

THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS

2026
EDITION



THE WORLD FEDERATION
OF INTERNATIONAL
MUSIC COMPETITIONS

Olga Kern
A Life in Music

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W E L C O M E

Dear readers,

The world of piano competitions is changing at a rapid pace – as, frankly, is almost everything around us. For some time now there has been an unmistakable and irreversible shift away from the purely competitive element, which in practice too often amounted to a gruelling elimination race, one in which, after every round, a handful of candidates found themselves packing their bags. Béla Bartók, who famously insisted that competitions are for horses and have no place in music or art, can rest easy. He was, of course, right all along: in the absence of any objectively measurable criteria, the very idea of crowning “the best” misses the point entirely.

No, competitions are fortunately transforming into something closer to a festival where young pianists can present themselves – at their best with a thoughtful, original programme, a mirror of their artistic identity. This shift dovetails neatly with the realities of a touring pianist’s life, as competitions now cast a wider net, seeking not a specialist but an all-round musician: one equally at home in recital, in concerto, and at a chamber music festival, where new collaborations so often coax artistry into unexpected shapes.

The perennial, unavoidable question – is there life after the competition? – is one competitions themselves are increasingly answering, offering support in management, media training, and other practicalities too often left by the wayside in conservatory education.

The reach of a competition has, in recent years, been amplified further still by the considerable power of livestreaming – though it bears remembering that the experience through YouTube or social media, if only for reasons of sound quality, is an entirely different experience from an evening in the concert hall. There, the live encounter draws pianist and listener into the creative moment, the same time and space – and it is this, still, that accounts for so much of music’s magic.

In this packed issue, we explore these very themes in a conversation with Sir Stephen Hough about the changes underway at the Leeds, and we spoke with Ralf Gothoni about the competition in Shanghai that he brought into being. We were also present at the congress of the Alink Argerich Foundation, where representatives of competitions from around the world gathered to share their experiences – particularly on the sweeping changes reshaping the competition landscape. It proved a genuinely fascinating and rewarding encounter.

We also pause to mark the hundred-year history of the International Frederic Chopin Piano Competition. But we open this issue with the extraordinary life story of Olga Kern, a pianist who seems almost to have been born for a life in music.

We wish you happy reading!

ERIC SCHOONES

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

PIANIST MAGAZINES



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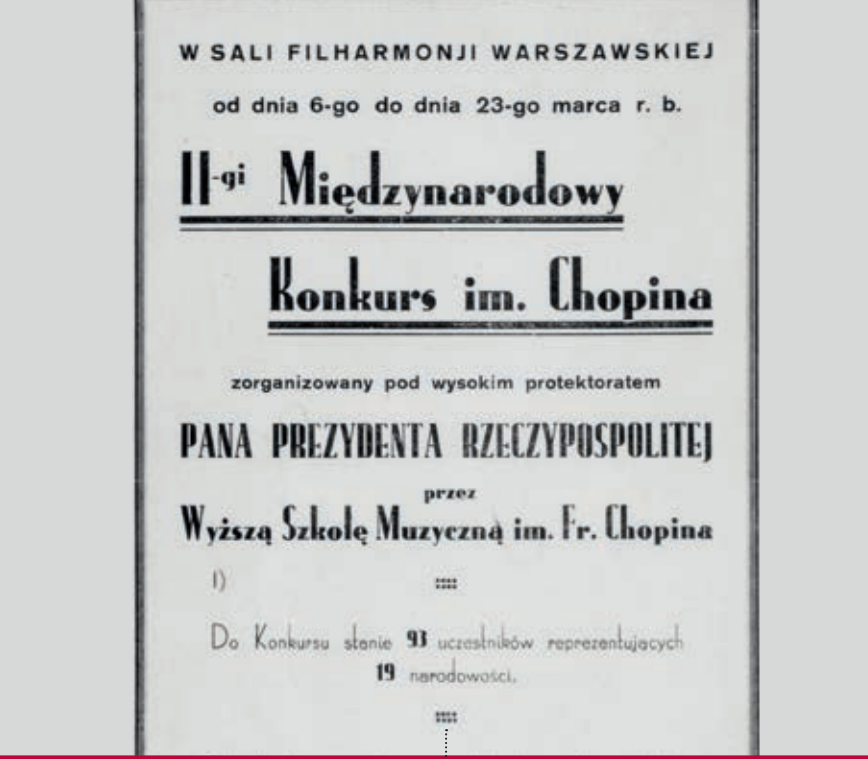
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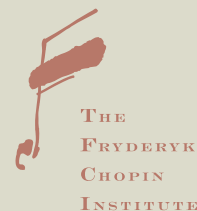
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An independent and objective Information and Service Centre for Musicians and Competitions, founded by Gustav Alink together with Martha Argerich. AAF supports musicians and competition organisers and gives them assistance and advice. AAF focuses specifically 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.

