and young pianists from around the world, continue to do what you do and share the beauty and joy of music to continue inspiring the world and make it a better place.

**YARON KOHLBERG**

CONCERT PIANIST \* PRESIDENT, PIANO CLEVELAND

PRESENTING ORGANIZATION OF THE CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION





## THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS

### THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS

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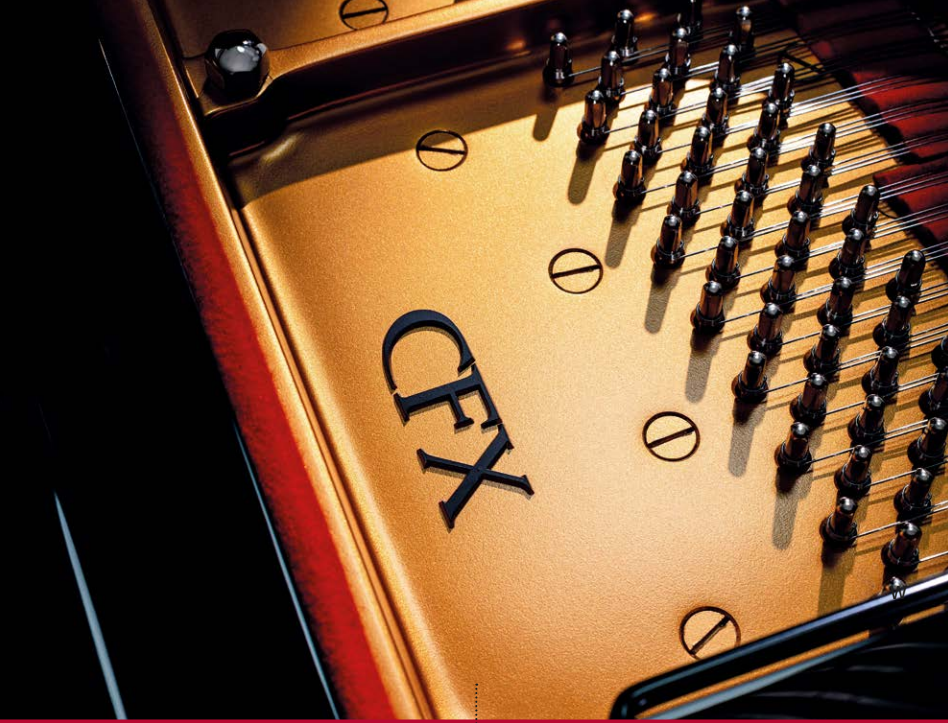
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### Stay updated!

For upcoming application  
deadlines etc. check:

**Alink-Argerich Foundation**  
[www.alink-argerich.org](http://www.alink-argerich.org)





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THE WORLD FEDERATION  
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### 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 to furthering their careers by presenting them before distinguished juries, general audiences, the media, and the wider music community.

The WFIMC is a Member of the International Music Council and some 120 of the world's leading music competitions belong to the Federation. A number of important international music organisations are associate members of the WFIMC.

[www.wfimc.org](http://www.wfimc.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 175 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

Piano Street provides material and services related to classical piano music and aims to facilitate and inspire communication between piano playing people from all over the world. The content of the website mainly consists of downloadable sheet music connected to hand-picked recordings, information about composers and pieces, one of the world's largest discussion forums about piano music (more than 600 000 postings), and the digital magazine section containing piano related news and articles. The popularity of the website is continuously growing, and it currently counts over 6,000 unique visitors daily. Piano Street has been online for over twenty years and operates worldwide from Stockholm in Sweden.

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In 2017, only 18 years of age and while still studying at the Tokyo College of Music, Mao Fujita won first prize along with the Audience Award, Prix Modern Times, and the Prix Coup de Coeur at the Concours International de Piano Clara Haskil in Switzerland. Then, two years later, Mao Fujita returned home from Moscow as the Silver Medallist of the 2019 Tchaikovsky Competition. Now he is done with competitions and is enjoying an international career.

**You had a good reason to participate in the Tchaikovsky Competition.**

*[laughs]* I just wanted to go to Moscow; I wanted to see the Kremlin. But I also love the Russian composers and when still in elementary school my mother bought me a DVD of the famous concert Horowitz gave in the Great Hall of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory, in 1986, sixty years after he had left Russia. Horowitz is my hero! I was so fascinated and immediately fell in love with his sound. So I wanted to play in that hall for many, many years. The easiest way to get there proved participating in the Tchaikovsky Competition, held in the same hall.

**That reminds me of Alexandre Kantorow, who participated mainly for the experience. He was awarded the first prize and I think neither of you experienced the stress caused by expectations of winning?**

No, not so much. Half of the competitors were Russian, and they were all very nervous and sweating, because they were so impressed with the history of the competition. For me it was just another competition and with Zen I learned to control my nerves. Focussing on the body – relaxing, relaxing, relaxing – I could play in the competition almost as if I were practicing at home, without too much pressure.


**You have participated in many competitions since you were eleven years old, but did you like competing? Looking at the videos of the Tchaikovsky you seemed to be enjoying yourself very much, being completely immersed in the music.**

Yes, definitely. Like the Tchaikovsky, the Clara Haskil Competition was also a wonderful experience, because of the classical repertoire, the nature in Switzerland, the truly kind people and enthusiastic audiences. And I made so many friends in competitions: Alexandre Kantorow, Dmitry Shishkin, and so many others. In Moscow I played chamber music with the winners of the competition for violin, flute, or cello. But in the end competitions are perfect to promote yourself with audiences and jurors. I always wanted to get feedback from them.

**You liked to interact with the jury?**

Yes, definitely. The Tchaikovsky Competition had a very prestigious jury; Pavel Gililov, Menahem Pressler and Nelson Freire were there! And I could see them from the stage. In that huge hall, they don't sit too far away, because they would not be able to hear all the details from the back of the hall. Oh reminds me of a nice story: I admire Nelson Freire so much, especially his recording of the





Mao Fujita

Mozart, the next level



Brahms concertos, and when I told him I was a huge fan of his, he said to me: “I am also huge fan of you.”

**I read on the website of the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam that Maria João Pires is also a fan of yours.**

Really? Oh!

**You played for her?**

No, never. Actually I have been to her concerts so often, and last year I covered for her, when she injured her shoulder, but I didn't know this!

**She plays a miraculous Beethoven Sonata opus 111 now in recitals, and people tend to say it's not for youngsters. But you played it at the Clara Haskil Competition.**

I was eighteen and my teacher in Tokyo taught me how to approach these magical pieces, but of course especially the second movement is a challenge for me. Immediately after the Tchaikovsky competition there was the pandemic. I had time to think about my future. I had done so many virtuoso pieces and I wanted to go the next level, and study Beethoven, Haydn and especially Mozart. In his music there are not so many notes contrary to Brahms or Rachmaninoff, where you can easily find the right sound. I remember

playing Rachmaninoff's second concerto with Riccardo Chailly and the Lucerne Festival Orchestra. The moment the orchestra comes in, the first note from the string is so incredible. Chailly had a wonderful way with the concerto and he will conduct when I play the same work in Amsterdam, next March. But with Mozart it's completely different. For Mozart you have to consider every single note, every harmony, because every detail is so important; otherwise it will be boring for the audience.

**You recorded all Mozart Sonatas, and you play all-Mozart recitals in Japan, and also in Amsterdam next year. Is Horowitz, your hero, also an inspiration for Mozart?**

Oh yes, his style of playing is fascinating. He doesn't move so much, only the fingers, but his sound, even with just a few notes, is really amazing. I also love his Scarlatti, it's so clear. People say his sound is so grand, so attacking, but his pianissimo is just marvellous.

**You will also play Mozart's Piano Concerto K. 488. Do you use the Busoni-cadenza, like Horowitz?**

No, when there is a cadenza by Mozart himself, I play that. But for other concertos like K. 467 or K. 491 Mozart didn't write one, and then I play my own cadenza.

A photograph of a young person with dark hair, seen from the side, playing a grand piano. The lighting is dramatic, with a strong light source from the upper left creating a silhouette effect and highlighting the keys and the player's hands. The background is dark.

*“Horowitz is my hero!”*





EIICHI IKEDA

**Do you know Dinu Lipatti wrote cadenzas for K. 467?**

Oh yes, he is one of my favourite pianists! At his last concert he played the Sonata in a minor. I also play it in my recital, where I put the four sonatas K. 309, 310, 311 and 333 together. Mozart wrote when he went to Mannheim and Paris, and later to Vienna. Although for my Carnegie Hall debut, I chose a more varied programme with Mozart, Liszt, Brahms, Clara, and Robert Schumann. But later I would love to play an all-Mozart recital there as well.

**That will be another hall where your hero Horowitz played.**

Yes, yes, yes! For the last two years I have had the opportunity to go to so many wonderful orchestras and halls, which fascinates me: Carnegie Hall and Moscow with Horowitz, la Scala with Callas, and Luzern with Claudio Abbado!

**I guess there are no more competitions for you?**

No, I can't. I have so many concerts now. But I like to follow competitions on the internet. And every time I am a little nervous thinking about the candidates. I watched Van Cliburn and Chopin Competitions with wonderful new winners!

**You follow that?**

Yes, every time!

His first appearance on the major international competitions was in 2010, where he received the 1st prize in the Junior Section of The World Classic in Taiwan. He won several piano competitions over the following years, including the Rosario Marciano International Piano Competition in Vienna in 2013 and in 2016 he won 3rd prize in the Gina Bachauer International Young Artists Piano Competition.

Mao Fujita is invited to festivals like Klavier-Festival Ruhr, the Verbier Festival and he performs with orchestras like the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, Mariinsky Orchestra, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic, Filarmonica della Scala, and St. Petersburg Philharmonic.

Sony Classical just released Mozart's complete Piano Sonatas with more on the way. Mao lives in Berlin where he continues his studies with Kirill Gerstein.

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

ERIC SCHOONES



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## AGENDA

## WFIMC Piano Competitions | February – May 2023

12 – 24 February

TAKAMATSU | JAPAN

*Takamatsu International Piano Competition*[www.tipc.jp](http://www.tipc.jp)

14 March – 1 April

TEL AVIV | ISRAEL

*The Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition*[www.arims.org.il](http://www.arims.org.il)

17 – 26 March

ÉPINAL | FRANCE

*Concours International de Piano d'Épinal*[www.concours-international-piano-epinal.org](http://www.concours-international-piano-epinal.org)

19 – 30 March

BARCELONA | SPAIN

*Maria Canals International Music Competition*[www.mariacanal.org](http://www.mariacanal.org)

12 – 15 April

LYON | FRANCE

*Lyon International Chamber Music Competition*[www.bru-zane.com/17-cimcl](http://www.bru-zane.com/17-cimcl)

13 – 22 April

JAÉN | SPAIN

*International Piano Competition Prize Jaén*[www.premiopiano.dipujaen.es](http://www.premiopiano.dipujaen.es)

12 – 18 May

OSAKA | JAPAN

*Osaka International Chamber Music Competition*[www.jcmf.or.jp](http://www.jcmf.or.jp)

31 May – 9 June

VALÈNCIA | SPAIN

*International Piano Competition "Iturbi Prize"*[www.pianoiturbi.dival.es](http://www.pianoiturbi.dival.es)





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Jury and  
finalists  
in 2022

# *The Bechstein-Bruckner Competition Austria*

On June 5 and 6, 2023, German piano manufacturer C. Bechstein and the Brucknerhaus Linz will present the third Bechstein-Bruckner Competition Austria. This successful, new cooperation serves to promote young pianists from the nine Austrian music universities and conservatories that offer a course of study in “solo piano”.

It is a defining feature of this competition that the participating candidates are directly nominated by their institutions. Pianists thus selected have two rounds to present themselves to their audience and the international jury in Linz, with mandatory pieces placing a special focus on the performance of Austrian piano repertoire. Prize money and concert engagements as part of the C. Bechstein Piano Recitals at the Brucknerhaus await the deserving laureates. Big winner of the first Bechstein-Bruckner Competition Austria 2021 was the Georgian pianist Irma Gigani from the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, who not only secured the First Prize, but also the Bruckner and Mozart Special Prizes for

the mandatory repertoire of the competition. In 2022, she was joined by Maria Narodytska from the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz, who herself took home not only the First Prize, but also the Bruckner and a Schubert Special Prizes. As chair of the jury this year, Roland Krüger expressed the great respect of the jurors for the high-level performances, some of which stood out in particular. “The names Bechstein and Bruckner, both of which stand for great traditions, naturally give rise to high expectations. We are all the more pleased to be able to award the first prize to Maria Narodytska, a musical personality with unique charisma. She is completely herself on stage and convinces with finely differentiated nuances of sound.”

Jurors of the previous competitions include renowned pianists, such as Prof. Michel Dalberto from the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse de Paris, Prof. Gerrit Zitterbart from the Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media, Prof. Konstantin Lifschitz from the Lucerne School of Music in 2021, Prof. Roland Krüger from the Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media, Prof. Dina Parakhina from the Royal College of Music London, and Prof. Alexej Gorlatch from the Mannheim University of Music and Performing Arts in 2022. The Lebanese pianist Abdel Rahman El Bacha and Prof. Markus Groh from the Berlin University of the Arts have already confirmed their participation in next year’s jury.

