

# THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS



THE WORLD FEDERATION  
OF INTERNATIONAL  
MUSIC COMPETITIONS

2

2024



Bruce Liu

*Shaping the  
Inner Force*

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## WELCOME (AN EXPLANATION OF A SMALL REVOLUTION)

*Dear readers,*

It is a great honour to invite you to this issue of the magazine, in which the International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition is given a prominent place. Please allow me to use this space to explain a small revolution that will take place in Warsaw in 2025. In the finals of the Chopin Competition, we will require the candidates to perform not only one of Chopin's concertos, but also his *Polonaise-Fantaisie*, op. 61.

The main aim of this change is to stylistically enrich the finals, i.e. the most important moment in the competition, the stage at which the jury's decisions are weighed on the prizes to be awarded.

Chopin's oeuvre is extremely varied. The composer, drawing on the brilliant style in the 1820s, went significantly beyond its framework in the concertos, both in terms of expression and pianistic means, but even so, both concertos represent only an early stage in his mature oeuvre. Further compositional breakthroughs can be observed in Vienna as a result of the outbreak of the November Rising, in the mid-1930s. It is then that Chopin decides to cease public recitals, at the turn of the decade, when, after rubbing shoulders with death in Majorca, he gives his works the characteristics of deeply reflective poems. Finally, in the mid-1940s, when he begins 'the late style', which is a kind of struggle with history and indeed with the essence of the musical work, he paves the way for future eras. This 'late style' opens with the *Polonaise-Fantaisie*, a work completed at Nohant during the last summer spent at Sand's estate.

The juxtaposition of such different works as a concerto and the *Polonaise-Fantaisie* will give the participants in the finals the opportunity to present a much more complete palette of pianistic means, and the jurors the chance to assess the maturity of the finalists in different musical styles. At the same time, the form of the *Polonaise-Fantaisie* allows for the construction of a coherent narrative in which it fulfils the role of a certain preparation for the concerto with orchestra, alluding to the age-old idiom of the improvised prelude.

**DR. ARTUR SZKLENER**

DIRECTOR OF THE CHOPIN INSTITUTE IN WARSAW



## THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS

### THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS

is published twice a year by PIANIST, as a part of the regular edition, and also worldwide as a separate magazine.

PIANIST (regular edition) is published four times a year in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Luxemburg, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands and Belgium.  
www.pianist-magazin.de  
www.pianistmagazine.nl

### Online access

www.pianostreet.com  
www.pianist-magazin.de/archiv

### Publisher

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5282XC Boxtel / The Netherlands  
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### Subscription Enquiries

Subscriptions are available for this separate edition (€14 a year) or as a part of PIANIST Magazine, German or Dutch edition.  
Please check: www.pianist-magazin.de

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### Stay updated!

For upcoming application deadlines etc. check:

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



International  
Beethoven Piano Competition  
Vienna

Bösendorfer



Save the Date:  
May 16 – 24, 2025

# 17<sup>th</sup> International Beethoven Piano Competition Vienna 2025

The Final Round with orchestra will take place  
in the Golden Hall of the Musikverein Vienna

[www.beethoven-comp.at](http://www.beethoven-comp.at)

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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)



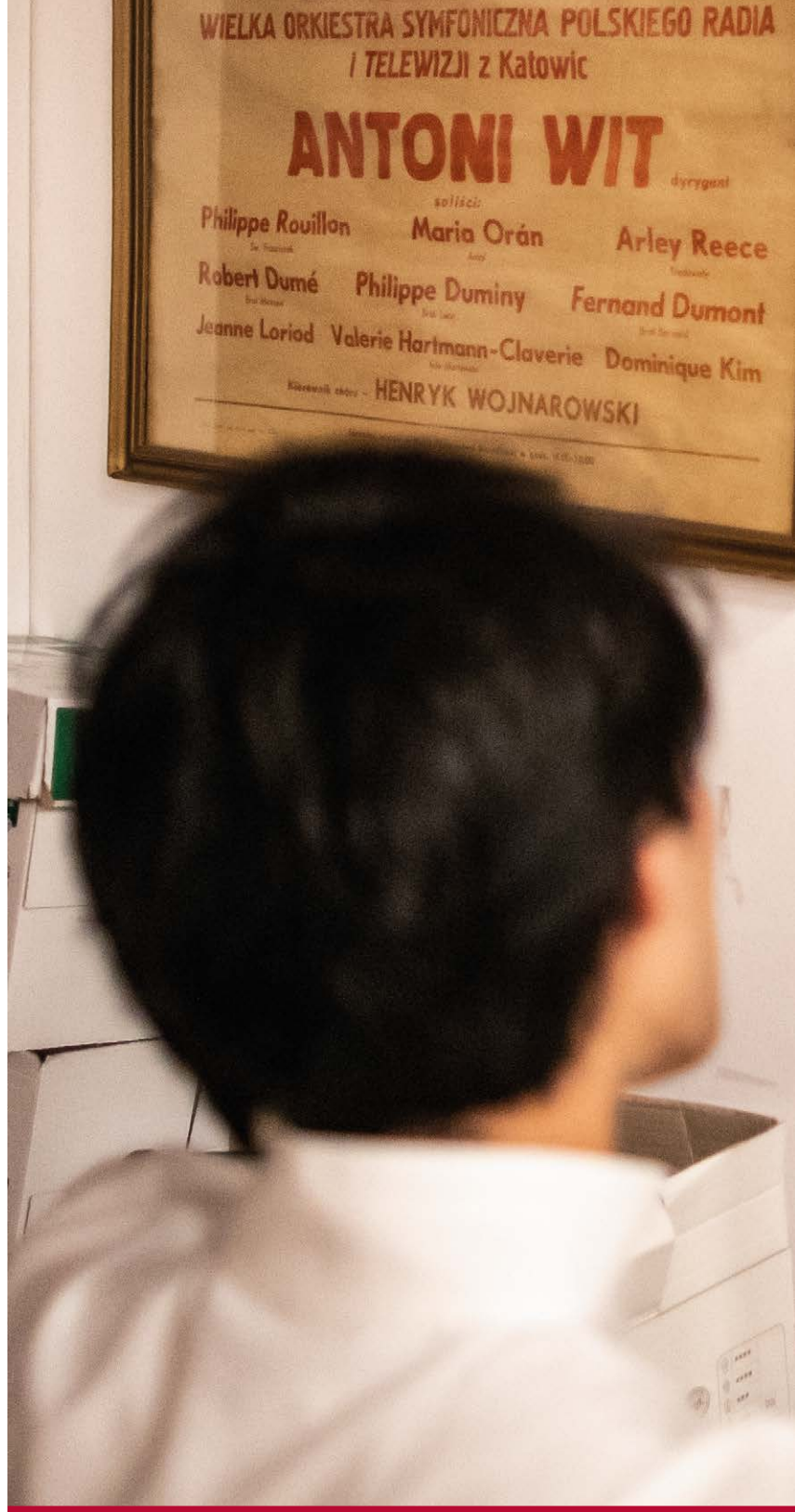
### PIANO STREET

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.

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

Bruce Liu

# Shaping the Inner Force



Bruce Liu, the renowned pianist, recently spoke with us after completing his Japan tour with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra. Our Zoom connection Stockholm–Warsaw brought back strong memories of his magnificent victory at the Chopin Competition in 2021. So, is Warsaw his second home? Perhaps, as the city offers a convenient respite and a familiar hub amidst his extensive touring schedule. As he prepares for upcoming tours of his new recital program and orchestral performances, Liu talked about his approach to repertoire, the evolving landscape of classical music, and the importance of individuality in an increasingly homogenized world.





GOLIK

**Warsaw is a short stop in your schedule. What do you have coming up?**

I'll be touring my new recital program soon, as the CDs are coming out in a few days. The new Tchaikovsky's Seasons CDs will be released on November 1st. Then, at the end of November, I'll start touring this program in Germany, Paris, Amsterdam, and other parts of Europe, as well as China. Later, in January, I'll be touring this recital program in America. And of course, there are a few orchestra concerts here and there. So, I'm always on the go. Regarding future recordings I am considering a concerto album, after having released two solo albums.

**How do you decide on your new repertoire? Is it purely a matter of heart, or do practical considerations come into play?**

Well, for now, I'm just going with the flow, changing the repertoire every season or so. After Chopin, I moved on to French music with Rameau and Ravel. Now, I'm focusing on this Russian program with Tchaikovsky's Seasons and Scriabin and Prokofiev Sonatas. And then, I'll probably return to some German music. I like to keep things fresh and avoid getting too tired. I also enjoy creating programs with narrative elements, whether it's connections between characters, tonal keys, or overarching stories. It helps to avoid the

feeling of going back to school, where we were always expected to play Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, a classical sonata movement, and an étude. That kind of routine can be a bit of a nightmare. I prefer to have a story to tell.

**Since signing with Deutsche Grammophone, you've had many opportunities, but it must also be challenging. Do you feel free to choose your repertoire, or is it a collaborative process?**

Well, of course, we have to consider various factors and avoid conflicts with other projects. Sometimes we have similar ideas, so we have to compromise or choose something else. But overall, they're very open-minded. Sometimes I have an idea, and they can help refine it and see the bigger picture. They have a better understanding of the market and other aspects. For example, the idea of recording Satie on both a grand piano and an upright piano was a new perspective for me. It was interesting to explore different sounds and the possibilities of post-production in recording.

**What actually triggered your interest in Chopin's music?**

Chopin is a beloved composer for piano students due to his accessible melodies and wide range of styles. His music, from challenging études to larger-scale pieces, offers opportunities for both technical development and musical expression. Unlike more complex composers like Scriabin or Brahms, Chopin's music is often more immediately appealing to a wider audience. His improvisational style allows for diverse interpretations, making his pieces endlessly fascinating to explore.

It's fascinating that there's so much room for interpretation. I never thought I would play Chopin the way I did, but I was so focused on the music itself that I didn't think much about the competition. I've always participated in competitions with a variety of composers, so I wasn't sure if I fit the Chopin mould. I just did my own thing. I'm a relatively optimistic and positive person, which seems quite different from the traditional image of Chopin as a melancholic

and depressive figure. However, his music reveals a multi-dimensional emotional range, and there are probably aspects of him that we still haven't fully understood. We often like to categorize people to simplify our understanding.