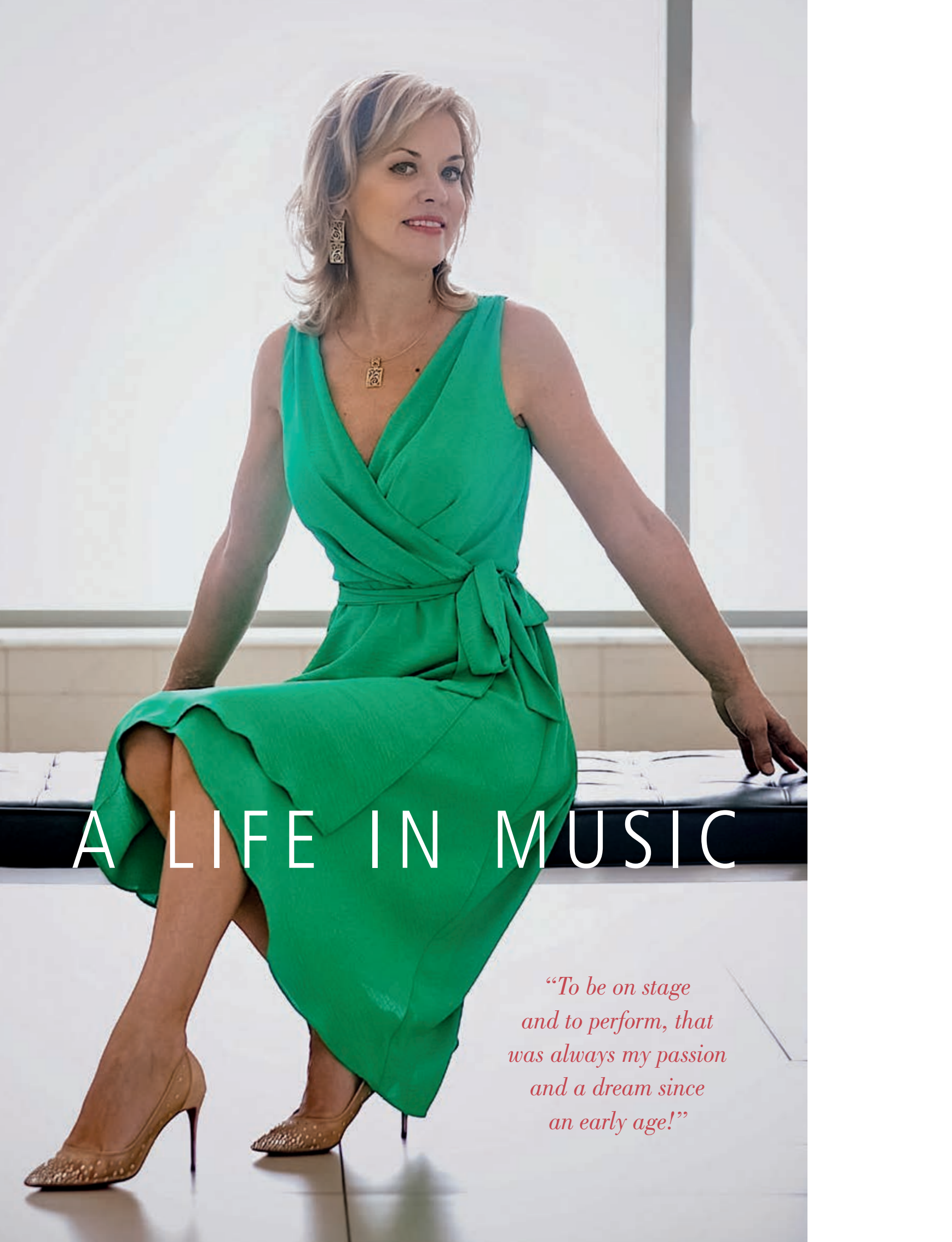
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Piano Street provides material and services related to classical piano music and aims to facilitate and inspire communication between piano playing people from all over the world. The content of the website mainly consists of downloadable sheet music 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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A LIFE IN MUSIC

*“To be on stage
and to perform, that
was always my passion
and a dream since
an early age!”*

Olga Kern

Olga Kern has a remarkable wealth of stories to tell. Her family lineage reaches directly back to Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky, and the music passed down through generations seems almost to have become part of her inheritance. Twenty-five years ago, she won the gold medal at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition and, in the process, formed a profound friendship with one of the greatest musicians of our time, whose name the competition bears. To follow Kern's story is to encounter not only an exceptional pianist, but an extraordinary musical legacy.