Maria Narodytska,  
first prize winner in 2022

C. Bechstein and the Brucknerhaus Linz cordially extend the invitation to the 3rd Bechstein-Bruckner Competition Austria on June 5 and 6, 2023.  
[www.bechstein.com](http://www.bechstein.com)





# THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS CAME TO UTRECHT





Last September, the second Conference of the Alink-Argerich Foundation took place in Utrecht, hosted by Liszt Utrecht this time. Some 120 representatives of international piano competitions, piano manufacturers but also performing artists, pedagogues, organisers, and journalists gathered to discuss various aspects of piano competitions. Gustav Alink shares his views looking back on a successful event.

A group photo of those who were present on the first day of the conference.

## Alink-Argerich Foundation Conference

The main aim of the Alink-Argerich Foundation (AAF) is to be of service to the musicians and competitions: to help young musicians with objective information, while facilitating organisers of competitions as well. The idea of arranging a conference was to expand this and to take a more active role by looking into matters of shared or competing interests and to give some suggestions or recommendations. The first AAF Conference was held in Barcelona four years ago. Barcelona proved there was a real need in the sector to communicate and come together. Gustav Alink: “Now finally the second gathering could be organised, in close cooperation with Liszt

Utrecht, which had also been postponed because of corona. I am very happy with the attendance of many of the major competitions: Warsaw, Brussels, Tel Aviv, Leeds, Zürich, Cleveland, Salt Lake City, Hamamatsu, Prague, Bucharest, Barcelona, Paderewski, Grieg, Maj Lind, as well as many of the smaller competitions, and the exchange of insight and opinions from different perspectives proved extremely rewarding.”

As a mathematician, Gustav Alink has always had a weak spot for statistics and this, combined with his passion for music makes for the perfect ingredients for more than forty years of profound research



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Moderator Alek Laskowski listens to the panel members for session 1: Florian Riem (WFIMC), Fiona Sinclair (Leeds), Yaron Kohlberg (Cleveland), and Nicolas Dernoncourt (Brussels)

into all the intricacies of piano competitions. In 1990, marking the centenary of the very first international piano competition in 1890 (the Anton Rubinstein Competition in St. Petersburg), and just before internet made everything much more accessible, Gustav Alink published the 2nd edition of his guide book and a set of three reference volumes with all possible data on piano competitions.

With the encouraging support of Martha Argerich, co-founder of the foundation, and having established a dense network of thousands of contacts, Alink enjoys a unique position in the musical world. There is a bond of trust with many in the sector, which enables the Alink-Argerich Foundation to have a keen eye for all trends and problems. Gustav Alink's expertise and independent judgement are often called upon. This, complemented with the professional knowledge of his spouse Akemi Alink whose personal approach and understanding has also gained much respect, makes them a perfect team. "We often work behind the scenes, for example mediating conflicts that can sometimes run high. But I also want to use our position to improve things in general so that competitions will be conducted fairly, with more transparency and in the best interest of young musicians. That remains our focus: helping these young people, most of whom are in the competition circuit for ten or even twenty years of their lives, always hoping to make a next step in their careers. I truly admire their enormous motivation, their great dedication and perseverance. A few weeks in a competition can make quite a change in the musician's career for years to come. It can be most rewarding, but the road to success is long and full of uncertainties, surprises, and disappointment."

The term "competition" is sometimes being avoided. Several competitions like to present themselves as festivals. Gustav Alink: "This has its origin in the idea that competitions in art are irreconcilable with the very nature of art. Not to have a ranking in the finals is not new. Already seventy years ago, the ARD Competition in Munich did not announce a classification after the final round. Also the competition in Santander and one in England tried it, but this was always abandoned eventually because everybody wants to know who the winner is. We saw another change at the Elisabeth Competition, where the last six of the twelve finalists have not been classified any more for quite some years now. The first prize winner always gets the most attention and it has happened that a competitor, who was not classified at the top, was so disappointed that he quit his career in music altogether. When the competition has the

structure of a festival, it can make the event more interesting for participants. Combined with good after-care and extra guidance, professional management and, of course, concert engagements are particularly important."

"In my opinion, a competition becomes much more interesting when as many pianists as possible can present themselves. Fortunately, the Queen Elisabeth Competition sticks to the old formula of some eighty candidates in the first round coming to Brussels to play in the hall for jury and public. It would be a pity if that number were to be reduced too much in pre-selections, because, after all, the experience of performing live in front of an audience is essential for young musicians. We are often invited to attend competitions, and mostly the organisers expect to see us at the finals, but I much prefer to go to the first rounds, where you can see and hear many more competitors, and really know what's happening."

And what about the age-old question of judges whose students are participating? "We always say that this should be avoided. It always causes complications and uncomfortable feelings, not only among the contestants and the audience, but also within the jury. Total objectivity does not exist when judging music. There is also the fact that jury members often serve on multiple competitions. So they probably have already heard candidates several times before and it is almost impossible to disregard those impressions. Of course, overall, having a career or not depends on many different factors and having a bit of luck often helps."

Like many of us nowadays, Gustav Alink is also quite concerned about the environment. "In this respect, some people might say that online competitions are a valuable addition. But we have to consider this carefully, because classical music should be experienced live in a concert hall." With the advent of the Internet, organising everything became much easier and cheaper in terms of communication, booking travel, etc. "This really encouraged competition organisers to go international. And the music world, especially of the big soloists, is very international. Still, I think there's something to be said for limiting travel for reasons of one's own health and the climate anyway. I would insist on that in my own role, and why not play more in one's own country?"

Will there be a third conference? "The attendance has been so impressive and the feedback so positive that this strongly motivates us to continue!"

ERIC SCHOONES

Panel members for session 5: Pascal Roge (France), Álvaro Teixeira Lopes (Porto), Noriko Ogawa (Hamamatsu), and Artur Szklener (Warsaw)







CHRISTIAN RUVOLO

Competitions have always accompanied my career, ever since I was a child; it always motivated me to give my best, although I didn't really care so much about the results. I didn't know anything about the musical world at that time; I only remember that at one of my first competitions the jury was talking, reading the newspaper, and drinking coffee. It's much different nowadays.

The chance to perform in public was my motivation, because as a pupil you basically play for your teacher and your relatives. Later, I became more aware of the importance of competitions. And in Leeds in 1981, I stepped into the professional world, and I felt it was a crucial moment in my life, something that could have an enormous impact on my future. I was not yet prepared psychologically, and surprisingly I reached the finals. The announcement of who was going on to the next round was simply nerve-wracking, and in the semi-finals, I had to play a recital that was broadcast live by the BBC nationwide. In the finals I played Rachmaninov's second concerto for the very first time with orchestra – there was not even enough rehearsal time to play it through once. But somehow it went well and I got second prize. Two agencies already

approached me during the first rounds, which was quite extraordinary. Leeds changed my life, but I still went on to do Brussels two years later. There I felt more confident: I had played my concerto with orchestra many times by then. You should take competitions of that calibre very seriously.

At that time it was still possible to make a career with second prizes. If I had won 1st prize at Leeds, I probably would have stopped with competitions. But with a 2nd prize of course you still want to try more. After Brussels I was invited to the Marlboro Chamber Music Festival in Vermont USA, where I met Rudolf Serkin and other famous musicians. Finally, the Van Cliburn Competition in 1989, gave me a so-called "Jury Discretionary Award", which means they liked my performances but couldn't send me on to the finals. My former teachers did not encourage me to try the Chopin or the Tchaikovsky Competitions, and nowadays I sometimes regret I didn't do more competitions, because without them it's much more difficult finding engagements.

My attitude towards competitions changed over the years. I was frequently invited to serve on juries, and I started organising



Wolfgang Manz

# Grateful for every competition!

Some forty years ago, Wolfgang Manz won a series of first prizes, in 1979 – at the Steinway Competition Hamburg, Grottrian Steinweg-Competition Braunschweig, and the Alfred Cortot Competition for young pianists in Milan – and then he went on to bigger competitions, winning second prize each time, in Senigallia, Leeds, Bonn and finally the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels in 1983, which secured his international concert career. He is currently teaching as professor at the Hochschule für Musik Nürnberg, serves on juries, is president of the Mozartverein 1829 Nürnberg, and has been artistic director of the Ettlingen International Piano Competition since 2020.

competitions myself. And I slowly began to understand how competitions actually work. Results are just a glimpse of a moment, depending on each jury member's personal taste and criteria. A different jury judges differently and results should not be taken too seriously as a verdict. Rankings are a "necessary evil": without them there would be much less of attraction and fascination. But results can never be "right" or "wrong".

What finally counts is the overall impression and with the exceptional high level nowadays there is a need for finding more universal artistic and intellectual criteria to define unique artistry. I also became much more aware that we are also actors on stage, and power of communication and body choreography or the ability of creating mysterious moments in a performance have a decisive influence on the public and a jury. Of course you have to remain faithful to the music, which is why I never liked eccentricities and showing off too much on stage. I believe more in the value of a high culture in playing, and good sound and balance.

I have two souls in my body: as an artist I actually do not want to compare, or judge about "who is your favourite composer or inter-

preter". However, as a professor accompanying students on their way into their profession, I am grateful for every, even smallest competition, because they provide the best opportunities for young pianists to present themselves. Competitions constitute a big "platform of chances", an artistic exhibition and a place of exchange and networking. With the right attitude one should take the chances and also listen to others, which can only widen one's horizons.

This year the level in the Ettlingen Competition was again extremely high, with youngsters from all over the world, twelve, thirteen years old and playing pieces like Balakirew's *Islamey* or Liszt's *Dante Sonata*, unbelievable, but true. This is thanks to excellent teachers all over the world but also the fact that highly polished performances on YouTube set a standard they want to achieve.

Sometimes you find an outstanding personality and we should not, like scientists, try to explain but instead keep the secrets of sound production and performance. That is what keeps the music world alive and going, with never-ending fascination.

ERIC SCHOONES



# Competitions Post-Pandemic – A New Grip on Audiences?

It might be too early to talk about a post-pandemic momentum as the global map still largely differs, but life has more or less returned to a more functional state in terms of social functions and general behaviour. During the pandemic, a multitude of actions and innovations were created by international piano competitions to provide for both participants and audiences. The big issue was to go online or hybrid.

Technically speaking, with high-end technology and online coverages already existing, all major competitions were prepared to run for online alternatives. Successful vaccine programs enabled a few to go hybrid. The situation's travel limitations also created unexpected zero-carbon future ideas and possibilities to reduce environmental impact. The online options allowed for programmes and interactive elements that offered deeper insights into the musicians and the music, with artist storylines letting contestants make a rapport with the audience with an aim to developing their personality and marketability as an artist.

According to consumer analyses, digital adoption across all economic sectors increased dramatically during Covid. In general, the world has seen a shift in the dynamic between business and consumer behaviour at large. Where, once, retailers would have almost anonymous transactional relationships with their customers, now both retailers and consumers are demanding deeper, more meaningful interactions.

We have looked at some of the competitions that were already digital pioneers when the pandemic started. How much did the new situation accelerate their already existing work to reach global audiences? Which new features and innovations were most impor-

tant to implement during the restrictions, and will they continue to play a part in the future?

Aleksander Laskowski of The Chopin Institute in Warsaw says: "Given all the travel restrictions, we felt it was our job to make people who could 'only' follow the competition online get a truly immersive experience. It means that following the latest trends in social media and being alert to all possible social and cultural developments is simply a part of our everyday job. We will be developing our digital offer to make it attractive and inclusive, also – in fact especially – for the young listeners."

The Fryderyk Chopin Institute recently received the prestigious Cremona Musica Award for communication and outreach of the 18th International Piano Competition Fryderyk Chopin in Warsaw. In October 2021, the competition materials on YouTube were viewed 37,500,000 times – which equals almost 880 years of uninterrupted viewing in total. On October 21, the concert of the laureates was watched by approximately 1,800,000 people on television. Nearly one million hits were recorded on the official website of the competition. The competition app was downloaded as many as seventy thousand times.

The Cliburn also has a long well-known history of work in video





and live streaming and saw exponentially higher online audience numbers in 2022, hitting twenty-five million views vs. five million in 2017, and covering the globe with people watching in 177 countries. Gold Medallist Yunchan Lim's rendition of Rachmaninov's 3rd Concerto is the most viewed version ever on YouTube.

CEO and President Jacques Marquis says: "We had the ability to enhance the quality of the production and show elements; the fact that we were able to be on many different distribution platforms simultaneously made us see and meet the changes that happened during the pandemic in how people connect with the arts."

The Cliburn also had the ability to quickly and inexpensively create new digital educational programs that they are continuing to use and grow now.

Marquis continues: "When the pandemic began, we had a vast library of content that could be repurposed to connect with people around the world during a time when we could not be together in person for concerts. Webcasting is a vital part of the competition experience as an unrivalled vehicle to launch new artists and bring new people into classical music."