**As a serious joke, Garrick Ohlsson said that even played poorly, Chopin sounds good. The material itself is so incredibly rich and valuable, yet it also invites to the art of perfect performance. How would you define great Chopin playing?**

Ultimately, Chopin is a Romantic composer, so emotion is crucial. A purely rational performer can't truly capture the essence of his music. Playing with heart is more important than playing with the brain. Of course, we need elegance, nobility, patriotism, nostalgia, playfulness, and a light touch, often referred to as *je ne sais quoi*. The singing quality, or *cantabile*, is also essential, as Chopin is considered the poet of the piano. His approach to *cantabile*, inspired by Bellini, elevates his music to perfection.

**You were born in Paris to Chinese parents, grew up in Canada working worldwide. Given today's globalized world, do you ever reflect on the impact of these diverse cultural influences?**

Yes, after starting my concert tours, I've continued to discover countless new cultures. It's always interesting to experience a place as a tourist and then delve deeper into the local lifestyle. That's why I prefer exploring smaller streets and observing how people live rather than visiting famous landmarks. I'm sure these cultural influences have shaped me, but since I grew up immersed in this mix, it's hard to pinpoint specific impacts. Language is a significant factor: I speak Chinese, French, and English. I wish I could learn more, especially for music.

**How did you handle the intense attention after winning the Warsaw competition? I guess it gets intimately connected to other interests you have in life besides the piano?**

It was a mixed bag of emotions. I wasn't expecting it at all, so it was a sudden shock. Luckily, I was a bit older, so I could handle the pressure. I focused on avoiding mistakes and simply navigating the whirlwind of travel and performances. It took a long time to process everything that happened. Even now, I'm still trying to fully understand the significance of that night. Well, lifestyle and food are also important. I'm open to trying all kinds of food, which is great for a traveler. My way of thinking has also been influenced by exposure to different cultures. I'm open-minded to new ideas and perspectives, and I don't believe in absolutes. I think everything has potential. Sometimes, when I play the piano, I draw inspiration from Chinese practices like Qi Gong, which helps with breathing and focus. I also like swimming and cart racing and also history and art. I often visit museums during my travels.

**Instruments today offer an amazing level of sound and technical quality. Does the piano shape the pianist, or does the pianist shape the piano? Quality is undoubtedly important, but perfection can be dangerous.**





*“What we all  
have in common is  
our difference.”*

GRZEDZINSKI

It can stifle creativity and innovation. A perfect performance is the worst compliment you can give a pianist, as it suggests a lack of individuality and emotion. When a performance moves me or makes me cry, it's never because it's perfect. We all strive for perfection, but we should never forget the importance of individuality and diversity. Every pianist should have their own unique voice and style.

**Do you have any advice for young pianists aiming for a professional career in classical music?**

I never really aimed to be a professional pianist. I just loved music and wanted to pursue it as a passion. The classical music industry can be quite tough, and it's hard to make a living from it. I think it's important to not be afraid of making mistakes and to trust your own judgment. While it's valuable to seek advice from teachers and mentors, you should also develop your own unique perspective. Regarding the future of classical music, I think there will be more crossover with other genres. However, the core values of classical music will always remain relevant. The way we present classical music might change, but the underlying message will stay the same. It's interesting that vinyl records are making a comeback. There's something about the vintage and elegant quality of vinyl that appeals to people. As long as we maintain the core values of classical music, the future is bright.

**Your credo: “What we all have in common is our difference.”**

**How is it so important to you?**

I think it's a summary of what we've discussed. Personality is be-

coming increasingly rare, especially in our globalized world. In the past, shops in different countries had distinct styles. Now, malls around the world look almost identical. This homogenization is concerning because it diminishes the value of travel and cultural exchange. Even when I play the same program in different countries, each performance is unique due to my mood, experiences, and the people I've encountered. It's essential to remember that we are humans, not robots. Growing up in a multicultural environment has shaped my perspective. I believe that individuality is crucial.

**PATRICK JOVELL**



GRZEDZINSKI

In Kooperation mit

Beethovenfest  
Bonn

# TELEKOM BEETHOVEN COMPETITION

04.12. – 13.12.2025



**Apply and take your chance to win attractive prizes. The competition is open for pianists aged between 18 – 32 from all nations. Application deadline: May 14, 2025**

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

1st prize: 50,000 EUR, 2nd prize: 25,000 EUR, 3rd prize: 10,000 EUR  
plus more than 6,000 EUR in special prizes and numerous concerts engagements.



**Connecting  
your world.**



NORBERT ITTERMANN

Images from last year's competition



# Telekom Beethoven Competition 2025

The Telekom Beethoven Competition is back, celebrating its 11th edition with an exciting opportunity for young pianists from around the world. With over €95,000 in total prize money, additional scholarship opportunities, and concert engagements on offer, this competition has become an essential platform for emerging talents to launch their professional careers.

The application period for the Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn 2025 opens on December 1, 2024, and will close on May 14, 2025. Talented pianists between the ages of 18 and 32 are encouraged to submit their application materials, including an audio-visual recording of one of Beethoven's final three piano sonatas and a prelude and fugue from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. This rigorous selection process allows applicants to showcase their skill and depth of interpretation for a place in one of the world's most esteemed classical piano competitions.

The next competition will take place from December 3 to 14, 2025, in Bonn, the birthplace of Beethoven, with each round being streamed live globally, making it possible for audiences worldwide to experience every captivating performance in real time. The 2025 edition offers increased prize money, with the first prize winner receiving €50,000, the second prize €25,000, and the third prize €10,000. Additionally, numerous special prizes, concert engagements, and festival appearances are available, allowing winners to gain inter-

national exposure and perform with leading orchestras in Germany and abroad.

In a unique addition, finalists of the competition will also have access to a scholarship program, supporting the realization of creative, independent artistic projects. This program offers up to €10,000 per project, encouraging finalists to pursue artistic endeavours that deepen their engagement with Beethoven's music and beyond. "Our prize winners are outstanding pianists and interpreters of Beethoven's work," says Prof. Pavel Gililov, Artistic Director and President of the Jury. "Through this scholarship, we aim to support their creative freedom and allow them to enhance their artistic profile with projects that require additional funding." Aspiring pianists can find the application form, along with all necessary details and submission guidelines, on the competition's official website.

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

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## AGENDA

## WFIMC Piano Competitions

December 2024 to June 2025

1 – 13 December 2024

SEOUL | SOUTH KOREA

*Seoul International Music Competition*

8 – 15 February 2025

GRAZ | AUSTRIA

*Franz Schubert and Modern Music (Piano Duo)*

13 – 21 March 2025

LEIPZIG | GERMANY

*International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition*

21 – 30 March 2025

ÉPINAL | FRANCE

*Concours International de Piano d'Épinal*

22 – 30 March 2025

DORTMUND | GERMANY

*International Schubert Competition Dortmund*

22 March – 3 April 2025

BARCELONA | SPAIN

*Maria Canals International Music Competition*

25 – 30 March 2025

PARIS | FRANCE

*Concours Long-Thibaud*

24 April – 3 May 2025

JAÉN | SPAIN

*International Piano Competition Prize Jaén*

5 – 31 May 2025

BRUSSELS | BELGIUM

*Queen Elisabeth Competition*

16 – 24 May 2025

VIENNA | AUSTRIA

*International Beethoven Piano Competition Vienna*

21 May – 7 June 2025

FORT WORTH | USA

*Van Cliburn International Piano Competition*

24 May – 29 June 2025

SENDAI | JAPAN

*Sendai International Music Competition*

4 – 14 June 2025

VALÈNCIA | SPAIN

*Valencia Iturbi International Piano Competition*

20 – 28 June 2025

PORTO | PORTUGAL

*Santa Cecília International Competition*



The conference attendees in front of the entrance to the Severance Hall.

GREGORY WILSON, WILGORY LLC

# Alink-Argerich Foundation

## 3rd International AAF Conference, Cleveland 2024





One of the panel sessions with Aleksander Laskowski (moderator), Matei Varga (Vendome Prize, USA), Rune Maahn Christensen (Aarhus, Denmark), Yaron Kohlberg (Cleveland), Robert Koenig (Palm Springs IPC) and Irena Gulzarova (Zürich).

GREGORY WILSON, WILGORY LLC



Competition organisers and directors from all over the world listening to the panel discussions.

GREGORY WILSON, WILGORY LLC



Five of the jury members of the Cleveland IPC: Melvin Chen (2nd from left), Matan Porat, Lydia Connolly, Mūza Rubackytė and Hyung-ki Joo, together with Yaron Kohlberg (President of Piano Cleveland) (far right) and Marian Tanau (Albuquerque, Olga Kern IPC) (far left) during a brunch at the AAF Conference.

AAF

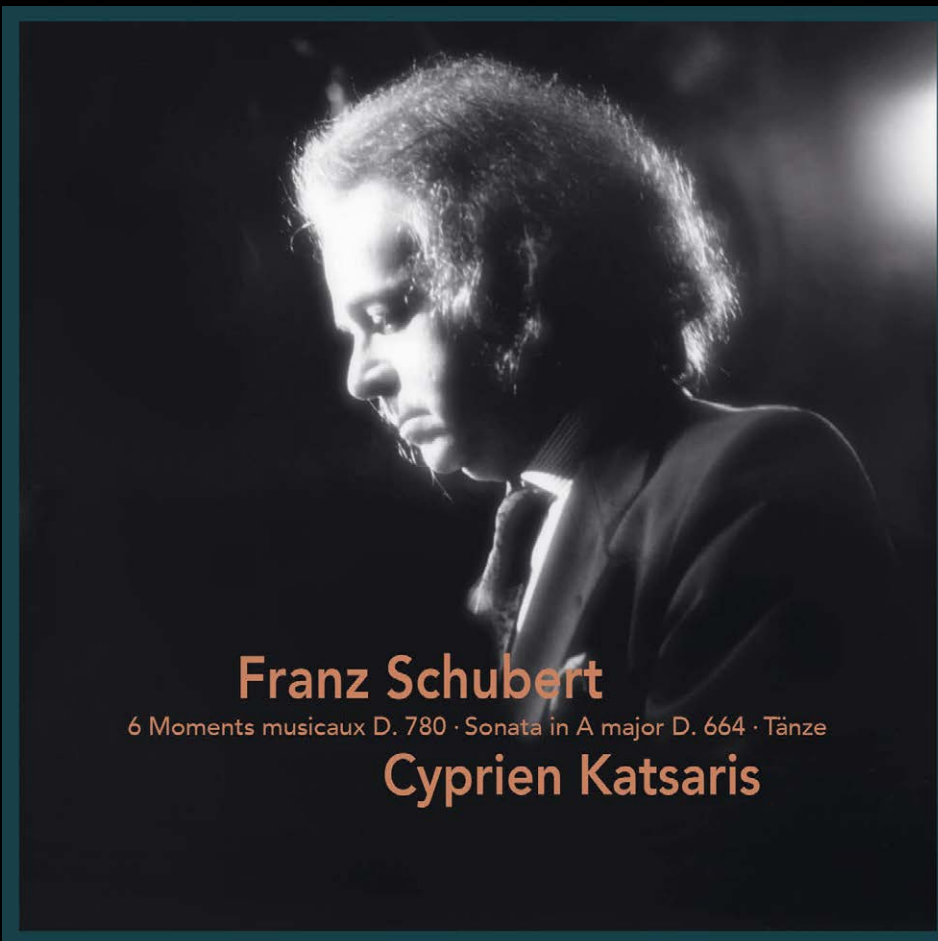
In August 2024, the Alink-Argerich Foundation organised the 3rd international AAF Conference in Cleveland (Ohio, USA) with Piano Cleveland as co-host. The conference was held just before the finals of the Cleveland International Piano Competition, which was celebrating its 50th anniversary. Location of the conference was the beautiful Reinberger Chamber Hall at Severance Music Center.