You played Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto at the Van Cliburn Competition. How has your interpretation evolved over the years?

I was 15 when I played it for the first time, and at that time I was concentrated on all romantic aspects of it – there are so many beautiful details in this concerto and I love them all very much. But now it's a different understanding of the piece for me. I find the dramatic, tragic side of the piece to be very important, for me now the music should be moving towards the culminating point, the "golden point", as Rachmaninoff always mentioned and wanted when he performed himself. Also, playing all four concertos, plus the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, (I often do it over two evenings, sometimes even all of them in one day), has always been for me an incredible experience and development of a different interpretation of this music over the years. My brother is a composer and conductor, and I am so happy that many years ago, for the first time I could do specifically with him and different orchestras which he was guest conducting, all Rachmaninoff, all Beethoven, all Tchaikovsky concertos. When you perform all concertos in the short period of time, you discover that the composer's language, in this case, Rachmaninoff's own language is there from the very beginning, even in his earliest compositions. Perhaps it is more innocent, but it is already very clear and simple. The second movement of the First Concerto, opus 1, is among the most incredibly beautiful music he wrote. His own recordings have inspired me enormously, especially the First and Fourth Concertos and the *Rhapsody*.

Stravinsky said that Rachmaninoff was the only pianist whose playing was free from grimaces. Very much like Horowitz and Van Cliburn.

Exactly. With them, everything comes from inside; nothing is external. It's that old school of expressing yourself through the hands, and not through anything else.

Let's talk about your family. Your great-grandmother was a mezzo-soprano in Kharkiv, and she was accompanied by Rachmaninoff himself.

Yes. She (Vera Fedorovna Pushechnikova) worked at the Kharkiv Opera Theater. She was friends with Rachmaninoff, and they often performed together in many different places. When I played one of the concerts in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, shortly after the Van Cliburn Competition, someone showed me the archives. Rachmaninoff and my great-grandmother had performed there as well. It was a very special feeling for me to play in that same venue. Rachmaninoff, with his genius, touched my family. His songs are incredible, and I was fortunate to work on them with amazing singers, such as Renée Fleming and Kathleen Battle.

And your great-great-grandmother, one generation earlier, was a pianist and a teacher in Kharkiv, and was friends with Tchaikovsky.

My grandfather (another musician, professor of oboe) was a big enthusiast of keeping our family tree. He was always searching for documents and information. There is a very unique photograph of Tchaikovsky with his signature, dedicated to my great-great-grandmother, Pelagea Safronovna Pushechnikova, as well as

*“Rachmaninoff,
with his genius, touched
my family.”*



several letters that are now in the Tchaikovsky Museum.

I can say that I grew up in the orchestra pit of the Bolshoi Theatre, surrounded by Tchaikovsky's ballet and opera music. My father worked there for 45 years and was taking me with him so I could experience the theatre from the inside. It was fascinating!

And my mother was playing Rachmaninoff's Third Concerto when she was pregnant with me. You can say that the music of Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky is in my blood and perhaps this is why the Third Concerto didn't seem too difficult for me when I was learning it.

The same thing happened when I was pregnant with my son, Vladislav. I played a lot of Schubert and Brahms, and they are now his favourite composers. He recently played Brahms' Third Sonata, and it felt easy for him. Unbelievable, don't you think?

You said that your mother was your best teacher because she never gave you a compliment.

Never! Even now, if sometimes I need advice, she is never easy on me. I am sure she is very proud, but she is just old school. Van Cliburn's mother was also very strict with him. The same was true of Rachmaninoff's mother. As a youngster, Rachmaninoff didn't want to practise at all. He had a very tough time with his teacher Zverev, whose students all lived with him, but being there, in that atmosphere of nonstop work, helped him. If you don't have discipline, even the greatest talent will not achieve what it should.

Rachmaninoff later in life worked like no one else, and he was famous for his slow practising.

Oh yes, as we know from Rachmaninoff's letters to his friends, he liked to practise really very slow, but not necessarily for a long time. He always said that sometimes one hour of correct practice is much more helpful than five hours of simply moving the fingers. You really need to know what you are doing.

This is so important. With his talent, he could play anything instantly, and yet he still made this great effort to work so hard. That is an example to everyone.