Cleveland International Piano Competition already presented a hybrid competition in 2020 and were quick in adjusting to digital

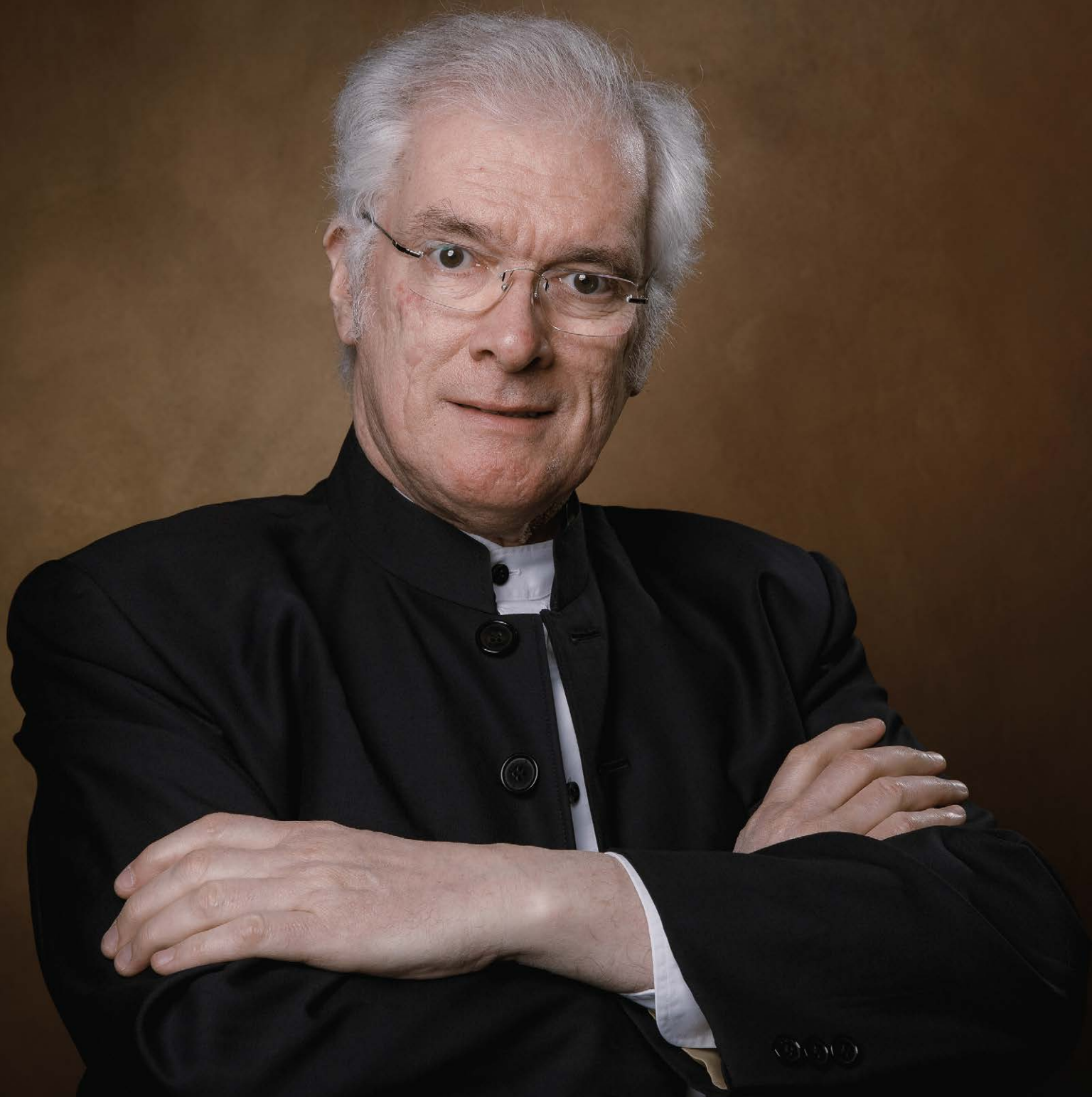
solutions and instantly offered the highest quality video recording locations worldwide to guarantee all contestants the same level of (unedited) recording quality. Also, funding for participation was offered through online application by giving out at least 1,000 dollars to those who were unable to fund participation themselves. Eight semi-finalists were presented live on location in Cleveland. President Yaron Kohlberg says that the first-round online option will continuously be offered in the future. "There is no replacement for live participation as we want to give the participants the true experience through playing for an audience, and we will go live as much as possible in the future. An important part of this is our community: inhabitants providing housing for the contestants and that being a part of our competition means the unique experience of the city of Cleveland."

It seems that the hybrid future is already here – both audiences and competitors around the globe can count on the fact that competitions will continue to increase availability, both physically and digitally.

**PATRICK JOVELL**

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





ANDREY WEYER

Peter Grote

# Independent observer



His experience in competitions is unique. Not as a competitor, although in his teens, as a cellist, he won a chamber music competition playing string quartet with his brothers, but mainly as Artistic Director of Kawai Musical Instruments from 1989–2014. He became Artistic Director of International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow and St. Petersburg and General Secretary of International Music Competition Harbin in China. We asked his opinion on some of the most poignant issues that keep the competitions minds occupied.

**Trained foremost by Paul Tortelier, Mirko Dorner and Konrad Grahe, you enjoyed a career with Trio Sanderi, travelling all over Europe, but when that stopped you continued to play.**

Yes, I lack the talent and the ambition to have a solo career, but I never lost the desire to play concerts, mostly with my wife Anna Malikova. When I was well prepared, I could perform adequately on stage, so that was satisfying.

**Being neither a pianist nor a pedagogue, you were probably kind of an outsider in the world of piano competitions.**

I would say I was independent. If I were a pianist, people automatically would ask what brand I have at home, which already is a classification. In twenty-five years, working for Kawai, I organized some six hundred concerts in Europe, CD recordings, masterclasses, and festivals, and I attended roughly a hundred competitions from the very beginning to the winners' concerts. These were the big events, like Hamamatsu, Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Sydney, Rubinstein, Van Cliburn and Busoni, but also many others. Each time I was there for the whole competition, just like the jury, which meant several weeks. It can be lonely, and the contestants are lonely too. I always tried to be supportive to those who selected Kawai, often making friends, and even sometimes played sonatas with them,

when they needed to prepare for chamber music rounds. I got to know almost every single performing pianist in the world and they, as friends, apparently appreciated my advice. So I wasn't lonely anymore.

**Then you got to know the other side.**

Yes, I speak Russian fairly well and Gergiev asked me to become artistic director of the Tchaikovsky Competition. Then two years later I got more or less the same position in Harbin in China, which is also a big event. I did the same work for smaller competitions too in various countries. So yes, I know what happens in competitions from both sides.

**You are very outspoken against jury members with students as competitors.**

There are two aspects. One is masterclasses. The famous pianists and pedagogues give so many masterclasses, they have worked with literally hundreds of young pianists, they can't even remember them all. Still the students mention it in their biography. But for a student in a conservatory, collaborating intensely with a professor over a period of years, I would always forbade this, because one way or the other, it would influence the results. That the professor is not



# THE NEW GM



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Peter Grote at TASS  
press conference for the  
Tchaikovsky Competition in 2015

allowed to vote for his or her student, makes no difference. Because the jury members are friends, so when the professor doesn't vote for his or her students, the others will. There is an easy solution: you don't need to go to this competition where your professor is sitting on the jury, you have ample choice to find another suitable competition. Also, I am always advocating to publish the results. Jury members are very well paid, the competitions take good care of them, and they have a great responsibility. They come to work and they should be ready to explain their votes. When you keep votes secret, automatically gossip and scandal arise. In the 2015 Tchaikovsky Competition, I also proposed to be transparent in all details. At first there was some resistance but then Gergiev, Matsuev, Bashmet and others on the Organisation Committee wanted to try it. I attended five competitions in Moscow before that and there were always scandals, people were throwing tomatoes, jury members fighting. When we published the votes, of course only those of candidates that hadn't made it to the next round, nothing happened.

**You also feel candidates should be given the opportunity to talk to the jury.**

Yes, when candidates know how the jury voted, this can and must be done in a fair and sympathetic way. This is mostly important for the big competitions, because every young musician can learn so much for the comments of masters like Viktor Tretiakov, Kiri Te Kanawa or David Geringas.

**So competitions do make sense?**

From the perspective of young pianists of course, if you do them in the right way and for the right reasons. They give you a chance to present yourself before the public: you will play for a professional

jury and you will play under stress. That is a very important point, dealing with adrenaline, experiencing what the stress of going on stage does to your body. I always tell young people to be prepared for the worst, but prepare as well as you can, and you must have the whole programme ready, also the concerto, even if you think you will not pass to the finals. In this way, if you do it for the experience and are open to learn, then competitions, big or small, can be extremely helpful. Because even in small competitions the level is remarkably high nowadays, and listening to the other competitors you learn your place.

Many times young musicians asked me: "What is a good competition?" The question is wrong, mostly they mean to ask: "Where would I be able to have a good chance" and that is the wrong point of departure.

Because for those who go with the objective to win, with high hopes, it can end in disaster. And of course there are the professional competition pianists, who have played at perhaps 70 or 80 competitions. What are they going to do after the competitions, one wonders.

And what happens after you get a major prize? Some competitions take good care of you, give your concerts, but sometimes far too many, 70 or 80 in a year! That can kill you if you don't have the repertoire. Therefore I believe competitions should not invite candidates under 20 years of age. Let them play in youth competitions – that is fine – but not in the professional competitions. It may be entertaining for the public, sometimes even sensational, but the objective of competitions should be to help outstanding talents with a realistic chance to embark on careers.

**ERIC SCHOONES**



Tchaikovsky Competition 2015, results round II piano section  
(from left to right): Vladimir Ovchinnikov, translator Svetlana, Klaus Hellwig, Peter Grote, Dmitry Bashkirov (Moscow Bolshoi Hall)



Piano Competitions give us an amazing opportunity to experience more than just the excellence of pianists and composers. For this we need state-of-the-art instruments that deliver the intentions of both the creator of music as well as the artist. In this edition Lucas Debargue speaks about Paulello and Matyáš Novák about Petrof.

# Pianists and Piano Brands

## Lucas Debargue — Paulello

At first, the instrument is quite intimidating: much longer than most concert grands, with added keys at the left and right of the keyboard and a design that is fully original; one can't imagine the sounds it can produce before putting ones hands on it.

Then, the surprise continues: the mechanics, the touch, the pedal system, the character of sound itself are an absolute discovery, without having anything in common with any other existing instrument. Stephen Paulello already made a 2.87 meters concert grand in the nineties: an ideal piano, made from the best of the concert instruments that some of us have the chance to play for their recit-

als, with some added special touches of subtlety, but still enough that is familiar to our ears, hands and feet.

By contrast, the Opus 102 piano is in a world of its own. If you want to submit it to your habits, it bites you very hard: it gives its best only when you take the time to explore the piano's responses to your intentions.

When I tried it for the first time in Paris Philharmonie, after Stephen just released it in 2015, I felt quite embarrassed: I came with my habits created by the instruments I was used to playing and the results proved anything but convincing... I left with the impression that the Opus 102 would be a fabulous instrument to



MANUEL GOUTHIERE





improvise and discover new combinations of sounds for present and future composers, but I was not conscious yet of the possibilities it can also offer when performing great piano repertoire. I couldn't make a list of all the specific things that the instrument offers to the pianist, but I can mention some of them.

The registers are remarkably balanced. One doesn't need to do what most concert grands require: to take basses with more power to make them clearer, overplay the singing middle-high register that is usually quite weak, overcontrol legato lines when playing pianissimo because of the risk that some notes don't sound, or worry about polyphonic clarity in the middle register when playing dense contrapuntal passages ... All this is possible on Opus 102 without other effort than forgetting about the habits created by other pianos!

The range of colours is infinite. The added keys mean added harmonics; helped by parallel strings and a system that Stephen invented to free the rim from the pressure of the strings, these harmonics make possible some piano sounds we have never heard before. I am especially sensitive to the possibility of making *real* differences between *p*, *pp*, *ppp* or even *pppp* without losing any quality of sound.

This instrument facilitates the avoidance of body tension. On many concert grands, series of octaves may demand a lot of strength and unhealthy tension on the part of the performer. This piano, being reluctant to endure any "vertical" attack, encourages one to play octaves with more relaxed arms because this is how they sound the best on it.

For me, the main challenge of this instrument is that it offers such a natural sound projection, that in compensation it can quickly be disturbed by tension of any kind. Nervousness may result in harsh sounds on this piano! Having a tendency of being quite nervous myself, I learned and still learn a lot by spending hours on this wonderful instrument that is one of the few true masterpieces of art from recent years. May pianists consider it more often and choose it for recordings and concerts!

### Matyáš Novák — Petrof

I was born in Hradec Králové, where for more than 155 years Petrof pianos have been made. There are a few piano brands all over the world that stay in "family hands" and Petrof is one of them. My relationship to Petrof pianos as well as to all the members of the Petrof family is very personal and special because Petrof pianos have been a part of my life since my early childhood. The Petrof upright piano is a very typical household item in Czech families. In our family we also had two old upright pianos in good condition. I started playing them when I was a small boy and that might be the reason why I became a professional pianist and classical music lover.