Although it is quite a trip to visit Cleveland from Europe or Asia, more than 80 competition organisers and others professionally involved in the Piano World made arrangements to be at the conference. They came from various states within the USA, but also from middle and south America, Europe, Israel, South Africa, China, and Singapore. There could have been more, but some had difficulties in obtaining a visa on time and there were also a few international flights cancelled. Several who were on their way to Cleveland had a very challenging trip due to a tornado over North America causing many changes in important flight connections. Fortunately, everybody arrived safely and had a wonderful time in Cleveland. For all of them it was important to meet colleague organisers from many different competitions, but also to see several good friends from (long) before and to make new contacts. At the

conference, a wide range of topics were discussed in seven panel sessions, covering many essential aspects of competitions such as the rules and procedures for the jury, financing a competition, the large variety in prizes and awards, support and facilities for the contestants. Other topics included factors that may enhance or damage the reputation and image of a competition, as well as the impact of the current state of the world on music competitions. Almost all attendees stayed to hear the final stage of the Cleveland International Piano Competition, in which the four finalists performed with the famous Cleveland Orchestra. The competition was won by Zijian (James) Wei from China.

www.alink-argerich.org

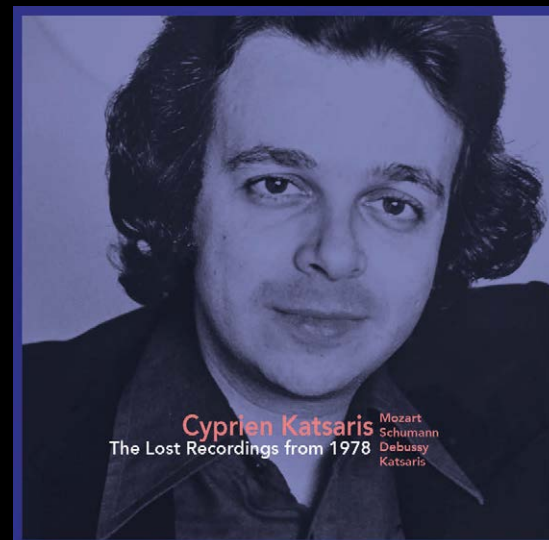
# NEW RELEASES BY CYPRIEN KATSARIS!



## Franz Schubert

6 Moments musicaux D. 780 · Sonata in A major D. 664 · Tänze

Cyprien Katsaris



Cyprien Katsaris  
The Lost Recordings from 1978

Mozart  
Schumann  
Debussy  
Katsaris

Cyprien Katsaris continues his recording odyssey with a second volume of Franz Schubert, including the Moments Musicaux, the A Major Sonata (D. 664) and several Dances.

A major discovery in Katsaris' archives, forgotten recording made in the United States in 1978, includes four improvisations and - a first, for him - Mozart 12 Variations on "Ah, vous dirai-je maman" and "Children's Corner" by Debussy.

PIANO 21

In partnership with the Melism label, a monumental 4-CD box set dedicated to Greek music from the 19th and 20th century. CD 1 features most of Katsaris's sold-out concert at Megaron, Athens in January 2024, and is completed with a world premiere studio recording of Constantine Kydoniatis's Concerto for piano and percussion, conducted by maestro Christos Kolovos. On CD 2, Katsaris performs the world premiere of 8 of the 18 Sinfonias by Nikolaos Mantzaros (1795-1872), the "Greek Beethoven", and on CD 3, piano music by Yannis Constantinidis, in collaboration with Nikolaos Samaltanos who joins him for the two-piano version of the 8 Greek Island Dances before performing, for the first time, the "Berlin Sonatina". On CD 4, Nikolaos Samaltanos plays world premiere recordings of works composed by the conductor Dimitri Mitropoulos: his youthful Sonata "My Soul", 14 Invenzioni for mezzo-soprano and piano with Angelica Cathariou, and the "Morceau de concert" for violin and piano with Nina Pissareva Zymbalist.

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8 Sinfonias for Piano

### DIMITRI MITROPOULOS

My Soul, Sonata in E-flat Major  
14 Invenzioni on Poems by C. P. Kavafy  
Un morceau de concert for violin and piano

### RENA KYRIAKOU

Les Cloches - Danse des Cobolds

### YANNIS CONSTANTINIDIS

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44 Children's Pieces  
8 Dances des Îles Grecques for 2 Pianos

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Vibraphone and Percussion Ensemble

### YANNIS A. PAPAÏOANNOU

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### GEORGES LEOTSAKOS

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THE NEW YORK TIMES

# Honens International Piano Competition

Honens promotes and fosters excellence in the art of piano performance, identifies and supports young artists with outstanding musicianship, and sparks and enhances appreciation and understanding of the piano and piano music.

Every three years, the Honens International Piano Competition identifies a Gold, Silver, and Bronze Laureate who best reflect the philosophy of the Complete Artist. In addition to awarding substantial cash prizes, Honens prepares its Laureates for professional careers in music through its Artist Development Program – a comprehensive, three-year artistic development and career accelerator – and creates opportunities for growth and exposure. The Honens Gold Prize is one of the world’s largest of its kind.

In addition, Honens has introduced its newest prize – the Incubator Award. The award provides one quarterfinalist, who has the passion and courage to be a change agent, with up to three years of support for one special project.

Driven by its commitment to responsibility for competitors, the community, and the art music ecosphere, Honens provides a runway for Laureates to set themselves apart from other artists as skilled performers who are also leaders, educators, advocates, and citizen artists.

## QUARTERFINALS

2 to 4 March, 2025, in Berlin  
17 to 19 March, 2025, in New York

## SEMIFINALS & FINALS

16 to 24 October, 2025, in Calgary



Sasha Kasman Laude



Katherine Chi and Catherine McClland



2022 Honens Prize Laureate Illia Ovcharenko



Krystian Zimerman in the finals performing with Warsaw Philharmonic conducted by Jerzy Maksymiuk, 1975.

# 100 years of the Chopin Competition

The centenary of the Chopin Competition is quickly approaching. Spectacular celebrations are planned for 2027 but we are already starting to reflect on the 100 years of our history.

The International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition is one of the oldest and most important events of its kind in the world, having been held in Warsaw for almost one hundred years. It is an exceptional competition, devoted entirely to the work of a single composer – the greatest Polish composer – Fryderyk Chopin.

Every five years, pianists from all over the world come to Warsaw to compete for the title of the best Chopin interpreter of their generation. Of course, participation in the competition represents an incredible test of nerves. Far more importantly, however, it also provides a wonderful opportunity to display one's talents to mil-

lions of viewers around the world, and to launch a fabulous career on a global scale.

Poland regained its independence in 1918. Soon afterwards, in 1925, at the initiative of the pianist and teacher Jerzy Żurawlew, the idea was born of organising an international Chopin Competition. The first edition of the competition took place in 1927, in the beautiful building of the Warsaw Philharmonic.

Twenty-six pianists from eight countries were in attendance. They included the 20 year-old Dmitry Shostakovich, representing the Soviet Union, although he failed to win a prize. Victory went to



Winner  
Martha Argerich  
giving interviews,  
1965.

another soviet pianist, Lev Oborin, while the remaining spots on the podium went to representatives of Poland: Stanisław Szpinalski and Róża Etkin-Moszkowska. The competitors practised in the private homes of wealthy Varsovians, since the organisers of the first edition of the Competition did not think of ensuring a suitable number of practice rooms.

The second edition of the Competition took place in 1932. One of the judges was the Polish composer Karol Szymanowski, while the jury's guest of honour was Maurice Ravel, who travelled across from France specially for the event. The second competition was won by the Paris-based Russian émigré Alexander Uninsky.

The last pre-war edition of the Chopin Competition was held in 1937. On that occasion, Japanese pianists—now well known for their love of Fryderyk Chopin—made their first appearance, causing quite a sensation. First prize went to Yakov Zak of the Soviet Union. The Polish pianist Witold Małcużyński took third place and went on to enjoy a marvellous international career.

The Second World War brought a twelve-year hiatus between editions of the Competition. Warsaw was almost completely destroyed in the war, and the building of the Warsaw Philharmonic was turned to rubble. Many Polish pianists and teachers died or emigrated.

The first post-war competition took place in 1949, when the whole world was commemorating the centenary of Fryderyk Chopin's death. The fourth competition was held in the popular Roma theatre, which had survived the ravages of war. Equal first place went to Halina Czerny-Stefańska, from Poland, and Bella Davidovich, from the USSR.

The year 1955 brought the inauguration of the new Warsaw Philharmonic, erected on the site of the old building that was destroyed during the war. The fifth edition of the competition, like all subsequent editions, was held there, and was won by the Polish pianist Adam Harasiewicz. Second place went to Vladimir Ashkenazy of the USSR and third to the Chinese pianist Fou Ts'ong. The 1955 Competition was also a grand society event, with the music-loving Queen Elisabeth of Belgium among the audience.