Completely. Yes, yes, all the time. I was talking to legendary Maestro Leonard Slatkin recently. He conducts and performs a lot. I asked him, "Where do you get your incredible energy?" And he told me: "Just remember one thing: if we tell ourselves that we are great, we need to stop." So we need to work all the time. I love working. I'm a workaholic, and it helps me. Actually, it's such a joy to see the faces of my fans and friends in the audience around the world when they really appreciate it.

You know, when Van Cliburn received that great reception in New York, with a ticker-tape parade after winning the Tchaikovsky Competition – a rare honour for a musician – he said: "I didn't conquer anything. It was a great moment for music."

He was such a humble person. He was the most incredible human being, with a huge golden heart. Amazing. I will always treasure the absolutely unforgettable time I spent with him. He had a lot of

*“If you don’t
have discipline,
even the greatest talent
will not achieve what
it should.”*

Steinways in his house, one better than another. One of the pianos in the living room was a Horowitz piano, and he asked me to try it. It was out of tune. He told me that he wanted to keep it exactly as it was when Horowitz played it. He never wanted to tune it. And when Gilels played Islamey at Carnegie Hall, Van told me, “He played it so incredibly, I will never touch or play this piece, it just can’t be better than this.” When he talked about music, he was full of love, music was everything for him. Now, when I go to Fort Worth, he’s not there anymore, he passed away in 2013, and it feels different for me. He was a very special person and an incredible musician. I miss him very much!

Let’s go back to your Van Cliburn Competition. You had a great rapport with James Conlon, the conductor.

Oh yes, he was incredibly supportive. For me, working with such a famous conductor at that time was an honour and also such a joy. He made everything so easy for me. But he was like that with all the competitors. He treated everyone the same way. In the finals, he conducted the Rachmaninoff Third Concerto four times, with four different contestants and each performance was very different. We talked about my interpretation, and he wanted me to play it as I wanted. He was so accommodating. We worked together after the competition a couple of times in different places, including the Ravinia Festival, and I hope soon we will work again!

At the time of the competition, James Conlon said: “Olga is all fire and she has an absolute conception of how she thinks the piece must go. This is a tradition of powerful playing and she likes a big sound.” Perhaps that is still a good description of your playing today?

I constantly stress the importance of a big but warm sound, and I tell my students at Manhattan School of Music – I love working there – that this is very important in order to create greater contrast in dynamics. But a big sound should never be harsh. You need to sing. You need to make it warm.

Also for me a very important aspect of being a concert pianist is to play chamber music. I am director of the Virginia Arts Festival chamber music series and I am very lucky that I can perform a wide variety of chamber music with amazing musicians from all over the world.





JOY



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You attended the famous historic Horowitz concert at the Tchaikovsky Great Hall in 1986.

Oh yes! My grandfather had only one ticket and he gave it to me. You can even see me on the DVD – a little girl with the blonde curly hair, in one of the orchestra seats. And I will never forget his sound. It was like the wind was blowing over me. And, for example, what he was doing at the culminating point in Scriabin's Etude was amazing. All these colours! The possibilities were endless. I also, when I was a young girl, admired Michelangeli and Richter very much. Once I heard Richter by chance when he came to the Gnesin School (where my brother studied) and played quite unannounced in a small concert hall of the school. I will never forget the Brahms *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, the two books. I was so inspired. I was very lucky.

What are your thoughts on competitions in general?

You need to see a competition as a way to open doors for your future career. In my opinion it is a good thing nowadays. I have my own competition – the Olga Kern International Piano Competition,

which happens every three years in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In 2028 it will be our fifth edition, and the competition is already a member of The World Federation of the International Competitions. The competition team is very proud of this achievement. They all work hard and the most important thing for the competition and its team is to help young pianists with the development of their career. So far we have had a very high level of pianists and wonderful winners, they are all establishing their careers very successfully! Of course participating in the competitions is not an easy task. But I always tell my students to work and to be ready 100% when they go to a competition and not to think about the jury and play as they would play their own concert or recital. I participated in the competitions not thinking about the jury. I wanted to perform and share with different audiences the pieces and the music I love so much. And I knew, going to a big competition as Cliburn, if I win, I will get management, concerts and recordings. That was an important thing for me, as I really wanted to continue in this wonderful profession – to be on stage and to perform, that was always my passion and a dream since an early age!

*“Horowitz’ sound
was like the wind was
blowing over me.”*

Stephen Hough is redesigning the Leeds Competition.