There has been a huge tradition of piano manufacturing in Bohemia since the early 19th century. I did research in this area and must say that especially in the inter-bellum period pianos achieved really world-class quality. Not only Petrof but also Scholze, Rösler and Förster Georgswalde produced high-quality instruments that we can still find all around the world. I decided to make a collection of these brands from that time and I already have three grand pianos at home. Unfortunately, it is only Petrof that survived the turbulent times of the second half of the 20th century and nowadays it is the only piano manufacturer in the Czech Republic.

In 2019, the spectacular Petrof Gallery was opened in our city. It reflects the rich history of the factory and lots of concerts and events take place there. This place has a very special atmosphere for me. I always look forward to Christmas time because I traditionally have a recital in the Petrof Gallery. This concert is always absolutely magical as well as the whole story of the Petrof family company.

**PATRICK JOVELL**

pianostreet.com

**More in our next edition!**



# Ettlingen International Piano Competition: a top event for young pianists

From August 7 – 14, 2022, the 18th International Piano Competition for Young Pianists was held in Ettlingen (Germany). This competition started in 1988 and has been held every two years, always in August. It is open for young pianists in two separate age categories: up to 15 and up to 22 years old.

Already for the first competition in 1988, there was a respectable number of applicants, but with the 2nd edition in 1990, the organisers were totally overwhelmed when they received more than 250 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 prizewinners, one can see many who are now enjoying great international careers. Just to mention a few: Lang Lang, Yuja Wang, Markus Groh, Severin von Eckardstein, Lisa de la Salle, Igor Levitt, Martin Helmchen, Boris Giltburg, Eric Lu, Ivan Krpan, and many more. The fact that they came to Ettlingen and became prizewinners there, has much significance. From all over the world these highly talented young pianists travelled to this beautiful small town near Karlsruhe and gave splendid perfor-



Rei Harada (Japan), winner of category B

mances; the jury in Ettlingen recognised their extraordinary talent and awarded them. The fact that many of the young pianists who once won a prize in Ettlingen went on to win other major and famous competitions, such as the Queen Elisabeth Competition (three first prize winners), Leeds, Busoni Competition, Tchaikovsky Competition, Geneva, ARD Competition, Concours Clara Haskil (four winners), Cleveland, Hamamatsu, Sydney, and other important competitions says enough. Ettlingen is “the place to be” to discover the stars of tomorrow and hear these highly talented pianists at a very young age.

Apart from the high level of music performances, there are also other aspects that make the competition in Ettlingen special. The competition takes place in the Asam Hall at the Castle of Ettlingen, which is beautiful and worth visiting. The entire organisation of





All prizewinners together with the Major of Ettlingen Dr. Johannes Arnold (far left), Director Michael Huber, competition director Frank Reich (4th from left), jury member Christopher Elton (4th from right) and jury chairman Wolfgang Manz (far right).

the competition under the direction of Frank Reich is very professional. He can rely on a good team of loyal and very motivated colleagues, some of whom have different nationalities which is rather practical. On the day that the participants arrive, they receive all necessary information about the practicing facilities and other details. Most of them happily use the accommodations offered by host families. When they all come together for a first meeting at the Musikschule in Ettlingen, the most important information is given not only in English, but also in Chinese, Japanese and Korean! To enhance the friendly atmosphere, snacks and drinks are offered immediately after the meetings.

For many years, Steinway has been a reliable partner of the competition and the instrument in the Asam Hall is in excellent condition for all the participants. Opposite the Asam Hall is another large space where other visitors can conveniently follow the competition on a large screen, while having a tea or coffee together with a piece of one of the delicious cakes, which are specially made every day and served by several of the volunteers.

Two years ago (2020), due to the pandemic, the 17th competition could not be held live, but the organisers did everything they could to realise an online competition that would be fair for all the contestants. Now, in 2022, live concerts and competitions are possible again and the entire Music World is reviving with a lot of spirit and enthusiasm. The upper age limit to participate in Ettlingen used to be 20 but was now set at 22. The fame of this competition is reflected in the high number of applicants: this year (2022), no less than 276 young pianists representing forty-one different countries, from Canada to New Zealand, wished to take part in Ettlingen! After a preselection, ninety-nine pianists were admitted to the main event.

The jury does not have an easy task. Usually, the jury in Ettlingen consists of nine well-known pianists and piano teachers. This year, two of them were unable to come due to a covid infection and travel complications. During the first twelve years of the competition, Mr. Naoyuki Taneda from Japan chaired the jury. The next



The jury on stage: chairperson Wolfgang Manz (far right), Major of Ettlingen Dr. Johannes Arnold (far left).

twelve years, Prof. Robert Benz held this position until 2020, when Wolfgang Manz accepted to take over this responsibility. One person has always been on the jury in Ettlingen from the very beginning in 1988 until today: Christopher Elton.

The level of performances was astonishingly high again. By far the largest representation of candidates came from China, Korea, and Japan. Looking at the names of the pianists from the other countries, nearly 80% of the candidates had Asian roots. Also at other competitions we can see that they are very successful. This time, the highest age group in Ettlingen was won by Rei Harada (Japan), followed by two pianists from Ukraine: Roman Fediurko and Dmytro Semykras, both of whom also received special awards. The victory in the youngest category went to Shuya Liu from China.

**GUSTAV ALINK**

The competition website has an amazing archive of all recordings from 2010 until 2022:  
[www.pianocompetition.org](http://www.pianocompetition.org)



Beautiful and delicious cakes are specially made and served.





The three finalists, from left to right: Derek Wang, Yukine Kuroki and Yeon-Min Park

# YUKINE KUROKI wins LISZT UTRECHT

Twenty-three year-old Japanese pianist Yukine Kuroki has won the first prize of the Liszt Utrecht International Piano Festival, formerly the International Franz Liszt Piano Competition. In a blood-curdling final, she had to compete against Yeon-Min Park (South Korea) and Derek Wang (USA) in Liszt's arrangement for piano and orchestra of Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasia*. In the modified format of the competition, the two other finalists were not classified: as runner-up finalists, Park and Wang both received the second prize. In addition, Yeon-Min Park won the audience prize.



## Festival or Competition?

The changed name reflects that in the twelfth edition of the event, the competition element was given a less prominent place. Moreover, what was new was that the repertoire included not only Liszt, but also Schubert, on the occasion of his 225th birthday.

In the first round, held online last January, ten pianists were selected from forty participants for the so-called “festival phase”, 22–26 September in TivoliVredenburg’s Hertz Hall. They were given the chance to present themselves in four different concerts, with no selection moments in between: among them were an “All-Liszt recital” and an “All-Schubert recital” (Liszt’s Schubert transcriptions). The two other, shorter performances involved chamber music and song accompaniment. Under the motto “Musicians first”, pianists were paid for their concerts.

So, on the one hand, it was about a piano festival, but on the other, its competitive element could not be discounted. Because that’s all there is to it when you have to perform in front of an international jury that decides whether or not you can go on to win a substantial cash prize as a finalist, followed by an international concert tour and a valuable coaching programme.

Be that as it may, the new formula worked. For audience and jury alike, the day’s programme of two times four substantively different concerts was more varied and less tiring than in preliminaries in the old-style Liszt Competition. The pianists seemed comfortable with this formula. This led to an unprecedentedly high technical and artistic quality.

## Surprising selection of finalists

The selection of the three finalists was surprising. Who would have thought, for instance, that Georgian Tamta Magradze would not be allowed to go to the final, after this phenomenal pianist had shown that she possesses superior technique, great musicality, and an uninhibited joy of playing like no other?

For others, their elimination seemed justified, as they had not performed equally well in all four parts. Nonetheless, they too were to be enjoyed, especially Minkyu Kim, who purely and without any outward show was only concerned with the musical content. Nevertheless, for Kim, there was no place in the final.

However, by contrast, Derek Wang (24) was admitted to the final, who is an intelligent musician pianist with an extroverted and positive appearance and a powerful, crystal-clear touch.

Japan’s Yukine Kuroki gave a beautiful Liszt recital but was much less convincing in her All-Schubert. Still, she made it to the final. And so did 31-year-old Yeon-Min Park. This poised South Korean possessed great tonal control and brought fine subtleties to her spot-on playing in all parts.



Winner Yukine Kuroki with Seichan the walrus, her mascot given to her by her grandmother.

## The result

In the finale this time, one did not have the usual Liszt piano concertos: as part of the Schubert edition, the *Wanderer Fantasia*, Schubert’s great solo work as converted into a piano concerto by Liszt, sounded three times. The Radio Philharmonic Orchestra under the enthusiastic direction of Christian Reif guaranteed a stimulating accompaniment in this attractive concert.

The first finalist was Derek Wang. His performance was brilliant, dramatic, and very exciting. However, he spoiled the good impression in the *Wanderer Fantasia* with his encore: the finale from Beethoven/Liszt’s Seventh Symphony, played too fast and loud. Playing second was Yukine Kuroki. Her *Wanderer Fantasia* sounded more intimate and lyrical than Wang’s, but she was less able to shape the big picture in the piece. Her encore, Liszt’s *Etude d’exécution transcendante* in f, played far too quickly, was clearly below par.

The last finalist, Yeon-Min Park, performed the *Wanderer Fantasia* coolly, pearly in tone and most stylish in expression. Picture perfect followed as an encore Liszt’s Paganini étude *La Campanella*. That not Park but Kuroki came first was a surprise, at least to the audience who had voted overwhelmingly for Park for the audience award.

CHRISTO LELIE

### NLISZT PRIZE

Within the festival phase of Liszt Utrecht, the independent mini competition NLiszt took place for the first time, intended for Dutch pianists up to 23 years old. Winner of this was 18 year-old Radu Rateling, the only one of the four participants who had played a complete Liszt programme. At the final concert, he brilliantly performed Liszt’s *Fantasy on Hungarian folk melodies* with orchestra.





Yamaha presents new CFX

# Pianist and instrument in harmony

This year marks 120 years since Yamaha started manufacturing grand pianos in 1902, and since the first generation of concert grand pianos hit the stages in 1950, Yamaha has constantly continued to work on quality, resulting in the launch of the CFX concert grand piano in 2010.

Now Yamaha presents its flagship once again.



The new CFX is the result of twelve years of intensive development by a team of more than sixty specialists around the “Unibody Concept”, as Yamaha calls it, when player and instrument merge in perfect harmony. Yutaka Matsuki, general manager of the Yamaha Corporation Piano Division in Japan, puts it this way: “This instrument allows artists to truly express themselves in their music.”

The innovations applied in this new line were developed in close cooperation with more than one hundred pianists from around the world, in which more than thirty prototypes were produced. During this process, Yamaha held many rehearsals and collected feedback from concert pianists. The only way to understand their needs and requirements for a concert grand piano – how the piano can be played, how it sounds and how it feels. All with the aim of further improving the instrument’s stage performance. To this end, all parts of the instrument were thoroughly redesigned, soundboard and frame, hammers and even the music stand.

Special to this is Yamaha’s in-house developed Acoustic Resonance Enhancement Technology. This allows temperature, humidity, and atmospheric pressure to be precisely manipulated with special equipment so that newer woods produce a rich and deep sound similar to that of wood in instruments that have been played for years. This technology works without chemicals, reducing its environmental impact. This technology is also used in other instruments, such as guitars.

The above was reason enough for a celebratory presentation and that happened on 31 May, 2022, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall at



Southbank Centre in London, where the new grand piano was played by Stephen Hough, accompanied by the Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Gergely Madaras. Online, many thousands of music lovers were able to watch.

Stephen Hough, who has been familiar with Yamaha for many years and has chosen the instruments for seven of his albums, said: “I’ve always loved playing the CFX and I love its old-school feel. I can form my rubato and many nuances more naturally than on some other, more modern-feeling instruments. In addition, the CFX has a great cantabile and razor-sharp action.”

Fortunately, Yamaha has stayed with the familiar concept with the new line, as Stephen Hough says: “I don’t think there is any dramatic change in the new CFX. It’s great that Yamaha is tirelessly trying to improve an absolutely first-class instrument further still.”