The sixth edition of the Competition took place in 1960, the Chopin Year organised under the patronage of UNESCO to mark the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth. The jury that year was the biggest in history, 36 jurors strong, including Nadia Boulanger and Witold Małcużyński, as well as Arthur Rubinstein as the honorary member. The sixth competition proved a happy one for Italy, with the laurels going to the youthful Maurizio Pollini, who was just 18 years of age.

The seventh edition, in 1965, started in an unusual fashion, with the performance in the inaugural concert of works by contemporary Polish composers: Kazimierz Serocki, Witold Szalonek, Tadeusz Baird and Karol Szymanowski. For the third time in the competition's history, the first prize went to a woman—the Argentinian Martha Argerich, who very nearly dropped out of the competition, attempting to flee the Philharmonic just before her first performance.

The eighth edition of the competition, in 1970, was won by Garrick Ohlsson, from the US, with Mitsuko Uchida of Japan coming second and Piotr Paleczny of Poland third.

20th to 22nd December 2024

Marseille, France



Pierre Barbizet

## International Piano Competition

### Prizes:

- |                  |          |
|------------------|----------|
| • 1st prize      | 10,000 € |
| • 2nd prize      | 5,000 €  |
| • 3rd prize      | 2,000 €  |
| • Audience award | 1,000 €  |

### 1st prize concert engagements:

- Festival de la Roque d'Anthéron (Summer 2025)
- Société Chopin de Paris
- Société Chopin de Nohant (Nohant Festival Chopin)
- Société Chopin de Marseille (SMAC)
- Société Tropézienne des Amis de la Musique (STAM)
- Festival de Ponlevoy
- Génération France Musique (Radio)

### Audience award concert engagement:

- Nuits du Castellet

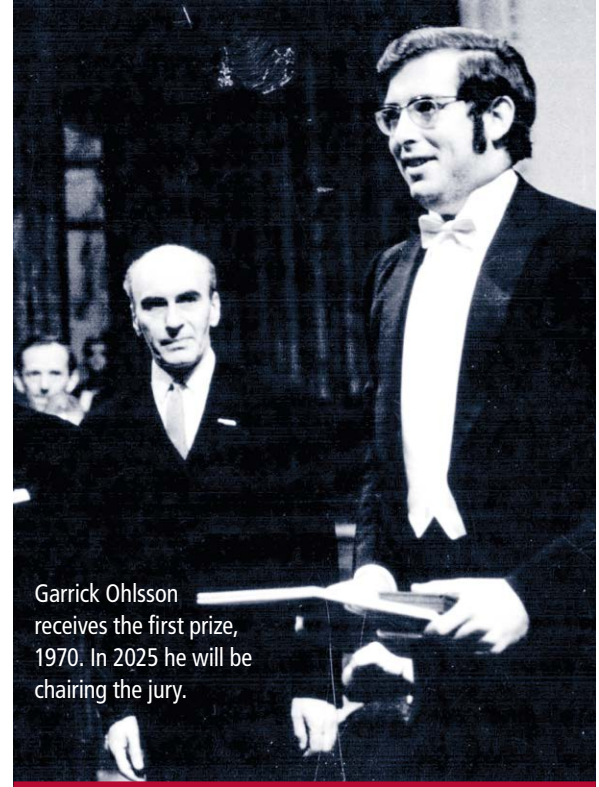
### Jury members:

- Claire Désert (France)
- Joanna Domanska (Poland)
- Roger Muraro (France)
- Marie-Ange Nguci (France)
- Roland Pöntinen (Sweden)
- Anne Queffélec (France)

Further information: [www.chopin-marseille.com](http://www.chopin-marseille.com)



Honorary jury member  
Artur Rubinstein  
during an intermission,  
1960.



Garrick Ohlsson  
receives the first prize,  
1970. In 2025 he will be  
chairing the jury.

In 1975 Polish music lovers thronged the Philharmonic to support the Polish representative Krystian Zimerman. They were not disappointed: in the ninth competition, Zimerman won first prize and nearly all the special prizes.

The next Competition took place in 1980, in an atmosphere of heightened political tension. In Poland, it was the time of Solidarity and great hopes for the overthrowing of communism. The winner was Dang Thai Son, from Vietnam, who in the final performed with a symphony orchestra for the first time in his life. Dang Thai Son also received the prize for the best performance of mazurkas – jointly with Ewa Pobłocka – and shared the polonaise and concerto prizes with Tatiana Shebanova. A great scandal was caused by the fact that Ivo Pogorelich failed to reach the final. Martha Argerich left the jury in protest.

In 1985 the eleventh Competition was won by Stanislav Bunin, from the USSR. In 1990, in the twelfth Competition, the first prize was not awarded. Second prize went to Kevin Kenner, from the US. The Competition was visited by two crowned heads of state: Queen Sofia of Spain and Queen Fabiola of Belgium.

In 1995 – to the great disappointment of both audiences and competitors – the first prize was again withheld. Second prize was shared by Philippe Giusiano, from France, and Alexei Sultanov, from Russia. The fourteenth edition of the competition, in 2000, was won by the Chinese pianist Yundi Li. Five years later Rafał Blechacz, like Krystian Zimerman before him, won the competition and received nearly all the special prizes. The sixteenth edition of the competition took place in 2010, when the whole world was

celebrating the bicentenary of the birth of Fryderyk Chopin.

This was the first edition of the Competition to be organised by the Fryderyk Chopin Institute. The young pianists could seek inspiration at the newly opened Fryderyk Chopin Museum and the beautiful park surrounding the birthplace of Fryderyk Chopin in Żelazowa Wola. The laureates of the bicentenary competition were Daniil Trifonov, Ingolf Wunder, Lukas Geniušas and the gold medal winner Yulianna Avdeeva. The seventeenth competition, in 2015, was closely followed by the media from the whole world.

A record number of viewers followed the successive rounds on television and radio and – above all – on the Internet, being over 31 million people altogether. The winner was the Korean pianist Seong-Jin Cho. All the records from 2015 were broken in 2021, during the 18th Chopin Competition. It was a special edition. Because of the Covid pandemic it had to be postponed by a year. Until the very last minute it was not certain whether health regulations, which were changing all the time, would allow contestant from abroad to come to Poland. The listeners were anxiously waiting, believing that they finally would be able to use the hard-won tickets. All the auditions were sold out in under three hours! The laureates were Martin Garcia Garcia – third prize, Kyohei Sorita and Alexander Gadijev – two equal second prizes, Bruce Liu – who won the first prize, the gold medal and millions of followers worldwide.

The nineteenth edition of the Chopin Competition will be held in October 2025. It is already sold out.

**ALEKSANDER LASKOWSKI**

# WALTZ

Discovered in New York 2024

Frédéric Chopin  
Piano Street Edition

*p* *fz* *fz* *fz* *5* *4* *2* *cresc.* *fff* *sempre f* *3* *3* *3* *tr* *21*



# CHOPIN *or* *no* CHOPIN

Recently, The New York Times reported that an unknown manuscript by Frederic Chopin had turned up at the Morgan Library in New York. The music world was briefly turned upside down again, even though this is not an immortal masterpiece, any more than it was a few weeks earlier with 14-year-old Mozart's *Ganz Kleine Nachtmusik*. But it is big news anyway. Even on talk shows it was the topic of conversation but perhaps we'd better check with Dr Artur Szklener, director of the Fryderyk Chopin Institute, who, by the way, also wrote the word of welcome for this edition of *The World of Piano Competition*, the supplement with PIANIST Magazines.

Szklener judged that the find does characterise Chopin's manuscripts from that era (1830–35): it is written in brown ink and the paper has proven to be from that period. Musically, the waltz, no more than a 24-measure fragment, also has, according to Szklener, the characteristics of the brilliant style, with which Chopin then catered to the "mechanisms of the music market of the time", as heard in the easily digestible Variations op. 12 or the Rondo op. 16. Little new under the sun you might say in our age of commerce! Anyway, everything seems to point in the direction of a gift for a pupil or a friend as Chopin: the unusual size of the manuscript (10×13 cm), the very detailed and well-kept notation with directions for dynamics, even with fingerings! Even though his name above the manuscript is clearly not written by Chopin himself, could it not be the lucky person who was allowed to receive the present?

The key question remains is it real or not? Surely a certain doubt creeps up on you, just as with the compositions that deceased masters like Rachmaninoff, Chopin and Liszt dictated to Rosemary Brown, half a century ago now. I was also reminded for a moment of the brilliant master forger Han van Meegeren who, in 1937, led all connoisseurs to believe that his *Emmausgangers* was a genuine Vermeer, whereas now any child could immediately point out the vast differences in style.

Van Meegeren taught us a lot about our current and ever-subjective and current perception of art, which says more about ourselves and our times than about the works of art from times long gone. And that is precisely the beauty of the always relevant and timeless art called music.

**ERIC SCHOONES**



# MYTHS AND REALITY

What seems to lend itself better to myth-making than the stay of two gifted artists on an island whose natural beauty is already a work of art? Such a sojourn is that of George Sand and Frédéric Chopin in Majorca. It is the most talked about episode in Chopin's life: a feature film has been dedicated to it and one of its protagonists wrote a novel about it. Try then to hold your own as a historian with a neatly documented account.



The view from Chopin's cell in the monastery

Frédéric Chopin and George Sand presumably met in November 1836. At that time, Chopin was a celebrated artist in Paris. He had many pupils mainly from aristocratic circles who provided him with a good income. Good, but not too generous, as he regularly complained that he could only partially afford the desired luxuries. He hardly gave concerts, but often played in salons where his playing was widely applauded. According to witnesses, he was more adventurous in salons than on paper, and by no means all his compositions had the over-refined intimacy and euphony one associates with salon music.

George Sand was a celebrated novelist at the time and she behaved independently, inside and outside her relationships and did not care about prevailing mores.