Yes, I heard about that, and he is doing a great job. There is a lot going on with competitions and how they are organised. Recently, I was president of the jury at the Cleveland Competition for Young Artists, and they had a very innovative round with a masterclass by Jean-Yves Thibaudet. After working with him, the candidates had to play their pieces again, and it was completely different. They played so much better. It was fascinating to see.

You have a busy schedule ahead of you.

Yes! I will be recording Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto in Milan with the Orchestra da Camera Canova and conductor Enrico Pagano. I also have a recording coming up with wonderful cellist Thomas Mesa, which will include incredible sonatas by Barber and Debussy. There will also be a solo album on the Steinway label. In the past, I was one of the first to record for Spirio Steinway piano. And I want to continue, as it is a completely fascinating technology! Also for the future I want to record Schumann, *Carnaval*, *Kinder-szenen* and his other pieces, as well as the complete Rachmaninoff concertos. So, yes, there is enough to do! I'm really looking forward!

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AGENDA

WFIMC Piano Competitions

2027

7 – 18 March

Barcelona | **SPAIN**

Maria Canals International Music Competition

12 – 21 March

Épinal | **FRANCE**

Concours International de Piano d'Épinal

26 May – 5 June

Zürich | **SWITZERLAND**

Concours Géza Anda

2 – 12 June

Valencia | **SPAIN**

Iturbi International Piano Competition

6 – 13 June

Yerevan | **ARMENIA**

Khachaturian International Piano Competition

10 – 19 June

Dallas | **UNITED STATES**

Cliburn International Competition for Young Pianists

10 – 24 July

Sydney | **AUSTRALIA**

Sydney International Piano Competition

25 July – 8 August

Cleveland | **UNITED STATES**

Cleveland International Piano Competition

25 August – 5 September

Bolzano | **ITALY**

Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition

8 – 18 September

Leeds | **UNITED KINGDOM**

Leeds International Piano Competition

11 – 18 September

Bratislava | **SLOVAKIA**

International Johann Nepomuk Hummel Piano Competition

21 – 25 September

Trondheim | **NORWAY**

Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition and Academy

25 September – 3 October

Dortmund | **GERMANY**

International Schubert Competition Dortmund

25 September – 3 October

Seregno | **ITALY**

International Piano Competition Ettore Pozzoli

15 – 28 October

Helsinki | **FINLAND**

Helsinki International Maj Lind Piano Competition

26 October – 6 November

Xiamen | **CHINA**

Xiamen International Piano Competition

12 – 29 November

Hamamatsu | **JAPAN**

Hamamatsu International Piano Competition

29 November – 4 December

Manchester | **UNITED KINGDOM**

James Mottram International Piano Competition

2 – 11 December

Bonn | **GERMANY**

International Telekom Beethoven Competition

Exact dates unknown at time of going to press for this edition:

September

Vilnius | **LITHUANIA**

International M. K. Čiurlionis Piano Competition

Lleida | **SPAIN**

Ricard Viñes International Piano Competition



4th AAF Conference in Porto

The 4th AAF Conference took place this year in Porto, Portugal, on 25–26 June. Organised by the Alink-Argerich Foundation every two years in a different city, the conference is held in collaboration with a major international piano competition.

The Santa Cecilia International Piano Competition is held in Porto every year, at Casa da Música. This year's AAF Conference took place during the two days preceding the competition's final round, co-hosted by the competition and Casa da Música.

The Alink-Argerich Foundation focuses on international piano competitions worldwide, with the main objective of providing musicians and competition organisers with clear, independent and objective information and assistance. Typical for the AAF Conference is its close attention to the participants themselves — their hopes, motivations and goals, as well as their struggles and needs. Previous AAF Conferences were held in Barcelona (Spain), Utrecht (Netherlands) and Cleveland (Ohio, USA). Porto proved an excellent choice for this fourth edition, drawing more than 125 attendees from 33 countries — competition organisers, but also former winners now appearing as concert pianists, professors and jury members. Aleksander Laskowski, official spokesman of the Fryderyk Chopin Institute in Warsaw, once again moderated the conference with great skill.