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



Across political borders and divisions:

# The 2022 Cliburn Competition lives up to its name

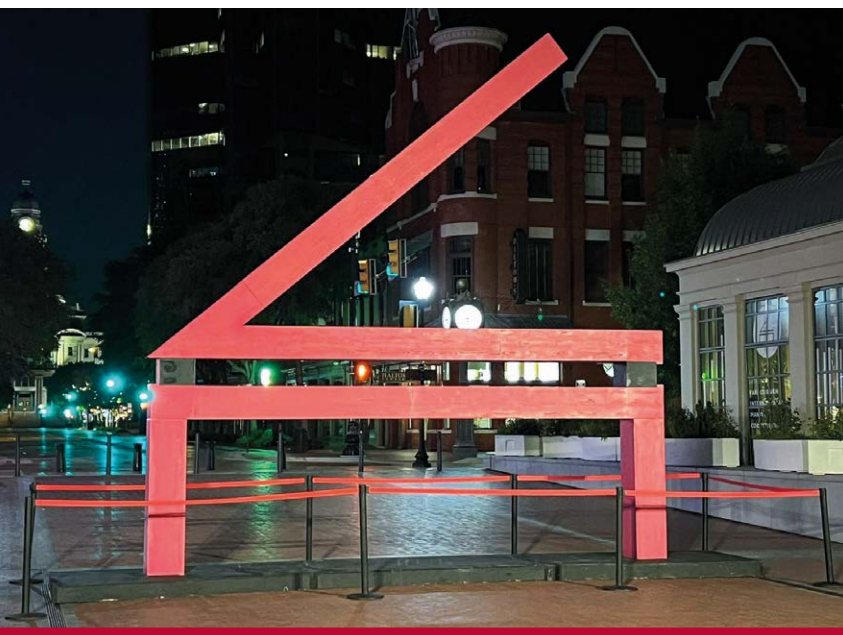
Of all the competition wins in history, there is one that might certainly be called one of the most spectacular: on April 13, 1958, Van Cliburn won First Prize at the first international Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow. The great hall of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory was absolutely packed when the twenty-three year-old American played in the final round, and the jubilation that followed his 3rd Rachmaninov concerto was indescribable. The audience jumped up, and students began chanting: “First Prize, First Prize!!!” The entire jury stood up as well and applauded. Sviatoslav Richter wept. Then, Emil Gilels led the young pianist onto the stage a second time and hugged him – in front of the entire audience – a blatant violation of the rules of the competition, in which half of the finalists had not even performed yet. Even outside the hall, the crowd did not disperse. Scores of fans broke through police barriers and climbed up fire escapes and rooftops just to catch a glimpse of their newfound idol: “Vanya” Van Cliburn.

For the audience, the winner was clear. But the decision was a political issue of unprecedented proportions, and so a tug of war began on Cliburn’s final night between parts of the jury, the Ministry of

Culture, and the Central Committee of the Communist Party. In the end, however, the decision was a matter for the boss, and Nikita Khrushchev ruled against the nationalists and against the Soviets’ preferred candidate. “An American winner is a good thing. We will show the world our impartiality!”

Sixty-four years later we remember this historic moment. The 16th International Van Cliburn Piano Competition is dedicated to its famous namesake. Cliburn logos and images of the great pianist can be found everywhere and on every corner of the Texas city of Fort Worth. A lot is new and record-breaking this year: the number of competition events and engagements for the winners, the amount of prize money, the millions of online viewers. The YouTube video of the winner’s final round alone has already been viewed more than eight million times, and the technical effort involved in cameras and microphones, interviews and moderation, and global marketing is huge. Equally important are the composition of the jury and the way it works: All ten judges are or were active concert pianists, not teachers – only the chairwoman, Marin Alsop, is a conductor and also leads the final round with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra.

The Cliburn-Logo in Downtown Fort Worth



Russian Anna Geniushene embraces her Ukrainian colleague Dmytro Choni.





With the large number of participants (388 registrations, 72 candidates in the preliminary round, 30 candidates in the main round), the task of the jury is not easy, and so an agreement was reached right from the start that there would be no discussion whatsoever among the jurors about the participants. Each juror should develop their own image of the young artists throughout the three-week competition, in a kind of “tunnel vision” without any influence from outside opinions, in order to be able to make a really independent decision at the end.

The extended programme for the final is also new in 2022. In previous competitions there was a chamber music round with repertoire for piano quintet; as of this year, all participants in the finals have instead had to play not one, but two large piano concertos with orchestra, in addition to the prescribed Mozart concerto in the semi-finals. An enormous task not only for the young pianists, but also for the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, which had to rehearse and perform twenty-four piano concertos in ten days. There were numerous highlights in the finale: the enchanting Gershwin concerto by the American Clayton Stephenson, the emotionally rich Grieg concerto by the Russian Ilya Shmukler, or the highly virtuoso Prokofiev by the Ukrainian Dmytro Choni, who despite (or perhaps because of?) a brief blackout in the third movement took the audience’s breath away. However, hardly any evening was as fascinating as the penultimate one. The third candidate, 18 year-old Yunchan Lim, took to the piano and made history with his Rachmaninov Concerto. Breath-taking tempi, perfect technique, and great emotions ended in standing ovations and great enthusiasm.

On the next (the last) day there was another highlight: Anna Geniushene from Russia presented an excellent Tchaikovsky as the last work in the finale and thus increased the tension even

more. In the end, however, the decision of the jury was clear and convincing: Yunchan Lim won the competition, followed by Anna Geniushene and Dmytro Choni.

Just like during the Cold War sixty-four years ago, politics became a big issue this year. For the Cliburn competition, it became clear during the early stages of the Ukraine war that Russian participants would not be excluded because of their nationality. Although there was plenty of hate mail and negative comments, and although certain sponsors threatened to withdraw their support, the stance of the competition found widespread support throughout the music world. Moreover, with the Russian pianist Anna Geniushene among the winners, a parallel was drawn with 1958. And even more significant was a gesture during the award ceremony, which some viewers might not have noticed: with her silver medal and certificate in hand, Anna Geniushene approached her Ukrainian colleague Dmytro Choni and hugged him, in front of a full hall and in front of thousands of spectators around the world. “Nothing else to say. I think that our namesake and inspiration would have been proud. This is why we do what we do!” commented Cliburn President and CEO Jacques Marquis on this touching end of a great competition.

**FLORIAN RIEM**

**Florian Riem** studied at the Munich Conservatory and at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana (USA). Working in arts management since 1999, he has held leading positions at Gidon Kremer’s Kremerata Baltica Chamber Orchestra. Since 2020, he has been Secretary General of the World Federation of International Music Competitions (WFIMC) in Geneva, Switzerland.

Yunchan Lim with conductor Marin Alsop



The prizewinners: Anna Geniushene, Yunchan Lim und Dmytro Choni







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# The *10<sup>th</sup>* GOCAA New York International Music Competition Member of the Alink-Argerich Foundation Since 2020 *Vancouver Preliminary Round*

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Register For the competition 2023

Preliminary Round Date: January 15th 2023

Preliminary Application Deadline: January 1st 2023

Preliminary Venue:

728 Granville St, Vancouver, BC 2nd floor

Contestant may choose In-Person or Online

Preliminary Round Repertoire

Professional group : Submit One piece

Amateur group : Submit One piece

Final Application Deadline: May 1st 2023

Final Round Date: July 2023

Finalist may choose In-Person (New York) July 7th-10th 2023  
or Online (Submit performance video) July 15th-30th 2023

Final Round Venue:

New York National Opera Recital Hall

Final Round Repertoire

Professional group : Submit Three different style pieces

More information:



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[gocaamusic@gmail.com](mailto:gocaamusic@gmail.com)



This year the Global Outstanding Chinese Artists Association (GOCAA) has chosen New York as the place to be, with a preliminary round in Vancouver. The GOCAA International Piano Competition aims to discover and promote young talent: the competition attracts many young talented pianists from around the world to perform and compete. With highly qualified judges and a rigorous selection process, the competition makes a direct positive impact on the future of piano study for young pianists.

# GOCAA International Piano Competition

GOCAA is a Non-profit Arts Association recognized by the U.S. Federal Government. As a comprehensive artistic organization, GOCAA members are active in many forms of arts, including musical arts, visual arts, dance, and others. GOCAA aims to promote cooperation among Chinese artists and nurture artistic achievements domestically and abroad. In order to create an international platform for artistic expression, GOCAA not only invites many outstanding artists from internationally renowned music schools and art schools but has also invited many experts from the arts industry. GOCAA frequently hosts academic activities around the globe to encourage artistic communication among Chinese artists. Increasingly, Chinese artists are being introduced to the world as more and more successful activities are held by GOCAA.

Chair of the GOCAA is Ms. Fangfang Pan, an extraordinary piano educator who emigrated to the United States. She is associate member of Grammy, the guest lecturer of the Xinghai Concert Hall ABRSM (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music) graded-exam lecture series, and the founder and education director of Guangzhou Yayun-Poly Music & Art Studio. After her emigration to America, Ms. Fangfang Pan participated as the judge in multiple major art competitions, such as ZhongSin International Music Competition (Singapore), the Chopin International Piano Competition for Young Pianists (preliminary, quarter-final), and many other major piano competitions. Moreover, Ms. Fangfang Pan successfully introduced major music events from Hong Kong and Macau to China mainland, which has greatly contributed to the music education of China mainland, as well as the cultural exchange between special administrative regions and the mainland. She was also the Director of Juries of the composition contest of the San



Francisco International New-concept Filmfest, and the Artistic Director of the America-Asia Art Group. At the same time, she established the Global Outstanding Chinese Artists Association, which is based in San Francisco, and the GOCAA International Piano Competition (GIPC), as well as the GOCAA International Vocal Competition (GIVC) and the GOCAA International Strings Competition (GISC). As the founder and chair of GOCAA and the International music Competitions, Ms. Fangfang Pan has led numerous rising young talents from all over the world, showing their talents in music on many different stages world-wide. Hundreds of these young talented pianists' recitals and concerto concerts have been held, giving each of them great opportunities to become a better and more mature artist.

Due to the success of the GOCAA International Piano Competition (America Division), July 29th was announced as GOCAA Day by the Mayor of San Mateo, United States. Ms. Fangfang Pan has been given Outstanding Contribution Awards several times from different cities.

Preliminary Application Deadline: January 1st, 2023

Final Application Deadline: May 1st, 2023

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You also find GOCAA on Facebook.







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WOJCIECH GRZĘDZIŃSKI / NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MUSIC AND DANCE



# International Competition of Polish Music

The International Competition of Polish Music seeks to popularize 19th and 20th-century Polish music around the world. The goal of the competition is to promote talented musicians (pianists and chamber musicians) who choose to include lesser-known works by Polish authors in their respective repertoires.

Recordings made during the event are available on major streaming platforms. The organization of the competition is also a way to promote Poland as a venue for artistic events of a worldwide scope. The competition is organized by the National Institute of Music and Dance, in cooperation with the Artur Malawski Podkarpacka Philharmonic Orchestra in Rzeszow, and financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

[polishmusiccompetition.pl/en](http://polishmusiccompetition.pl/en)

The National Institute of Music and Dance implements creative, publishing, academic and scholarship projects. It sets new standards for cooperation between artists and institutions. Every day, the Institute's team ensures the growth of Polish musicians and dancers, and provides them with opportunities to showcase their achievements in Poland and abroad. The sponsor of the National Institute of Music and Dance is the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland: [www.nimit.pl](http://www.nimit.pl)

Performing at the 2nd Stanisław Moniuszko International Competition of Polish Music in 2021:  
Ivan Shemchuk, Carter Johnson and Michał Karol Szymanowski (from top to bottom)





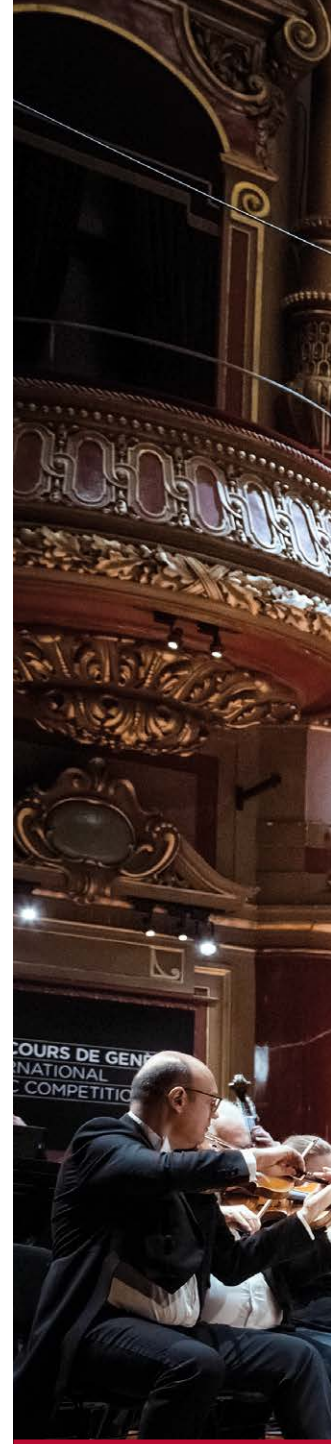
Kaoruko Igarashi, Sergey Belyavsky, Kevin Chen and Zijian Wei (from left to right)

## *Finding a true artist*

In this year's final at the Geneva International Music Competition in Victoria Hall in Geneva, the first prize and four special prizes went to Kevin Chen (17, Canada). Sergey Belyavsky (28, Russia) won the second Prize. Third prize was shared by Kaoruko Igarashi (27, Japan) and Zijian Wei (23, China) ex aequo.