At their first meeting, the spark did not exactly fly. He wrote: "I met a great celebrity, Madame Dudevant, known as George Sand. Something in her appearance does not please me. What an unattractive woman La Sand is. Is she really a woman?" She wrote: "Our little one." These reactions are understandable. She was a woman of the world,

he on the other hand shunned the big stage and avoided contacts that meant little or nothing to his art. He lived for his art, while she made her life a work of art. At the time of their acquaintance, he was still in the aftermath of his dead-end relationship with a former fellow student, while she was divorced and in the meantime was having all kinds of extramarital affairs. Nevertheless, it did not stop there: they had been a couple since June 1838. As a result, he experienced security for the first time since he had left Poland, while she could fully indulge her caring instinct and called him "my child". The trip to Majorca in November 1838 was necessary. Chopin was often ill and his doctor advised him to spend some time in a sunnier place. Travelling with Chopin and Sand were her poet and son. The most flowery description of the stay is credited to Chopin's friend Franz Liszt. "All the prisms of happiness gathered in this period of Chopin's life. Is it surprising that they rekindled in him the life that at this moment shone in its liveliest sparkle? Lonely Majorca, surrounded by the blue waves of the Mediterranean and shaded by lemon trees, gave the impression, by its location, of responding to



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FRYDERYK  
CHOPIN  
INSTITUTE

XIX MIĘDZYNARODOWY  
KONKURS PIANISTYCZNY  
IM. FRYDERYKA CHOPINA  
WARSZAWA 2025

19<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL  
FRYDERYK CHOPIN  
PIANO COMPETITION  
WARSAW 2025

2 - 23  
PAŹDZIERNIKA  
2025

2 - 23  
OCTOBER  
2025

[chopincompetition.pl](http://chopincompetition.pl)

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the ardent desire of youthful minds still cherishing the hopes of their most beneficent and naive illusions in their longing for the bliss of an uninhabited island.”

Admittedly, Chopin complained on arrival that the requested piano was being held by customs for eight days. However, “All this is but a grain of sand compared with this heaven, the poetry that emanates from everything, and with the vivid glimpses of this landscape. It is one of the most beautiful in the world and the looks of the people have not made it dull.” The environment inspired him to compose. He completed his series of 24 Preludes opus 28 there and started working on other compositions.

Three weeks later, the tone changed dramatically. “The country is hell, in terms of mail, people and facilities.” This change had all sorts of reasons. Chopin fell ill and consulted several doctors who contradicted each other rather than help him. Initially, the foursome lived in a hotel where it was damp and had barely any windows. Thereupon, the four moved to a former monastery that was literally and figuratively far from civilisation. The islanders, very Catholic and conservative, viewed the couple with amazement: she a woman in men’s clothes, he anything but an average hetero who managed to elicit incomprehensible sounds from the keyboard, both artists living together unmarried. Sands’ children were called heathens and pelted with stones. Escape into their own art was only partly possible. Her new novel did not want to run smoothly and his composing work did not always go smoothly either. However, the hostile environment did foster bonding between the four (initially). Nevertheless, after they became somewhat used to the new environment, “the parents” lapsed into their old habits. Sand writes: “When I returned from my nocturnal explorations with my children to the monastery, we found him at the keyboard at ten o’clock in the evening, pale, with blank looks and hair standing up, and it took

some moments before he recognised us.” Never a more cinematic moment than that...

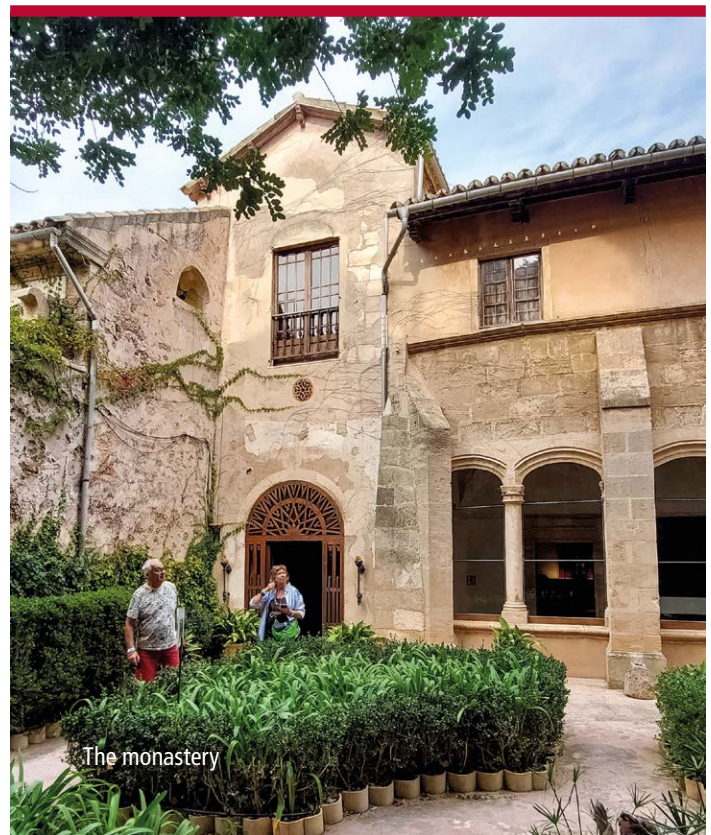
The problems with Chopin’s health remained. A walk to the mountain near the village of Palma nearly killed him and, on the advice of a doctor, they left the island. On the boat, they were in the company of “a hundred pigs who screamed quite a lot. Their stench ruined and the air so much that the sick person had no rest and almost no air to breathe. When he arrived in Barcelona, he was still spitting blood and looking around like a ghost.” After returning to Paris, the two remained a couple for some time, but with the old abode, old instincts also resurfaced in the two, and in 1847 their relationship ended. Sand devoted a novel to the relationship that tout Paris devoured with red ears, and she declared in small talk about her years with Chopin: “I lived like a virgin.” The person Chopin responded to this as his music is: intensely, discreetly, civilised and inscrutable.

As much attention as these anecdotes have received, so little has been given to the musical significance of this sojourn. No sooner and no later did Chopin write such short and compact works. Many preludes have an etude-like character and all are conceived from the sound possibilities of the instrument, which is why some preludes appear impressionistic and have given rise to highly pictorial descriptions, something Chopin disliked. While his other works in short genres from these and subsequent years are about the same length as their older counterparts, the melodic material invites elaboration on a much larger scale. Experience with the smallest form taught him even better how to deal with large forms. His greatest musical role model remained Bach. The only sheet music he took with him to Majorca was from Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*. It can be heard in what he composed.

EMANUEL OVERBEEKE



The Pleyel Chopin composed the preludes on.



The monastery



Piano  
Neuchâtel VdT

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7-8-9 FEBRUARY 2025



**Jacques Rouvier**  
jury president

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

**Katja Avdeeva**  
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## Scherzo International Piano Competition

Inspiring young talent in challenging times each year, the Scherzo International Piano Competition draws young pianists from around the world to Tel Aviv's Israel Conservatory of Music. Since its founding in 2017, this competition has provided a unique platform for emerging musicians to perform, connect, and master their artistry.

Scherzo combines the thrill of performance with a supportive environment that fosters both a global community and personal growth. Participants benefit from a distinguished panel of jurors who offer invaluable feedback, encouraging each young pianist to deepen their musical expression. The competition has shown remarkable resilience, continuing its mission through challenging times by adopting a hybrid format that allows participation even when travel is restricted. In 2024 alone, participants from 16 countries joined the competition, demonstrating that Scherzo remains an inspiring stage for young talent.

Looking ahead to the 2025 edition, both participants and audience can anticipate exciting new additions, continuing Scherzo's tradition of nurturing talent and excellence. Stella Brener, Founder and Managing Director, shares the competition's vision: "Our goal is to create a welcoming stage where young pianists can freely express and explore their musical voices. Scherzo isn't just a competition; it's a place to gain confidence, build meaningful connections, and embark on a lifelong musical journey. With each edition, Scherzo strengthens its commitment to cultivating a new generation of artists ready to shape the future of classical music."

## International Paderewski Piano Competition

The thirteenth edition of the International Paderewski Piano Competition will be held from November 9th to 23rd, 2025, in Bydgoszcz, Poland. The Paderewski Music Association (est. 1922), the organizer of the competition, is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of young pianists and Polish culture, with a special focus on classical piano music.

The competition was founded in 1961; its prize winners include Nikita Mndoyants, Yulianna Avdeeva, Eduard Kunz, Zheeyoung Moon, Jakub Kuszlik, Hyuk Lee, Philipp Lynov, Kamil Pacholec, and recently Mateusz Krzyżowski. Since 1998, the competition has been held every three years. The event honours the legacy of Ignacy Jan Paderewski, the pianist, composer, and politician.

The jury of the 13th International Paderewski Piano Competition will be chaired by Piotr Paleczny, the Artistic Director. The jurors will include Akemi Alink, Philippe Giusiano, Jan Jiracek von Arnim, Olga Kern, Alexander Kobrin, Ronan O'Hora, and Paweł Wakarecy. The Ambassador of the competition is Rafał Blechacz. The competition has been a member of Alink-Argerich Foundation since 2004 as well as the World Federation of International Music Competitions in Geneva since 2010.

The competition is open to pianists of all nationalities, born between 1993 and 2009 with the preliminary auditions in Warsaw, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai, New York, Vienna, and Sacile. The winning participants will share a total of € 62,500 in prizes, not to mention additional awards in the form of concerts and recitals in various prestigious music institutions in the Netherlands, Poland, Japan, the USA, Germany, Austria, and many others.

[www.konkurspaderewskiego.pl](http://www.konkurspaderewskiego.pl)





**A TRIBUTE TO YOURI EGOROV 8 MAART 2025 20:15**

**FINALE YPF EUROPEAN PIANO COMPETITION 9 MAART 2025 14:15**

kwart- en halve finales 26.02 t/m 05.03 in het Bimhuis gratis toegankelijk



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Juan Pedro García Oliva, the winner of 2022, playing in the finals.

FOPPE SCHUT

# The Young Pianist Foundation

The Young Pianist Foundation, celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, is already fully engaged in organising the 9th YPF competition. It will take place in February/March 2025 and will open its doors to young pianists from the European Union (incl. the United Kingdom and Switzerland) up to and including the age of 27. The YPF European Piano Competition / Grand Prix Youri Egorov will bring the greatest young talents from the European Union to the Netherlands, creating not only a fair and stimulating pianistic challenge, but also an incentive for students, teachers, and educational programs within the conservatories to achieve even greater engagement and performance.