Across eight sessions, a wide range of topics was discussed. Rob Hilberink, director of the Liszt Utrecht Competition, and Yaron

Moderator Aleksander Laskowski with the panel members for the first session on the role of competitions in a changing world: Rob Hilberink (Liszt, Utrecht), Magdalena Hirsz (Jeune Chopin, Lausanne), Yaron Kohlberg (Cleveland Competition) and Alvaro Teixeira Lopes (Santa Cecilia Competition, Porto)



Moderator Aleksander Laskowski with the panel members for the second session on repertoire: Vovka Ashkenazy (Pianist/Jury member), Edward Cohen (Scottish Competition, Glasgow), Wojciech Kocyan (American Paderewski Competition, Los Angeles), Cristina Uruc (Enescu Competition, Bucharest) and Markus Wyler (Concours Géza Anda, Zürich)



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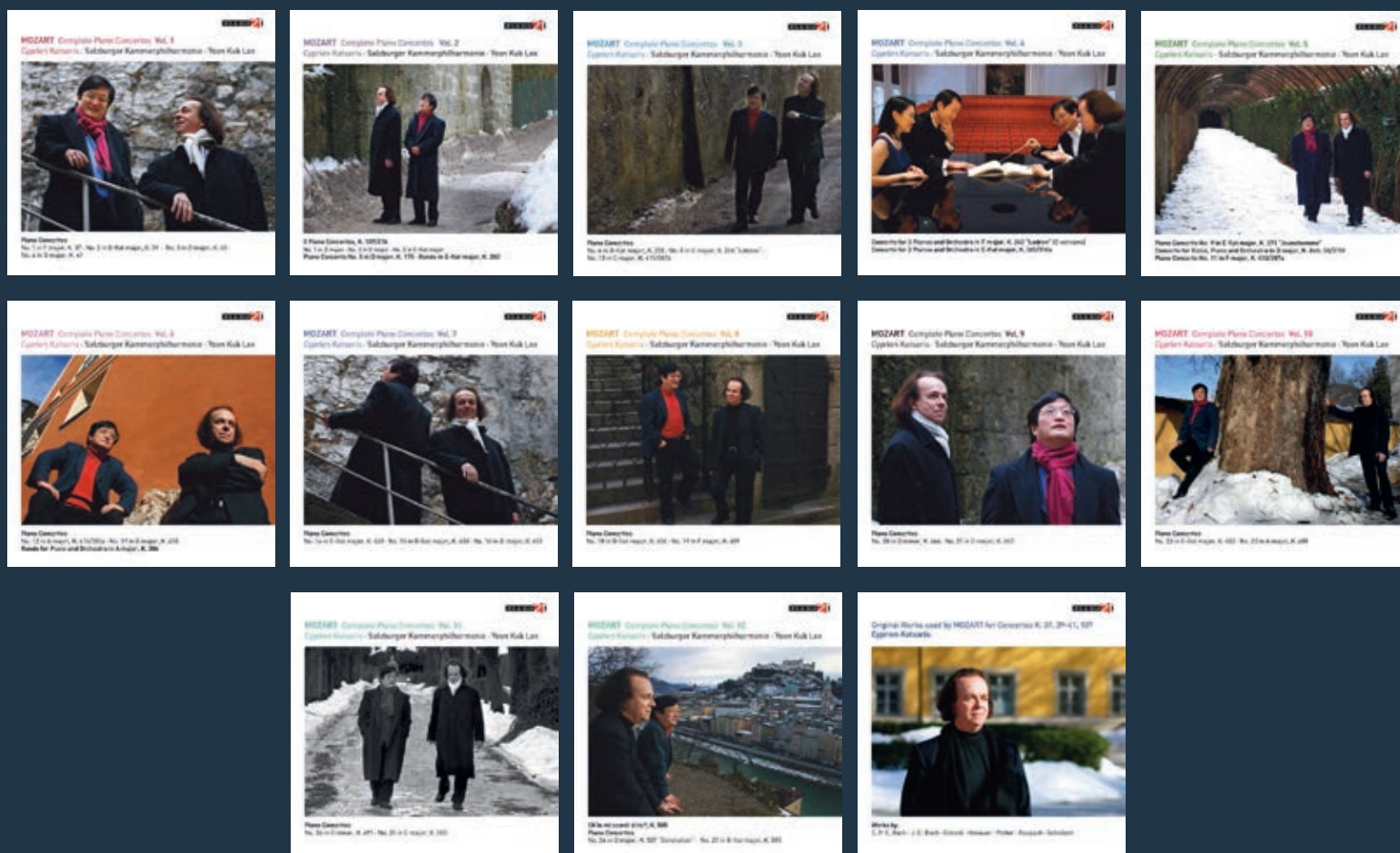
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„Ein gustiöses Konzert wie wenige ...“ *Salzburger Nachrichten*



Kohlberg of Piano Cleveland spoke about the valuable role competitions can play today in helping young musicians present themselves and think through their choice of repertoire — and how competitions can also help bring classical music to new audiences.