The competition was founded in 1939, and it is the dream of every young pianist to follow in the footsteps of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, George Solti, Jacques Klein, Dominique Merlet, Martha Argerich, Nelson Goerner, and in more recent years Lorenzo Soulez, Dmitry Shishkin, to name but a few of the illustrious winners in Geneva. Hearing the finals with orchestra in the hall and most of the semi-finals on the internet, for me Kevin Chen qualified for this honour like no other candidate. Notwithstanding his youthful age, he showed most maturity. He played Chopin's First Piano Concerto with impeccable taste and technique, a great sound and in wonderful dialogue with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, conducted by Maržena Diakun. He was truly outstanding in his semi-final as well, with remarkable interpretations of Beethoven: Sonata Op. 101 and Mendelssohn's *Variations sérieuses*, Op. 54. Already almost ten years ago Kevin Chen, who is also a prolific

composer with over one hundred works to his name, was listed in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's "Top 30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians Under 30." He has won multiple international competitions, including the International Piano-e-Competition (2019), the Hilton Head International Piano Competition (2020), the Mozart International Piano Competition in Lugano, Switzerland (2020), and the Franz Liszt International Piano Competition in Budapest, Hungary (2021), the latter as both the youngest competitor and the youngest ever winner of the competition. Unfortunately, the other finalists in Geneva did not achieve his level. The evening started with Zijian Wei playing Liszt's Concerto no. 1. Knowing the hall can be difficult for pianists his approach was too grandiose for my taste. Especially with Liszt, the pianist should make the listener forget all about the pyrotechnics and also his manners at the keyboard, such as his grimacing, is quite







Kevin Chen

ANNE LAUREL CHAT

distracting. The two other finalists chose Prokofiev's Third Concerto, and I missed true magic here in both performances. Kaoruko Igarashi had impressed with sincere and honest playing in the semi-finals, especially with some Liszt transcription of songs by Schubert.

Giving the candidates completely free choice of repertoire for the semi-finals seems a like good idea, because real artists can reveal their potential best that way. One of the highlights was Jae Sung Bae (22 years old, Korea) who played an enchanting Haendel Suite no. 3; nothing artificial here, just pure and humble music making. A great artist in the making. Another remarkable pianist is Vsevolod Zavidov (17 years old, Russia). A true virtuoso with a unique own voice; we will certainly hear more of him in the future.

**ERIC SCHOONES**



Jury member  
Matthias Kirschnereit

BASTIAN FISCHER

## COMPETITION PROFILE

From March 31 to April 2, 2023, the International Piano Competition for Young Pianists Kronberg will be held for the first time in the newly built Kronberg Casals Forum.

# YOUNG PIANISTS AT KRONBERG ACADEMY

Every two years, Kronberg will become the centre of piano music. The competition aims to convey the joy of making music and sustainably promotes the level and quality of music making as well as special talents. It combines professionalism and the highest standards with cordiality, appreciation, and a pleasant atmosphere. The non-profit association "International Piano Competition Taunus e. V." invites children and youngsters of all nations between the ages of 6 and 19 to make music and demonstrate their skills in the Carl-Beckstein-Saal, as well as the large chamber music hall. The registered participants qualify for the competition through a digital preliminary round via video selection. All competitions are open to the public and admission is free.

The overall management is in the hands of Prof. Dr. Gerhard Hücker. A top-class jury with Prof. Matthias Kirschnereit, Prof. Christian A. Pohl, Prof. Claudia Schellenberger and Ulrike Danne-Feldmann (also artistic director) will award numerous prizes and special prizes in seven age groups, a rarity in competition land, with prize money of up to 20,000 euros. The prizewinners' concert on Sunday, April 2, 2023, at 5 p.m. will feature the first prize winners in each age group as well as some special prize winners.

[www.piano-competition-kronberg.de](http://www.piano-competition-kronberg.de)



# INTERNATIONAL SCHUBERT COMPETITION DORTMUND



## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE LAUREATES OF THE XIV. PIANO COMPETITION 2021



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**LUKAS STERNATH**

2nd Prize - Prize of the Kulturstiftung  
Dortmund & Audience Award - Prize of the  
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**JONAS STARK**

3rd Prize

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NEXT COMPETITION

**IV. LiedDuo Competition 2023**  
Dortmund, September 24 - October 01, 2023





Prizewinners and jury members

## International Schimmel Piano Competition

From 23 – 25 September 2022, the final rounds of the 2nd International Piano Competition took place in the Schimmel Concert Hall in Braunschweig. Twenty-four young pianists between 18 and 32 years old from more than ten nations qualified for the finals in the preliminary round, of which twenty-two young pianists participated in two public competition rounds.

The five-member jury consisting of Prof. Wolfgang Zill (jury chairman, Hannover), Prof. Markus Becker (Hannover), Prof. Yuka Imamine (Munich), Prof. Tim Ovens (Vienna) and Prof. Dr. Milana Chernyavska (Graz) not only assessed the pianistic-artistic performance but also a corresponding programme concept. All participants had the special challenge to come up with an interesting and creative concept for a theme of their own choice, matching the selected concert programme. In the first round, the programme was not to last longer than 30 minutes; a short speech presenting the concept before the performance was optional for the participants.

Six participants convinced the jury the most with their creativity and pianistic skills and were allowed to present another programme (max. 60 min.) with a concept to match in the second final round. The performances of all participants were so impressive that it was not easy for the jury to reach a decision, but in the end the prize-winners were announced:

The 1st prize (€6,000) was won by Johannes Obermeier (Germany), the 2nd prize (€3,000) went to Tsuzumi Namikawa (Japan) and the 3rd prize (€1,500) was secured by Lorenzo Mazzola (Italy).

All three prizewinners presented a selection from their competition entries in the final prizewinners' concert on the final evening. In the end, the audience present voted for their favourite among the prizewinners and thus the audience prize (€500) including a trophy went to this year's winner, Johannes Obermeier.

With the announcement of the competition, Schimmel Pianos wants to raise awareness among young pianists for a modern concert generation that it is not only about an exceptional piano performance but also about designing a programme that will be a special experience for the audience. Thanks to the great popularity of the competition and the new competition concept, Wilhelm Schimmel Pianoortefabrik GmbH plans to hold this competition on a regular basis. Current and future information will be published via the universities, social media and the specially designed competition homepage: [www.schimmel-klavierwettbewerb.de](http://www.schimmel-klavierwettbewerb.de)

Johannes Obermeier, first prize winner





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# Kayserburg Sponsors Vietnam Youth Piano Competition & Festival

Over the course of five days, ending September 1st, aspiring young pianists participated in the Kayserburg Vietnam Youth Piano Competition & Festival 2022 in Hanoi, performing on a Kayserburg Concert Grand Piano. Sponsored by Bilimoon Company and the Vietnam Institute of Education Development (VIED) to promote multilateral cooperation for the development of the country's culture & art, the event drew contestants from all over the country.

The competition seeks to foster talents that will move forward to attend the Kayserburg International Youth Piano Competition in China, which attracts more than 100,000 contestants from all over the world. After two rounds the winners were presented with a Kayserburg and Pearl River upright piano.

Leng Tshua, director of global sales and marketing of Pearl River Piano, believes the competition is important not only for developing and honouring the talents of young Vietnamese pianists but also as an opportunity to practice stage skills and express their abilities as artists.

"The mission of VIED Education is to promote music, spread advanced culture, and develop art education in the new era by motivating and encouraging the learning of music for the younger generation," Tshua said. "We are honoured that they have chosen Kayserburg to play a part in achieving this prestigious event."





[www.schimmel-pianos.de](http://www.schimmel-pianos.de)







DANIEL DELANG

The winners of the piano competition 2022: Lukas Sternath, Austria (first prize), Junhyung Kim, South Korea (second prize), Johannes Obermeier, Germany (third prize)

# ARD International Music Competition

The ARD International Music Competition, one of the most renowned and large-scale competitions of its kind, takes place for the 72nd edition from August 28 to September 15, 2023. The competition is open for the following categories: Harp, Double Bass, Viola, and Piano Trio.

The competition was founded in 1952 by the public broadcasting radio stations of the Federal Republic of Germany, managed by Bavarian Broadcasting in Munich, and takes place every year in September. For many of today's world-famous artists, an award from the ARD International Music Competition in Munich represented a springboard to their major careers: Jessye Norman, Christoph Eschenbach, Mitsuko Uchida, Christian Tetzlaff, Sharon Kam, Heinz Holliger, Peter Sadlo, Maurice André, Quatuor Ebène and Fabian Müller, to name but a few.

Over the years, the ARD International Music Competition with its annually changing line-up of musicians has developed into an internationally singular and highly regarded institution. Since 2001, the presence of contemporary music has been considerably reinforced through commissions to prominent composers.

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

the chance to meet agents and music executives looking to sign up the next major talent. 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 obviously confrontational situation, at least at the end of the event, into the experience of making music together.

The jury of the 2023 piano trio competition consists of Susan Tomes (former Florestan Trio), Jitka Čechová (Smetana Trio), Soo-Kyung Hong (Trio con Brio), Esther Hoppe (former Tecchler Trio), Raphael Pidoux (Trio Wanderer), Annete von Hehn (ATOS Trio), Per Lundberg (Trio Poseidon).


At the semi-finals, finals and prizewinners' concerts, the candidates will be accompanied by the Munich Chamber Orchestra, Münchner Rundfunkorchester and Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks.

The ARD state broadcasting corporations report extensively on radio, television and online. The three prizewinners' concerts on 13–15 September 2023 will be broadcast live on the radio by BR-KLASSIK and as a live videostream on [ard-musikwettbewerb.de](http://ard-musikwettbewerb.de)

Livestream at [www.br.de/ard-musikwettbewerb](http://www.br.de/ard-musikwettbewerb) and at [www.br-klassik.de/concert/index.html](http://www.br-klassik.de/concert/index.html)

For further information, please consult: [www.br.de/ard-musikwettbewerb](http://www.br.de/ard-musikwettbewerb)





A view of the hall at Trolldhaugen, with a view on the lake and the composer's hut.

# Edvard Grieg Competition Bergen (Norway)

The 17th International Edvard Grieg Piano Competition was held in Bergen (Norway), 26 August – 3 September 2022. The competition has a long history. Norwegian pianist Einar Steen-Nøkleberg founded the competition as the “Concours Grieg” in the year 2000 in Oslo. Actually, there was an earlier initiative in 1988 with the Queen Sonja Competition, but after two editions for piano, this one continued as a competition for singers.

A well-known pianist and international piano teacher himself, Einar Steen-Nøkleberg succeeded in attracting good panels of jury members and high-level of pianists as participants to his competition. From the early editions, we can see the names of pianists who became prize-winners and developed fine careers, such as Eugen Mursky, Hinrich Alpers, Tatjana Kolesova, Yaron Kohlberg, Stepan Konczal, to mention just a few. After the Edvard Grieg Competition had been held twelve times in Oslo, it moved to Bergen in 2012, the idyllic city at the mid-west coast of Norway, where Edvard Grieg and his wife Nina had lived and worked. Their home with a beautiful view on the lake Nordål is now a museum and there is an excellent concert hall, where the competition takes place in August/September every two years. With the move to Bergen and the great support by the Stiftelsen Kristian Gerhard Jebsen as main sponsor, the prize money was considerably increased (30,000/20,000/10,000 euros for the top

three prizes) and the competition adopted a stable structure of four rounds, preceded by a pre-selection. Thanks to a partnership with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, the competition has a glorious final round at the Grieghallen.

This 17th edition of the Grieg Competition had been long awaited. Originally planned for 2020, it was cancelled due to the corona pandemic. Rescheduled for 2021, it could still not be held, as the organisers were determined to hold the competition live in Bergen instead of resorting to an online event. It was therefore with great joy and relief that the competition could take place again. The pianists responded overwhelmingly: a record number of 247 applications were received! After a pre-selection, thirty pianists received the news that they are welcome to participate in Bergen.

Apart from the piano competition itself, the organisers offer much more. Each day of the first three rounds at the beautiful venue





The three prizewinners receive applause from the audience, the orchestra and the jury.

DAG FOSSE / KODE

Troldhaugen (Grieg's home and Museum) during the breaks, people from the audience may attend a listeners' forum where interesting aspects of the competition are discussed, often with special guests. Competitors who do not enter the second round or the semi-final are given the opportunity to perform at other concert venues in and around Bergen, for which they also receive a decent fee.

Two days before the final round, a trip to the Ole Bull Academy is organised for a special concert/lecture with Norwegian Folk music. The day before the finals there are more events such as a guided tour, a masterclass by jury member Lilya Zilberstein and an evening concert at Håkonshallen, which is a real treat and has become a tradition in itself: a recital by the first prizewinner of the Chopin Competition! Bruce Liu performed works by Rameau, Chopin, Ravel and Liszt. In 2016, Seongjin Cho (winner of the 2015 Chopin Competition) also performed at Håkonshallen.

Back to the competition: logically, all contestants have to perform works by Edvard Grieg, and they may complement this with other repertoire of their own choice. Thanks to the free repertoire, quite a variety of different works, from Baroque to Contemporary, had been prepared. Naturally, there is a time limit: 30 minutes, both for the first and second round. It is a hard decision by the jury to interrupt and stop a contestant when his or her performance is lasting too long. This also happened at the Maj Lind Competition in Helsinki, several weeks later. Since it concerns a competition with other contestants and a high-quality live streaming, the time schedule has to be strictly observed. The contestants know that they may be stopped. And it did not harm the contestant at the Grieg Competition: she still reached the finals.