The YPF is grateful to welcome Severin von Eckardstein, Jean-Claude Vanden Eynden, Edith Fischer, Nino Gvetadze, Ronan O’Hora (as non-voting president), Hannes Minnaar, Malcolm Singer, and Einav Yarden as members of the international jury. The repertoire for the competition will be partly free, but the most important style periods must be included in the repertoire in different rounds. In addition, the following works, amongst others, have been made compulsory: a chamber music piece by Mozart in the semi-finals, together with the Amato Quartet, which has been very much in demand lately, and Beethoven or Schumann in the final round with orchestra. Prior to the competition, potential candidates are selected through video submissions. A newly commissioned piece for piano solo by Jan-Peter de Graaff is part of the repertoire for the Grand Finale. The quarter- and semi-finals will take place at the Bimhuis and the final round, together with the Phion Orchestra under the baton of Benjamin Levy will take place in Muziekgebouw aan ’t IJ, a leading concert hall in Amsterdam. Around December 15, 2024, the pre-selection jury, led by Thomas Beijer, will select twenty quarter-finalists. From February 26 to

March 5, 2025, the quarter-finals and semi-finals will take place at the Bimhuis, Amsterdam, admission is free for the public.

The final of TOETSEN, the National Piano Youth Competition 2025 being organised by the YPF together with the Liszt Competition (open to children aged 11 through 17), will take place on Saturday, March 8, at the Bimhuis. The final of the YPF European Piano Competition 2025 – Grand Prix Youri Egorov will take place on Sunday afternoon, March 9, 2025. The finalists will be accompanied by Phion, Orchestra of Gelderland & Overijssel under the baton of Benjamin Levy.

On Saturday evening, March 8, 2025, members of the international jury as well as Thomas Beijer will play during “A Tribute to Youri Egorov”. This concert, in honour of Youri Egorov and his philosophy of giving young pianists the opportunity to develop, has become a true YPF tradition and every time it is special to attend because of the large number of master pianists in one evening.

[www.ypf.nl](http://www.ypf.nl)

[www.liszt.nl/toetsen-120](http://www.liszt.nl/toetsen-120)



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Tomoharu Ushida

# The Puzzling World of Piano Competition Eliminations

The realm of classical music is punctuated by the drama of international piano competitions, where emerging talent vies for recognition and a launchpad to a glittering career. Yet, these contests are not without their share of controversy, particularly when it comes to the enigmatic process of elimination.

Recently, the case of Tomoharu Ushida, a gifted Japanese pianist who participated in the 2024 Leeds International Piano Competition, has ignited debate. Ushida, with his commanding stage presence and technical mastery, seemed a strong contender. However, to the astonishment of many, he was eliminated in the early rounds. While the specific reasons for this decision remain undisclosed, it has reignited discussions about the subjective nature of competition judging, with some speculating that the jury might have sought a particular gender balance among the finalists.

Ushida's story is far from unique. History is replete with instances of talented musicians who faced unexpected eliminations. One infamous example is Ivo Pogorelich, the young Yugoslavian pianist, who was eliminated from the 1980 International Chopin Piano Competition despite praise from renowned jurors like Martha Argerich, who famously walked out in protest. This act of defiance catapulted Pogorelich to international stardom, even without winning the competition.

The 2011 Tchaikovsky Competition also witnessed controversy surrounding the elimination of Dmitry Kopachevsky in the semi-final round. Critics lauded his technical prowess and profound musical interpretation, questioning the jury's decision. Such incidents underscore the unpredictable nature of competition judging, where personal taste and subjective preferences can significantly influence outcomes.

However, it's important to note that not all successful pianists have relied on competition victories. Evgeny Kissin and H el ene Grimaud, for instance, have forged exceptional careers without major competition accolades. Kissin achieved global recognition without entering any significant piano contest, while Grimaud established

herself through powerful performances and acclaimed recordings. Even legendary figures such as Vladimir Ashkenazy, who placed second in the 1955 International Chopin Piano Competition, have shown that success comes in various forms. His subsequent victories, including first place in the Queen Elisabeth Competition the following year, remind us that a single competition result doesn't define an artist's legacy.

More recently, pianists like Yuja Wang and Benjamin Grosvenor have risen to prominence through their artistry and distinct musical voices rather than competition victories. Their stories emphasize that while competitions can serve as springboards, they are not the sole path to success in the classical music world.

The world of international piano competitions is a complex one, fraught with contradictions. As the influence of public voting and prizes grows, the disparities in judgment become increasingly apparent. Lucas Debargue, for example, won fourth prize in the Tchaikovsky Competition 2025, but received the Critic's Award and subsequently embarked on a successful international career with a major label recording contract.

Eliminations can spark heated debate and surprise, reflecting the subjective nature of artistic judgment. Yet, they also remind us that talent and artistic integrity can shine through even without a trophy. As Ushida and countless others continue to forge their paths, they demonstrate that success in classical music is not solely tied to competition victories but is a tapestry woven from talent, dedication, and an unwavering passion for performance. These qualities are recognized not only by competition juries but also by critics and audiences alike.

**PATRICK JOVELL**



**21. 2.-1. 3. 2026**

Ljubljana, Slovenia

# LJUBLJANA FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION Piano 2026

General and Artistic Director of the Ljubljana Festival: **DARKO BRLEK**

Artistic Director of the Ljubljana Festival International Competition - Piano 2026:  
**EPIFANIO COMIS**

Jury President: **DUBRAVKA TOMŠIČ SREBOTNJAK**

1<sup>st</sup> prize: **50.000 EUR**

2<sup>nd</sup> prize: **30.000 EUR**

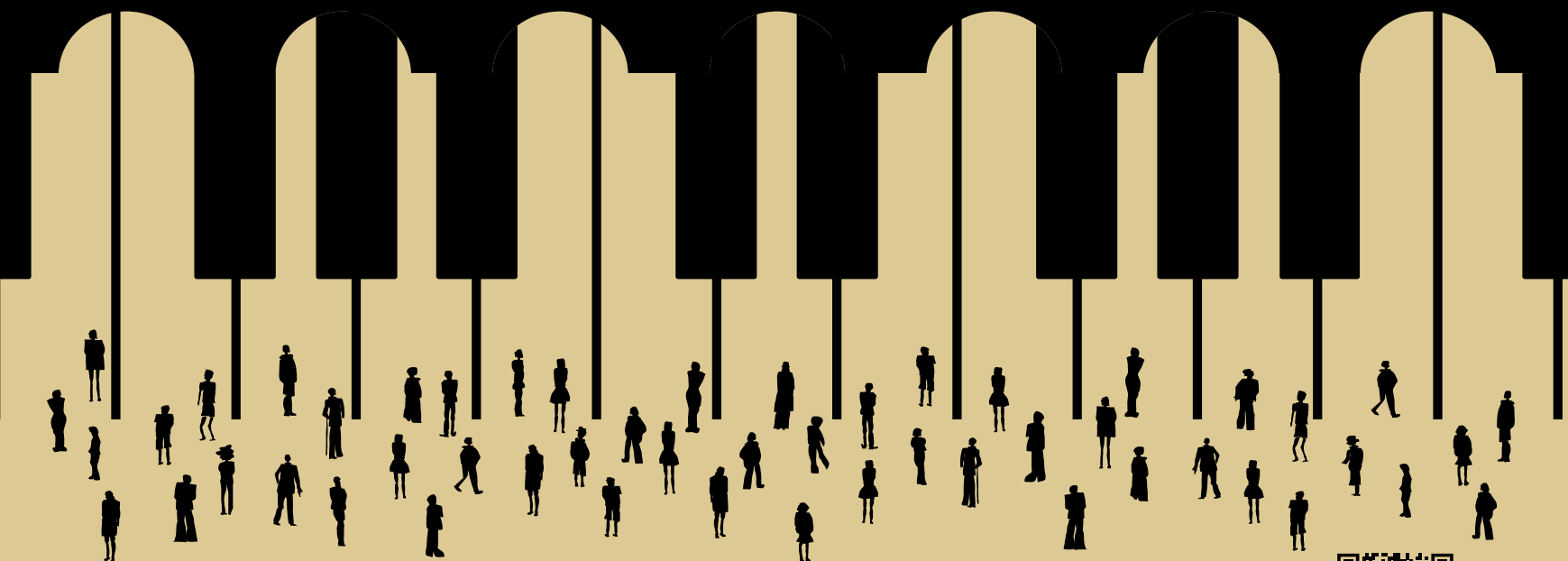
3<sup>rd</sup> prize: **15.000 EUR**

4<sup>th</sup> prize: **8.000 EUR**

5<sup>th</sup> prize: **5.000 EUR**

6<sup>th</sup> prize: **3.000 EUR**

**APPLICATIONS:  
5. 1.-10. 5. 2025**



More information: <https://ljubljanafestival.si/competition-piano/>



City of  
Ljubljana



The Ljubljana Festival was founded by the City of Ljubljana.

The Ljubljana Festival reserves the right to alter the programme.

# Ljubljana Festival International Competition – Piano 2026

Through the Ljubljana Festival International Competition – Piano 2026, the Ljubljana Festival brings together exceptional young talents from around the globe, building a vibrant platform for emerging pianists to make their mark on the global music scene. The second edition of the competition will take place from 21 February to 1 March 2026, aiming to provide young talents with an opportunity to reach the pinnacle of their art and to share exceptional classical music with an international audience. This endeavour further solidifies the Ljubljana Festival's reputation as one of Europe's foremost music events.

Festival Ljubljana is eagerly preparing for the second international piano competition, which will once again bring the world's most promising young pianists to Slovenia. Following the remarkable response to the first competition, which welcomed participants from all over the world, the 2026 event will offer another golden opportunity for pianists to compete for distinguished awards, international acclaim, and the chance to perform for an esteemed audience in a prestigious setting.

Darko Brlek, the general and artistic director of the Ljubljana Festival, emphasizes the competition's profound impact on young musicians, helping to open new doors and nurture their growth on the world stage. Renowned Italian pianist and educator Epifanio Comis, a long-time advocate for young talent, will once again oversee the artistic direction of the competition. Presiding over the competition jury will be honorary professor Dubravka Tomšič Srebotnjak, one of Slovenia's most celebrated pianists and a cherished cultural ambassador.

The competition also offers impressive financial rewards. Cash prizes will be awarded to the top six performers, with the grand prize set at an extraordinary €50,000. In addition, special prizes will be awarded for the best performances of works from different periods: Baroque, Classical, Romanticism, the 20th and 21st centuries, a prize for the interpretation of a work by a Slovenian composer, and a prize for the highest-ranking Slovenian pianist.