At the Jeune Chopin Competition in Switzerland, open to pianists up to 18 years of age, sharing the stage with such great musicians as Martha Argerich — who serves not only as a jury member but also performs during the competition — is an unforgettable experience for the young participants. It was noted that the jury members themselves can indeed be true ambassadors for competitions, not only by talking about the events afterward, but by inviting prize winners — or other participants whose performances left a lasting impression — to future engagements.

Markus Wyler of the Concours Géza Anda spoke about the competition's demanding repertoire requirements and the adjustments that have been made. Pianist and jury member Vovka Ashkenazy gave his view on the order and timing of performances in a competition, and whether this might affect the pianist himself or the jury's attention and reception.

Another session addressed key aspects of adjudication systems and jury rules. Preselection processes, often based on submitted recordings, raise their own complications — from disqualifying edited takes to fairly evaluating hundreds of video entries. Gustav Alink gave a presentation illustrating clear examples of problems and delicate situations that competitions can and should avoid. Pierre Hellermann, Director of Concerts and Artists at Steinway&Sons, joined one of the panels to talk about the concert opportunities for prize winners.

For the first time, the conference also welcomed younger pianists still actively competing. They followed the sessions closely and asked the panel members thoughtful questions.

The welcoming reception, coffee and tea breaks, and the buffet on the first evening gave attendees ample opportunity to meet and talk — many reconnected with old friends and colleagues, while others made new contacts. While important topics were being discussed, the conference was held in a warm, friendly and relaxed atmosphere that everyone clearly enjoyed.

ERIC SCHOONES

Group photo at the end of the first day of the conference — (unfortunately, not all participants are pictured here).



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Globe International
Piano Competition

GLOBE INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION 2027

- ▶ **Registration:**
open 01 september 2026
until 10 january 2027
- ▶ **Live rounds** march 26-28, 2027
HILVERSUM - THE NETHERLANDS

➔ **GIPC.NL**

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SANDER DE CLIPPELAAR

Globe International Piano Competition 2027 – Fifth Anniversary Edition

From March 26 to 28, 2027, the fifth edition of the Globe International Piano Competition (GIPC) will take place at Heuvellaan Hilversum. Since its launch in 2022, the competition has continued to grow and develop every year. It offers an inspiring international stage for promising young pianists. Artistic quality, stage experience, and the personal development of the young pianists are central to the competition.

To mark this anniversary edition, the program has been expanded with additional special prizes, including concerts abroad, masterclasses, and educational components, allowing participants not only to compete for awards but also to gain valuable knowledge and experience from renowned musicians and expert teachers.

March 26, 1827 marks the anniversary of Beethoven's death. This edition pays tribute to that occasion. There will be a special prize for the participant who, in the jury's judgment, delivers the most beautiful performance of a Beethoven piano work during the semi-final or final.

The competition is open to young piano talents up to and including the age of 21, from the Netherlands and abroad. It offers a unique opportunity to perform in front of an expert international jury and a wide audience.

The competition is led by artistic director Denise Lutgens, who is responsible for the online selection together with Giuliano Adorno and Francesca Vidal.

The jury for the live performances consists of Francesca Vidal, Giuliano Adorno, Dorian Leljak, Markus Schirmer, Davor Matačić, and Bartłomiej Kominek.

Registration is now open. The deadline is January 10, 2027. Pianists who wish to showcase their talent and further develop their skills

are warmly invited to register for this special anniversary edition.

The public is welcome to attend the semi-finals on Saturday, March 27, 2027, with free admission, and tickets for the final on Sunday, March 28, 2027, can be ordered at www.heuvellaan.com.

In addition to the annual competition, GIPC also organizes masterclasses, a summer and winter school, and concerts to support young international talents and provide them with stage experience. During the summer and winter school, participants receive instruction from renowned pianists. The curriculum includes masterclasses on Steinway grand pianos, concerts in various settings, workshops and seminars, ample practice opportunities, and group activities. In this way, GIPC focuses on the artistic development of young pianists.