In the 2nd round, a specially commissioned work 'Notturmo' by Ørjan Matre could be played, but this was not compulsory. The semi-finalists perform, apart from solo repertoire, the second movement of one of Grieg's Sonatas for violin and piano together with violinist Ludvig Gudim (prizewinner of the

Menuhin Competition and several other competitions himself). The three pianists admitted to the finals were: Fuko Ishii (age 31, Japan), Aleksandra Swigut (30, Poland) and Zifan Ye (22, China). For the final stage, two piano concertos had to be prepared: the one by Grieg and one from a list of thirteen other piano concertos. Interestingly, the competition organisers let the finalists decide among themselves who would play the Grieg Concerto. It thus happened that Aleksandra Swigut played Chopin #1 and the other two finalists played Grieg.

It was fantastic that the organisers had invited guest conductor Lawrence Foster for the finals. He also came to listen to the performances in the earlier rounds. Fuko Ishii won the first prize. Aleksandra Swigut ranked second, but she also received the Audience Prize and the special prize awarded by the orchestra.

**GUSTAV ALINK**

All votes by the jury were published on the competition's website: [www.griegcompetition.com](http://www.griegcompetition.com)



Guest conductor Lawrence Foster (right) talking with journalist Alain Lompech near the statue of Edvard Grieg.

GUSTAV ALINK



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# **13<sup>e</sup> CONCOURS INTERNATIONAL PIANO À MAYENNE**

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There are many paths to an exploration of music history: examining trends by era, for example, exploring national styles, or noting technological innovations and their impact on a culture. Each of these is potentially limited, compared to the understanding that arises when the connections between them is fully considered. In his new book, *Musical Revolutions*, Stuart Isacoff focusses on disruptions to the status quo: moments in music history when things dramatically changed, with an eye on their precedents and aftermaths. The author discusses his concept.

## How the Sounds of the Western World Changed

Some of these revolutions were bold leaps with a gloriously expansive effect, like the invention of music notation in the eleventh century; the birth of opera in the sixteenth; the time in the early twentieth when American jazz spread its wings and moved to Paris. Others were seriously unsettling, like the tumultuous decision by Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg and his students to erase the distinction between “consonance” and “dissonance,” thereby overthrowing the very pillars of Western harmony; or the determination by John Cage and his followers to craft their music from the indeterminacy of a coin toss. Each one ushered in a new direction—often unexpected, like a planet following an invisible orrery, discernible only after the fact. At times these spurred convulsive reactions (as in the swing, during J. S. Bach’s lifetime, from clotted complexity to elegant simplicity—a change Bach himself transcended, as his music embodied both).

Still, these changes usually didn’t arise in a flash, like an unforeseen volcanic eruption, but instead unfolded as an arc: preceded by earlier hints and models, and encompassing long-term aftereffects. The pattern reflects the definition of “revolution” as suggested by Nicolaus Copernicus in his ground-breaking *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*, in 1543. “Revolution,” in his view, implies cyclic return, as in the elliptical orbits of the planets as they revolve around the sun; or in periodic repetition, per Galileo’s explanation of the ocean’s tides, based on Copernican theory.

The term “revolution,” though it conjures images of storming the barricades, is frequently less a cannon shot than a great pendulum swing. And, as J. Bernard Cohen pointed out in *Revolution in Science* (1985), it implies depth, a cumulative impact, or a web of contexts.

Even with the disruptive shock of the new, a discernible symmetry can be found within revolutionary changes. As Mark Twain pointed out, history may not exactly repeat, but it rhymes: the universe unfolds as a great narrative poem, outlining an endless series of connections. In describing the arc of a particular musical phenomenon, however, the question arises of how far back one should search for its origins. The pursuit could be endless, because there never was a time without music.

Archaeologists have found a flute, at least thirty-five thousand years old, in a cave in southwestern Germany, made from a hollow bone of a griffon vulture, surrounded by cave paintings and carved figures. A conch-shell horn from the Paleolithic period, eighteen thousand years ago, has turned up in southern France; it had been deliberately chipped and punctured to create a musical instrument.

Clearly, music and art have always been essential aspects of living. The list of events in my book is, of course, somewhat arbitrary. No attempt was made for completeness, since the subject is inexhaustible, and others might well come up with alternate versions –



# Musical Revolutions

*“History may not exactly repeat,  
but it rhymes: the universe unfolds  
as a great narrative poem,  
outlining an endless series  
of connections.”*

including perspectives more inclusive of world music. There is a great big universe beyond the Western canon, and my focus was simply a result of who I am, and what I have focused on and experienced for most of my life.

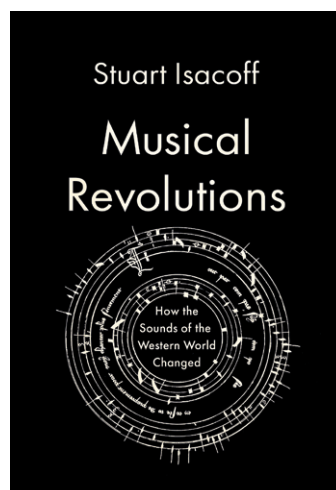
In fact, I even felt compelled to skip some important facets of Western music, like rock – the stylistic juggernaut that emerged in the 1950s, animated by teenage angst and overheated libidos. It arose from the simmering turmoil at the centre of a growing generation gap, with the aim of disrupting the status quo. Like everything else I covered, rock constantly evolved. In the beginning, its transgressions were relatively tame: Elvis Presley stunned a public unaccustomed to artists whose style transcended the Black/White racial divide, and easily sent teen girls into a frenzy with the mere twitch of his hips.

As the years wore on, the festering nihilism at the music’s centre erupted into outright brutality: pianist Jerry Lee Lewis (“Great Balls of Fire”) literally set his instrument ablaze; the Who’s Pete Townshend smashed guitars on stage, as the music metaphorically demolished social guardrails. Rock musicians increasingly assumed the role of outcasts and outlaws, though the Beatles, among other groups leading the “British Invasion,” brought charm to the mix. The movement’s trajectory changed again through increasing levels of sophistication, while diverse currents, from folk-rock and grunge to electronics and hip-hop, influenced the genre in unpredictable

ways. If rock is to be written about, it deserves a more knowledgeable observer than myself.

So the scope of my book was limited. Yet the benchmarks I cited, aspects of a continuing tradition, stand out as moments of remarkable creativity and daring. Though it is unusual to find them compiled into a single volume, I believe deeply that they are worth remarking upon, and celebrating.

**STUART ISACOFF**



**Stuart Isacoff**  
**Musical Revolutions**

Knopf  
320 Pages | ISBN 9780525658634



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is a unique three-monthly magazine, published in seven countries in two special editions with different contents: one in German for Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Luxemburg and Liechtenstein and one in Dutch for the Netherlands and Belgium. The magazine is also distributed in controlled circulation in Eastern Europe with other European countries planned for the future.

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.

Upcoming edition of The World of Piano Competitions is published: May 2023

For all inquiries please contact: [h.bruger@pianist-magazin.de](mailto:h.bruger@pianist-magazin.de)

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The application period has begun for the Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn 2023.

Pianists between the ages of 18 and 32 are invited to submit their application documents by May 19, 2023. For the 10th edition, the competition has significantly increased the prize money: for the first time, the 1st prize has grown to 50,000 euros, the 2nd prize now is 25,000 euros, and all of 10,000 euros will be awarded to the 3rd prize winner. In addition, there are numerous special prizes, concert appearances with orchestras, and festival concerts in Germany and abroad.

# Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn anniversary edition



Furthermore, a scholarship program is to be set up for all finalists of the competition: prizewinners will have the opportunity to submit an artistic project of their choice after the competition and receive additional funding of up to 15,000 euros. In this way, the competition would like to encourage its prizewinners to engage even more intensively with extraordinary artistic projects, giving the pianists the freedom to pursue creative projects for the future. “All our prizewinners are outstanding pianists and first-class interpreters of Beethoven’s music. They clearly demonstrate this in four long competition rounds. Through our scholarship program, which we have now announced, we will give our prizewinners the opportunity to realize artistic projects that require additional funding, while at the same time giving them the chance to enhance their own artistic profile. We would like to offer our finalists the creative freedom they deserve in that form,” says Prof. Pavel Gililov, Artistic Director and President of the Jury of the Telekom Beethoven Competition.

Applications are still possible until May 19, 2023, on the homepage of the competition. To this purpose, applicants must submit an audio-visual recording of one of the last three piano sonatas by Ludwig van Beethoven, as well as a recording of a prelude and a fugue from the *Well-Tempered Clavier* by Johann Sebastian Bach, and also fill out the application form online.

All further information including additional application requirements can be found at: [www.telekom-beethoven-competition.de](http://www.telekom-beethoven-competition.de)

Prizewinners Giorgio Lazzari and  
Hans Suh at the competition





# *“Lads, build good pianos”*

Very special pianos, 100 % made in Germany. This manufacturer, a family company established in 1835, is actively and enthusiastically presenting itself with some interesting changes in order to be prepared to face the demands of the future. We spoke to Stefan Gritzka, who has become CEO of Grotrian-Steinweg since the beginning of 2019.

The flags on the company's premises fly proudly in the wind. The modernized entrance with an adjoining showroom instantly looks pleasant and reserved but clearly underlines the company's aim: “We simply build good pianos here and are proud of it.” In the foyer, we see the portraits of six generations of Grotrian-Steinweg family members, as well as a picture of the new owner, who has owned the company since 2017.

The factory seated at the Grotrian-Steinweg 2, was built in 1974 and was long considered the most modern piano factory, built to produce 3,000 instruments a year. Ever since, this ranked Grotrian-Steinweg as one of the largest and most important manufacturers of upright-and grand pianos.

Nowadays, the production is being gradually transformed, and long production lines are giving way to more flexible individual workstations, with additional control stations, ensuring the highest quality standards.

The company is currently training ten prospective piano builders, to ensure the best possible transition in the personnel structure for the future. Stefan Gritzka: “The mix of craftsmen with more than forty-five years of professional experience with younger piano builders in progress is clearly visible and gives a positive vibe to the whole”.

The past has shown that a new direction had to be taken at Grotrian-Steinweg. In order to face the market needs for instruments in different price ranges, while achieving a corresponding production volume, the company had to expand its product range to offer instruments of the best possible quality in each price segment. “It was therefore decided to design three product lines, each of them belonging to the best instruments in its class. *Three lines, one Heartbeat*. In the entry-level segment, the Wilhelm Grotrian line was launched some time ago. These upright and grand pianos are manufactured in our shareholders' factory in China and are carefully



## A visit to Grotrian-Steinweg

finished by our highly skilled craftsmen in Braunschweig. And we deliberately chose the name Wilhelm Grotrian to show our customers in complete transparency where these instruments are coming from and what distinguishes them from a genuine Grotrian-Steinweg made in Germany. In this entry-level segment, Grotrian-Steinweg offers two upright and two grand piano models.

In the second, a bit more expensive segment, the Momentum line, we currently offer two upright piano models. Two grand piano models will follow in the coming months."

In the process, the Momentum instruments abandoned the original design with the unique star-shaped frame. "A compromise in terms of quality was out of the question for us, and in order to continue offering attractive instruments, we decided to set up this new construction. However, much of the work, as the cabinet, action, keyboard, hammerheads and much more, is still conducted by our experienced craftsmen. This creates "Made in Germany" instruments, with clear communication, aiming to position themselves confidently on the market through an assured quality."

In the highest price segment, Grotrian-Steinweg offers high-end pianos: upright piano models we have known for decades in sizes 113, 118, 124 and 132, and in the grand piano segment our models in sizes 165, 192, 208 and 276. Both carrying the star-shaped frame made out of the best wooden parts, in combination with components of renowned German manufacturers such as Renner, Kluge, Klinke,

Strunz, Abel, Röblau and others. All handcrafted up to almost 80%. Stefan Gritzka: "As most piano manufacturers, we are currently facing very difficult times. For us, one thing is clear: we have a great and long history; we are one of the oldest piano manufacturers in the world and we want to continue to write our history in the future. As they say in Lower Saxony: *Sturmfest und Erdverwachsen*, so it is with us. We stay true to our core values and offer suitable instruments for beginners, ambitious hobby players and professionals."







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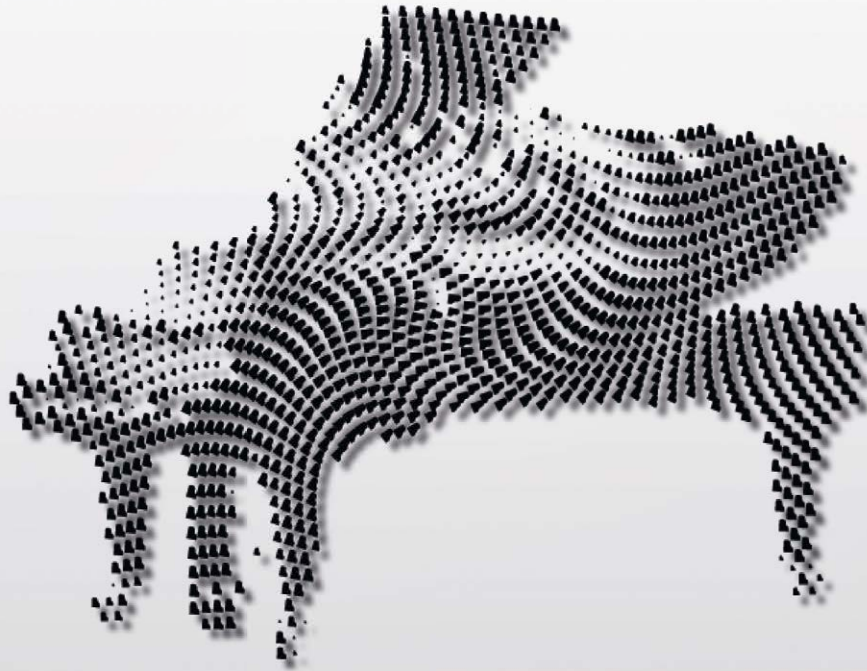


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# INTERNATIONAL SCHIMMELPIANO COMPETITION 2022



**1st Prize**  
Johannes Obermeier



**2nd Prize**  
Tsuzumi Namikawa



**3rd Prize**  
Lorenzo Mazzola

*Congratulations!*

We thank all participants for their great performance and congratulate the winners of this year's International Schimmel Piano Competition.