Applications for the 2026 competition will be open from 5 January to 10 May 2025. Eligible applicants are professional pianists born between 1995 and 2009. Applicants will be required to submit a performance recording, proof of age, a photograph, a short biography, a repertoire list, and two letters of recommendation. The qualifying round jury will then select 30 pianists to participate in the first round of the competition.

The contest will take place in three stages. Following the first round, twelve pianists will advance to the second, and six will proceed to the final. The initial rounds will take place in the Marjan Kozina Hall at the Slovenian Philharmonic, while the grand finale will be held in the prestigious Gallus Hall of Cankarjev dom. In the final round, competitors will perform alongside the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra, providing a unique chance for the finalists to showcase their artistry before a discerning audience.

Finalists will be invited to perform some of the piano repertoire's greatest masterworks, demanding flawless technique, artistic depth, and in-depth interpretation. Featured composers include Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, Frédéric Chopin, Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, and Sergei Prokofiev.

<https://ljubljanafestival.si/en/ljubljana-festival-piano-competition>



The winner of the first piano competition: Kai-Min Chang



Final evening of the first Ljubljana Festival International Piano Competition

# Two Competitions and a new Exchange Network led by Youth

The Association Jeune Musique (AJM), founded by the composer and pianist Michel Runtz, has organized a biannual International Piano Competition in Fribourg (Switzerland) since 2002, which is open to young pianists up to the age of 18. This competition proposes a programme exclusively dedicated to 20th and 21st Centuries repertoires. Moreover, the Association Jeune Musique chooses the compulsory pieces for the competition among works written by Swiss composers. After 11 successful editions of the Fribourg contest, AJM suggested collaborating with the Shanghai Music Conservatory by organizing a similar event with the same characteristics and goals as the one in Fribourg.



Michel Runtz

French-Swiss composer and pianist, Michel Runtz was born in Paris and lives mainly in Switzerland. Founding President of the Association Jeune Musique and the Fribourg International Piano Competition. Co-founder of the Sino-Swiss International Piano Competition of Shanghai. Michel Runtz composes to communicate emotion when presented not only with a film, a play, or a text but also the aesthetic sense of certain painters: the contrast of the material to the beauty it contains. This response echoes other creations in which the composer provides a musical language that seeks not to mislead but to rouse the listener toward clarity and simplicity. His works immerse the listener in a harmonic universe that is situated in a kind of “in-between” that reveals a cross-bred music.

Michel Runtz has already performed his works in China, France, Italy, Morocco, Poland, Russia, and Switzerland. His compositions are increasingly featured in international competitions and in the programmes of renowned performers such as Irina Kataeva, Fanny Clamagirand, Jay Gottlieb, Boris Baraz and Laura Mikkola.

In 2018, Michel Runtz was awarded the Claude Blancpain Foundation Prize (Switzerland) for the foundation of the Jeune Musique Association, for the continuation of the *Fribourg International Piano Competition* and the new international influence of Fribourg through its Fribourg – Shanghai innovative project. Michel Runtz has just finalised the composition of an opera based on Yasmina Khadra’s work, *Cousine K*. His works are published by *Runtz Music Edition*.

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

[www.youtube.com/@MichelRuntz/videos](https://www.youtube.com/@MichelRuntz/videos)



“Young Pianists as Ambassadors of today’s Music.”

In 2019, AJM and the Music Middle School affiliated to the Music Conservatory of Shanghai together created the *1st Sino-Swiss International Competition of Shanghai for Young Pianists*, a biannual competition devoted to music of the 20th and 21st centuries, with compulsory pieces written by Chinese composers.

This project involves the creation of an unprecedented exchange network between Switzerland and China. As this competition is linked to Fribourg’s, the Chinese competition’s laureates are invited to play the following year in Fribourg during the competition and vice versa. These winners become ambassadors for the musical heritage of the country that has awarded them.

Through its compulsory pieces, the project promotes Chinese and Swiss music of the 20th and 21st centuries in both countries. As both competitions are international, this promotion will certainly extend beyond the borders of both countries, according to the organizers of both events.

This new kind of network is an extraordinary world premiere: two competitions that have exactly the same goals, follow the same process, and require the same originality.

### Another Sino-Swiss competition

In March 2024, AJM and the Music Middle School affiliated to the Music Conservatory of Shanghai organized the *2nd Sino-Swiss International Competition of Shanghai for Young Pianists*, biannual competition devoted to music of the 20th and 21st centuries.

This 2nd edition of the Shanghai competition, which follows a 5-year hiatus since the 1st edition in 2019 due to the pandemic, was a real success. Fifty-three candidates, divided into three levels of

difficulty, faced an attentive international jury comprising Yang Yunlin, Wen Deqing, Didier Schnorhk, Laura Mikkola, Olivier Cazal and Michel Runtz.

The two main objectives of the Shanghai competition remain the same as those of Fribourg. The first is to promote Swiss and Chinese composers through the compulsory pieces. This unique approach creates a cultural bridge between Switzerland and China, between Shanghai and Fribourg, and offers young musicians an international platform to express their talent and creativity.

This new network of cultural exchange, created through a partnership between both competitions, gives a unique artistic dimension to this project in which the youth are a central vector. The children and young people’s mission is to promote the music of the 20th and the 21st Centuries and to include all the representative aspects of the actual world we live in, which this kind of music embodies.

### New horizons for musical heritage

The Shanghai Competition and the Fribourg Competition continue to play an essential role in promoting contemporary music, supporting composers, and strengthening Sino-Swiss cultural exchanges. This initiative demonstrates the importance of supporting young talent and creating opportunities for the music of our time to flourish on a global scale, and for culture to be a meeting ground.

By joining forces, Shanghai and Fribourg are opening up new horizons for contemporary music and creating a lasting legacy for future generations of musicians.

MICHEL RUNTZ

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

Our German edition was launched in 2017 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 2025  
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Ed Bazel at the Abbey Road crossing

## Pearl River names Ed Bazel Kayserburg Worldwide Brand Ambassador

Ed Bazel, an internationally acclaimed, award-winning pianist, composer, and founder of *The River of Calm – Music to Soothe Your Soul* online radio station, has been appointed the Worldwide Brand Ambassador for Kayserburg pianos. Originally from Huntington, West Virginia, Bazel was inspired to pursue music at seven after being captivated by The Beatles' first appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show. He later studied under esteemed pianists such as Jay Flippin, Lou Levy, Joe Harnell, and Clare Fischert.

For over twenty years, Bazel performed as a solo pianist at exotic locations and societal events worldwide. Bazel's four critically well-received albums include the recent *The London Sessions: Reflections From Studio 2*, which was recorded at the iconic Abbey Road studio made famous by his childhood heroes and was accepted for consideration in the 67th GRAMMY® Awards. This October, Ed will record a new album on the Kayserburg KA275 at the famed Skywalker Sound in Marin County, CA.

He is also a veteran producer of corporate events for Fortune 500 companies, working with an extensive list of concert artists, comedians, and speakers in over 25 countries. The Los Angeles Times named him *The Marco Polo of Modern Music* for his groundbreaking work in China.

Recently, Bazel was honoured at the Hollywood Independent Music Awards (HIMA), where his song *Soaring* won Best Instrumental Song, and at the InterContinental Music Awards (ICMA), where it won Best Contemporary Instrumental.

His online music channel reaches listeners worldwide, promoting hundreds of independent pianists, vocalists, guitarists, and others who play soulful music.

"We're thrilled to have Ed Bazel carry forward the Kayserburg story as our Worldwide Brand Ambassador," said Pearl River's Global Director of Sales & Marketing, Leng Tshua. "Not only is he an accomplished pianist and composer, but his community outreach – whether it's providing headphones with healing music to people undergoing chemotherapy or composing music to help the autistic find their singing voice – meshes perfectly with the Kayserburg brand."

The Kayserburg line reflects Pearl River's goal to create the world's finest pianos. Entirely handmade from 8,000 perfectly matched components by skilled artisans closely supervised and trained by Swiss master piano technician Stephen Mohler, Kayserburg represents the ultimate expression of German craftsmanship.



Ilya Shmukler is announced as first prize winner. On the right: Prof. Tobias Richter and Rico Gulda.

## 16th Concours Géza Anda, 30 May – 8 June 2024

The first edition of the Concours Géza Anda was held in 1979 with the famous conductor Georg Solti as chair of the jury. Claudio Arrau was also invited to serve on the jury but could not come. Winner of this first edition was French pianist Georges Pludermacher. The competition has been held very steadily every three years, without interruption. Looking back on the history of this competition, we immediately see the impressive composition of the jury: after Georg Solti, other illustrious conductors and great pianists chaired the jury, such as Antal Dorati, Neville Marriner, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Jesús López Cobos, Christian Zacharias, and Gerhard Oppitz, while other famous musicians served as jury members: Nikita Magaloff, Maria João

Pires, Homero Francesch, András Schiff, Rudolf Buchbinder, Bella Davidovich... The list would be too long to mention them all.

It is not only the stellar composition of the jury that makes the Concours Géza Anda so special. The principal idea of this competition is to pay homage to the legacy of Géza Anda. This is reflected in the repertoire requirements. It contains the works with which Géza Anda himself had great affinity.

Mrs. Hortense Anda-Bührle, with whom Géza Anda was married until his untimely death in 1976, created the Géza Anda Foundation, through which the competition could be organised. Mrs. Anda-Bührle was always fully committed to managing a high-level and

The Géza Anda International Piano Competition in Zurich (Switzerland) deserves to be as well-known as the Cliburn, Queen Elisabeth, or Chopin Competition, as it is a magnificent event of the highest level and standing, and has been so from the beginning.

respectable musical event. Naturally, she knew very well in which style and spirit Géza Anda performed. It happened once that Mrs. Anda-Bührle did not entirely agree with the decisions of the jury after the first round and that she openly said so to the audience before the results were announced. It shows her great passion and support for the young talented musicians. This support is also seen in the list of prizes and awards. The first prize has always been high: this year it was raised to CHF 40,000 (more than 40,000 Euro). At the 6th competition (1994), precisely 30 years ago, the first prize was already CHF 30,000, hardly matched by other competitions at that time. Another interesting fact: usually, the next prize winners receive much less, but the Concours Géza Anda is very considerate and does not have a large gap between the awards for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize winner. During the early editions of the competition, all three prize winners even received an equal amount of prize money! Apart from the monetary awards, there is something else that the Géza Anda Foundation does for its laureates: all three prize winners receive professional concert management for three years. Around 90 engagements per year are arranged! This is vital and extremely valuable for the young musicians who have demonstrated to be ready for an international career. They need professional management to obtain concerts in important concert venues and festivals all over the world.