More information on the International Schimmel Piano Competition can be found under:  
[www.schimmel-klavierwettbewerb.de](http://www.schimmel-klavierwettbewerb.de)

  
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Jury member Anne Queffélec

In 1994, the pianist/teachers Michael Wladkowski and Philippe Vert began a collaboration which, over the years, has led to the creation of various musical events in the town of Mayenne, France. Svetlana Samsonova, artistic director and president of the jury of the International Piano Competition of Mayenne, tells the story.

# Mayenne International Piano Competition

The meeting with Jean Christophe Bergeon, director of the Conservatoire of Mayenne Communauté, produced the Mayenne International Piano Competition, which began in spring 2008. Over the years, it has grown to become a major event in the town's cultural programme. Every year, candidates from all over the world come to the Mayenne municipal theatre to compete for the first places. The trials are open to the public and the final is always full. Many winners of this piano competition have seen their careers as pianists take off. Several of them have been selected and/or awarded prizes in international competitions.

The competition offers numerous artistic opportunities to the laureates: beyond any financial reward, various offers such as recitals in different places around the city of Mayenne. In the near future, thanks to the new collaboration with the Ensemble Instrumental de la Mayenne (EIM) and its new conductor Chloé Meyzie, new options will be offered to future winners.

A great number of internationally renowned personalities from the piano world (Anne Queffélec, Jean-Marc Luisada, Michal Tal, Philippe Cassard, Youri Bogdanov, Aquiles Delle Vigne and many

other pianist-professors) have been part of the jury in previous editions of the competition and this will again be the case in 2023. One of the particularities of this competition is also the "jury of high school students" in collaboration with the two high schools of the city of Mayenne, a practice certainly unique in the world of music competitions! This truly is a musical baptism for these young people who take their roles very seriously. The candidate chosen by the high school students will have the privilege of having a recital organised by this jury.

After two years of the pandemic, the Mayenne International Piano Competition is back. The 13th edition will take place from the 27th to the 30th of April 2023 with new features, such as three rounds instead of two as in previous editions, and new artistic perspectives in partnership with local actors for our winners. This edition will again be judged by an international jury from France, Israel, Germany, Russia, and the United States.

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DOROTHEE STOLZMANN

Front line from left to right: Top prize winners ex aequo: Mateusz Tomica (and Mazurka Prize, PL) and Vojtech Trubac (Czech Republic); Zvezdan Vojvodic (6th Prize, Croatia); Andrey Zenin (3rd Prize and Prize for the Best Improvisation, Russia); Fantee Jones, (5th Prize, USA); Da Jin Kim (4th Prize, Korea)

Top prize winners Mateusz Tomica and Vojtech Trubac together with Jill Rabenau, Competition Director

## COMPETITION PROFILE



# Chopin in Darmstadt

After the undisputed market leader in Warsaw, Poland, Chopin's homeland, the International Chopin Piano Competition in Darmstadt ranks second among Chopin-only competitions worldwide. The Orangery in Darmstadt with its historic ambience and beautiful gardens proved to be an atmospheric venue for the XII International Chopin Piano Competition, which the Darmstadt-based Chopin Society in the Federal Republic of Germany hosted there from October 21 to 31, 2022.

In glorious weather – a real Indian Summer – everyone, including the contestants and the jury, took advantage of the beautiful grounds to take a breather and watch the gardeners preparing green spaces and flowerbeds for winter. The organizers could not complain of the lack of public interest. In particular, the two top-class concerts that framed the competition – the inaugural gala concert featuring all eight jurors and on the last day the prizewinners' concert – were very well attended. In addition, music lovers took the opportunity to experience different performance styles at the candidates' public recitals and perhaps also to gain inspiration for their own piano playing.

Of the fifty-eight successful applicants, thirty-seven candidates from nineteen countries actually turned up to vie for the top prizes over eleven days of competition. Of the twenty candidates who reached the second round, six qualified for the finals. The finalists then had to demonstrate their ability to interact with other accompanying musicians on the two final evenings. Although

the organizers had offered various works by Chopin for the final round, all finalists chose the F minor concerto.

Hearing the same concerto six times over at first suggested the chances of boredom, but on the contrary, it was stimulating to again observe the very different approaches of the young performers whose maximum age was 30. Instead of a symphony or chamber orchestra, for the first time the finalists were accompanied this year by the Apollon Musagète Quartet, a world-class Polish string quartet, supported by double bassist Slawomir Rozlach. Both contestants and listeners agreed that the outstanding performance of this quartet was a highlight of the competition.

The jury under the direction of Kevin Kenner (USA) had a difficult decision to make; its members included Christopher Elton (Great Britain), Martin Kasik (Czech Republic), Alexander Kobrin (USA), Aleksandra Mikulska (Poland/Germany and President of the Society), Katarzyna Popowa-Zydrón (Bulgaria/Poland), Sabine Simon (Germany) and Dina Yoffe (Latvia). Instead of a first prize, it awarded two second prizes. Mateusz Tomica (Poland) – who also won the Mazurka Prize – and Vojtech Trubac (Czech Republic) will travel back to their respective homelands with prize money of 8,500 euros each. Third place, upon which 5,000 euros was bestowed, went to Andrey Zenin (Russia), who was also awarded the Prize for the Best Improvisation. Fourth place went to Da Jin Kim (Korea), followed by Fantee Jones (USA). Finally, the sixth place went to Zvezdan Vojvodic from Croatia, only 19 years old, whose performance that same evening led to an engagement by the Chopin Society Taunus for its "Intermusikale" in Oberursel, near Frankfurt, in 2023.



Mateusz Tomica performing in the second round



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SCHULZE POLLMANN  
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ESSEX  
YAMAHA  
MAENE

Esther Valentin (Mezzosoprano)  
and Anastasia Grishutina (piano)  
laureates of the 2018 edition  
of the competition

## COMPETITION PROFILE



## LiedDuo Schubert-Competition Dortmund

The IV. LiedDuo-Wettbewerb 2023 will be held from September 22 – October 1, 2023 in Dortmund.

The organisation is focussed on a passion for the music of Franz Schubert to the next generation.

Duos (Singer / Pianist) of all nations whose members were born after September 25, 1990, are entitled to apply for the competition, which consists of three rounds and a video pre-selection round. In addition to the works of Franz Schubert, the focus is on the songs of Robert Schumann. For the program of the third round, songs should be selected based on a programmatic idea. This way the competitors are free to create the program in their own way, as they would do in concert practice.

The jury members of the IV. LiedDuo Competition 2023 are Ingeborg Danz, Julius Drake, Elisabeth Ehlers, Bernarda Fink, Ian Fountain, Michael Gees, Christine Schäfer, James Taylor and Roman Trekel. Artistic Director of the competition is Ingeborg Danz. The patron of the competition is Prof. Dr. Norbert Lammert, former President of the Bundestag and ambassador of the IV. LiedDuo-Competition 2023 is Anna Lucia Richter.

In addition to the prize money, the winning duo will receive a CD production and a media package with a total value of over 25,000 euros. The award-winning CD will be released on the GWK Records label and distributed by NAXOS. And all prizewinners will be given various concert engagements. After the competition, all participants will also receive the professional recordings of their performances, which will be broadcast via live stream.

The online portal for registrations for the competitions will be open from January, 2023. Application Deadline: May 21, 2023.  
[www.schubert-wettbewerb.de](http://www.schubert-wettbewerb.de)





**25 February –  
4 March 2023**

Ljubljana, Slovenia



# LJUBLJANA FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION

Artistic and General Director of Ljubljana Festival: **Darko Brlek**

Artistic Director of the 1<sup>st</sup> Ljubljana Festival International Piano Competition: **Epifano Comis**

Jury President: **Dubravka Tomšič Srebotnjak**

Jury Members: **Robert Benz, Ricardo Castro, Barry Douglas, Violetta Egorova, Cyprien Katsaris, Anne-Marie McDermott, Ick-Choo Moon, Leonel Morales**

Selected 28 competitors from 18 countries will perform in Ljubljana:

**Ryan Martin Bradshaw, Yan Cai, Yangrui Cai, Kai-Min Chang, Wanchuan Chen, Arsen Dalibaltayan, Evgenii Evgrafov, Jure Goručan, Luca Grianti, Nabeel Hayek, Yi-Chung Huang, Fantee Jones, David Khrikuli, Uladzislau Khandohi, Ruben Kozin, Roman Lopatynskyi, Jonathan Mak, Arsenii Mun, Víctor Naranjo Pérez, Vladimir Petrov, Élisabeth Pion, Aleksandar Raos, Alexandra Segal, Ilya Shmukler, Urban Stanič, Vitaly Starikov, Kostandin Tashko, Yuanfan Yang**

Total prize fund: **74.000 EUR**



## **ROUND 1 – Recitals**

25 – 27 February 2023

## **ROUND 2 – Recitals**

28 February & 1 March 2023

## **ROUND 3 – Finals with Award Ceremony**

3 & 4 March 2023

with conductor **RICARDO CASTRO** & **RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra**

Watch online at **[ljubljanafestival.si/competition](https://ljubljanafestival.si/competition)** & on **Facebook**





Gallus Hall, Cankarjev dom



COMPETITION PROFILE

Dubravka  
Tomšič Srebotnjak

# Ljubljana Festival International Piano Competition

From 25 February to 4 March, 2023, Ljubljana Festival, led by the General and Artistic Director Darko Brlek, will be holding its first international piano competition in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The competition is open to professional pianists of all nationalities who were born between 1992 and 2006. The aim is to enable young, talented pianists to become top musicians, and to share outstanding classical music with a large international audience.

The artistic director of the 1st Ljubljana Festival International Piano Competition is the renowned Italian pianist Epifanio Comis. At all stages of the competition, the pianists will be appraised by an expert nine-member jury, consisting of renowned musicians, and presided over by the Slovenian pianist and Professor Emeritus Dubravka Tomšič Srebotnjak, who has for many years been considered Slovenia's No. 1 cultural ambassador. As a young pianist, Tomšič Srebotnjak won many international piano competitions, and is now a jury member of numerous important international piano competitions throughout the world. She will be joined at the jury table by the renowned US pianist Anne-Marie McDermott, the recipient of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to music Barry Douglas, the French-Cypriot pianist and composer Cyprien Katsaris, the world-class musician Violetta Egorova, the recipient of numerous awards and Professor Emeritus Ick-Choo Moon, the German pianist Robert Benz, former artistic director of the Ettlingen International Competition for Young Pianists the Spaniard Leonel Morales, who regularly demonstrates his talent and virtuosity in concerts, and the first Brazilian conductor to be given honorary membership of the UK's Royal Philharmonic Ricardo Castro. The latter will conduct the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra, which will be accompanying the finalists in the

concluding concerts, scheduled to take place on the evenings of 3 and 4 March in Cankarjev dom, the largest Slovenian culture, convention and congress centre.

The Ljubljana Festival International Piano Competition will be the first piano competition on such a scale held in Slovenia. There will be twenty eight competitors from eighteen countries; the winner will receive the main prize worth 30,000 euros, and prizes will be awarded up to 6th place. In addition, there will be special prizes for the best performances of a Baroque musical work, a classical sonata, a Romantic musical work, a 20th century musical work, a 21st century musical work, a musical work by a Slovenian composer, for the competition's youngest finalist, and the pianist representing Slovenia with the highest score.

The competition will be divided into three stages. The first two stages will take place in the Marjan Kozina Hall at the Slovenian Philharmonic. In the first stage, each competitor will perform a recital, which must include one whole sonata by Beethoven, and one or more musical works chosen by the competitor. In the second stage, the programme must include one important Romantic musical work, one important 20th century musical work, and one or more musical works chosen by the competitor. Competitors must not repeat a work they have already performed in the first stage. The competition jury will, as a rule, select twelve competitors who will progress to the second stage, and six competitors will make it to the third stage. In the final stage each finalist will perform a piano concerto. The introductory meeting for the competitors will be held on 24 February at 9.30 AM at the Slovenian Philharmonic and will include a draw to determine the order of performance. All competitors will have access to pianos for practicing at the Ljubljana Conservatory of Music and Ballet from 23 February to 4 March.

During the competition all performances can be watched on [www.ljubljanafestival.si](http://www.ljubljanafestival.si) as well as on Facebook.



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