## 2024

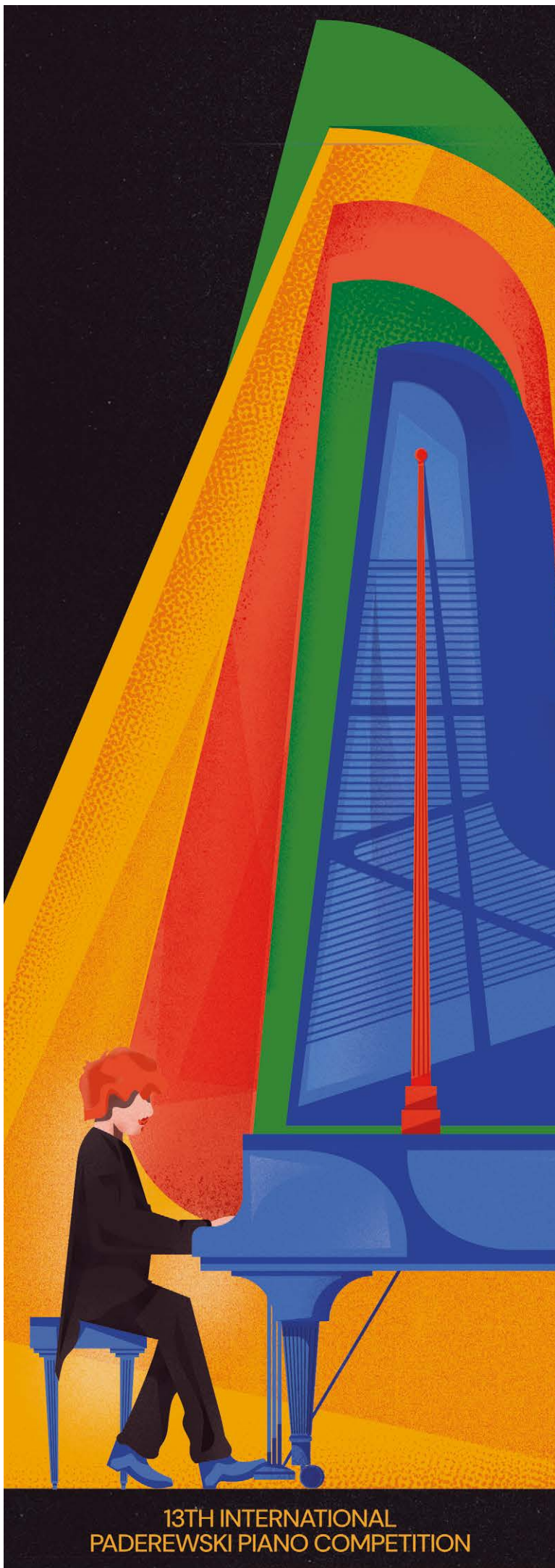
How did this year's 16th edition of the Concours Géza Anda go? The repertoire requirements were again very demanding. First of all, a 30-minute video recording had to be submitted as part of the application. That is not unusual. Nowadays, almost all international music competitions ask for this. But then, the live competition in Zurich consists of four rounds and for each round many more pieces have to be prepared than will be played: for the first round, the contestants must submit a work by Bach or Scarlatti plus three Beethoven sonatas and three etudes. Ninety minutes before going on stage, the candidate are informed which works the jury want to hear. For the second round, three recital programmes of 50 to 55 minutes have to be prepared. The semifinals and finals consist of a concerto with orchestra, for which in total four concertos have to be submitted.

In spite of these high musical demands, more than 160 pianists applied. Forty-two were selected to compete in Zurich. On top of all the elements that make the Concours Géza Anda so special, the fact that Martha Argerich would also be on the jury made this competition even more attractive. Franz Xaver Ohnesorg, organiser of the famous Klavier-Festival Ruhr for more than 27 years, had been invited as chair of the jury, but he suddenly passed away (just before the last of three charity concerts, at which he would have handed over the leadership of the Klavier-Festival Ruhr). Rico Gulda then stepped in as chair of the jury in Zurich. Thirty-six pianists showed up to participate in the competition. The solo rounds took place at the MKZ (Musikschule Konservatorium Zurich). It must have been a bit disappointing, also for the audience, that Martha Argerich was not in the hall for the first round. She had just returned to Europe from Japan, and it was decided that she would come to Zurich to be at the competition from the second round onwards. Nevertheless, she listened to all the first-round performances online and gave her judgement. The

The three finalists (from left to right):

Dmitry Yudin, Ilya Shmukler and Daumants Liepiņš





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Galaxie Y.



Ilya Shmukler during his rehearsal for the final stage.

same arrangement was made with Ricardo Castro. Everybody was very pleased and happy that Martha had come and was fully committed, even though her 83rd birthday was during the competition! The level of the contestants was extremely high. Many of them had already been prize winner of other important competitions, such as Kate Liu (Chopin Competition, Warsaw), Ilya Shmukler (finalist in the Cliburn Competition), Daumants Liepiņš (Enescu Competition and winner of the Maria Canals and also the Vendome Prize Competition) Luca Buratto (winner of the Honens Competition), Wataru Hisasue (ARD Competition), Jinhyung Park (winner in Prague, Jaén and Vilnius), Aristo Sham (winner World Music Masters in Monte Carlo and prizes at the Vendome and Gina Bachauer Competition, Dublin, Terni and many more), Arseny Tarasevich-Nikolaev (2nd prize in Cleveland and Sydney), Kaito Kobayashi (2nd in Leeds), Valentin Malinin (2nd in Tchaikovsky Competition), Hyuk Lee (winner of the Paderewski and Marguerite Long Competitions, 3rd in Hamamatsu) and so on. During those 10 competition days in May/June, Zurich became the centre of the Piano World, where outstanding performances of all these 36 young pianists could be heard.

A vast range of great piano works by Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, Ravel, Bartók, but also less well-known works by Tomas Adès and Friedrich Gulda were played. In the solo rounds, Ilya Shmukler came on stage right after Kate Liu. In the 2nd round, it happened that both played Liszt's *Funérailles*. Both times it was a stunning performance. Remarkable was the performance by the youngest participant Laura Mota Pello (21) from Spain. She is a great talent, and her Liszt Sonata was very impressive. Naturally, in such a high calibre field of contestants, it is unavoidable that there is disappointment when some of them do not pass to the next round in spite of their excellent performances. It was extremely difficult to judge and make decisions, as Martha Argerich stated afterwards.

The semifinals were held in Winterthur. This became another feast: Mozart concertos by the six semi-finalists together with the Musik-

kollegium Winterthur, which was conducted by Mikhail Pletnev! The three finalists played Beethoven #4, Bartók #2 and Grieg at the Tonhalle, with the Tonhalle Orchestra conducted by Paavo Järvi. They also performed a compulsory solo work by Toshio Hosokawa, who was present as jury member.

Ilya Shmukler won this competition, while Dmitry Yudin and Daumants Liepiņš shared the 2nd prize. It was interesting that there was also a junior jury this time consisting of seven young pianists from music universities all over Switzerland and a representative from Tel Aviv. Their award as well as the audience prize went also to Ilya Shmukler. Thirteen additional special prizes were given.

**GUSTAV ALINK**

**All performances can still be heard on:**

[www.youtube.com/ConcoursGezaAndaZurich](https://www.youtube.com/ConcoursGezaAndaZurich) | [www.geza-anda.ch](http://www.geza-anda.ch)

At the start of the Mozart Concertos, Martha Argerich receives flowers from Prof. Tobias Richter for her birthday and she happily greets Mikhail Pletnev.





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## Young Pianists in Kronberg

From 21–23 March 2025 the 2nd International Piano Competition for Young Pianists Kronberg invites young pianists aged between 6 and 19 from all over the world to the renowned Casals Forum in Kronberg (Germany) offering long-term commitment and support for young talent, providing them with a unique and motivating experience.

The first edition of the Piano Competition, organized by the non-profit association International Piano Competition Taunus e. V., was hugely successful. Over 290 young pianists from 33 countries applied to participate in the digital preliminary round and 62 participants were admitted to the competition in Kronberg in 2023. The first prize and special prize winners wowed the audience at the laureate concert, which was broadcasted worldwide via live stream. The innovative concept of the competition is characterized by prizes in seven age groups with a total value of over €30,000, numerous and valuable special prizes with a funding focus (master classes,

concert performances, professional audio and video recordings, scholarships and much more), a top-class jury, optimal conditions, a high standard in every respect and a very personal and warm atmosphere. A free supporting programme offers the young talents plenty of opportunity for exchange and fellowship. The aim is to turn the competition into a celebration of the music and talents for everyone involved, focusing on the development of young talent.

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

## 12th International Piano Competition of Fribourg

The Association Jeune Musique (AJM), which has been organising the Fribourg International Piano Competition (Switzerland) since 2001, aims to promote music of the 20th and 21st centuries and to bring people together who wish to contribute to the further interpretation of the music of the 20th and 21st century.

The Association encourages the performance of this music, especially by young musicians and supports the creation, promotion, and study of works by contemporary Swiss composers. This biennial competition, held at the Music Conservatory of Fribourg from March 7 to 9, 2025, is open to young pianists up to the age of 21, and features a programme devoted exclusively to music of the 20th and 21st centuries. The Association Jeune Musique selects the compulsory pieces for the competition from works by Swiss composers of the same period. The program to be performed is divided into five levels of difficulty and age. Exceptionally, for this 12th competition, there

will be no four-hand piano category. The opening concert will feature the first prize winners of the Shanghai 2024 and Fribourg 2022 competitions.

After having established a partnership for a number of years with the Brin d'Herbe competition in Orléans (France), in 2019 AJM developed a project to set up a competition similar to that of Fribourg in Shanghai (China).

On the YouTube channel of the AJM you can find videos of the opening concert of the 11th International Piano Competition Jeune Musique Fribourg, 2022.

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