The Globe International Piano Competition is an initiative of Denise Lutgens, piano teacher and concert pianist with an international career. GIPC is supported by many music lovers, host families who open their homes to young participants, and sponsors such as Heuvellaan Hilversum, Oostendorp Muziek, Evert Snel piano's en vleugels, Norbert Croonenberg, Apollo Hill Music, and the Municipality of Hilversum.

www.gipc.nl (There you can also sign up as a friend/donor of GIPC)

27 Sep – 3 Oct 2027

BRAHMS PIANO COMPETITION DETMOLD

Open for competitors from all countries (age limit: 35 years)

Registration Deadline: 30 Apr 2027

1st Prize Winners



2024
Elisabeth Tsai
(ex aequo)



2024
Martin Jaspard
(ex aequo)



2021
Jonas Aumiller



2019
Fuko Ishii



2017
Adela Liculescu
(ex aequo)



2017
Anna Ulaieva
(ex aequo)

www.brahmscompetition-detmold.de



The international Brahms Piano Competition Detmold, hosted by the Detmold University of Music, will celebrate its tenth anniversary in 2027. At the same time, the competition will be held for the fifth time, having been established on a three-year cycle.



ALL PHOTOS: THORSTEN KRIENKE



Orchestra Final 2024 with the two first-prize winners Elisabeth Tsai (above) and Martin Jaspard (below), as well as the third-prize winner Rei Harada (right).

Brahms Piano Competition Detmold celebrates its 10th Anniversary in 2027

From 27 September to 3 October 2027, Detmold will once again become a centre for Brahms' piano music. Johannes Brahms spent three formative years at the princely court in Detmold beginning in 1857, making the city an especially fitting venue for a competition dedicated to his works.

Over the years, the competition has steadily enhanced its international reputation and has firmly established itself among the world's leading piano competitions. Its appeal to young pianists lies not only in the total prize fund of € 17,500, but above all in its extensive career development opportunities. In addition to a professional CD and video production for the First Prize winner, an expanded number of prize winners' concerts will once again be offered, including engagements at the Böblingen Pianists' Festival, with the North West German Philharmonic Orchestra – which will also accompany the final round – at the Bagno Concert Gallery in Steinfurt, and with many other concert presenters.

The international jury for the 2027 competition consists of Andrea Bonatta, Konrad Elser, Kevin Kenner, Mi-Joo Lee, Mamiko Suda, Dina Yoffe, and the competition's founder and Artistic Director,

Jacob Leuschner, Professor of Piano at the Detmold University of Music.

"A competition is only as strong as its participants, and the Detmold Brahms Competition has been fortunate to discover numerous prize winners who have gone on to build outstanding international careers, including Adela Liculescu, Jonas Aumiller, Martin Jaspard, and Teppei Kuroda," says Leuschner.

Brahms' piano music places exceptional intellectual and emotional demands on performers in addition to technical mastery. Virtuosity alone is not enough; artistic maturity and musical depth are essential. Accordingly, the competition's upper age limit is 35 years. Detmold is already looking forward to another week-long "Brahms Piano Festival," which traditionally attracts not only local audiences but also piano enthusiasts and concert presenters from across Germany and abroad. All rounds of the competition are open to the public and will be livestreamed. The final will take place on 3 October 2027 at 6:00 p.m. in the Konzerthaus Detmold.

Approximately 30 competitors will be selected through a preliminary video screening. The application deadline is 30 April 2027.

28.8.–6.9.2027
PIANO TRIO



SEP 2028
PIANO SOLO
SEP 2029
PIANO DUO

More Information:
ard-musikwettbewerb.de

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ARD International Music Competition

Martin Grubinger, percussionist and jury chairman 2026: "The ARD Music Competition has international reach: if you win, all doors are open to you. As Frank Sinatra put it: If you can make it there, you'll make it anywhere."

The ARD International Music Competition, meanwhile one of the most renowned and large-scale competitions of its kind, 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, Francisco Araiza, Christoph Eschenbach, Mitsuko Uchida, Thomas Quasthoff, Yuri Bashmet, Christian Tetzlaff, Sharon Kam, Heinz Holliger, Maurice André, Trio Wanderer, Antoine Tamestit and the Quatuor Ebène 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. Each year an average of 400 to 600 young musicians apply to take part in the competition. Then, following a preliminary round, some 200 competitors from 35 to 40 countries actually appear. The competition takes place every September in Munich in four

varying categories. The next competition takes place from August 28 to September 17, 2027 for flute, voice, violin, piano trio.

Meret Forster, Artistic Director of the ARD International Music Competition: "For all the Olympic enthusiasm, there is one thing that really matters to us, and that is to give a voice to young musicians. The decisions here are not made by an algorithm or a click count but by a jury of experts who are concentrating exclusively on the artistic interpretation. This has become a rarity and for that very reason is enormously valuable. The media momentum of ARD gives prizewinners a platform that reaches far beyond the concert hall. This is all the more important at a time when the music business is in a state of flux and new talent has more of a struggle than ever to make itself visible. We are a reliable and dependable channel for budding careers."

Future competitions:

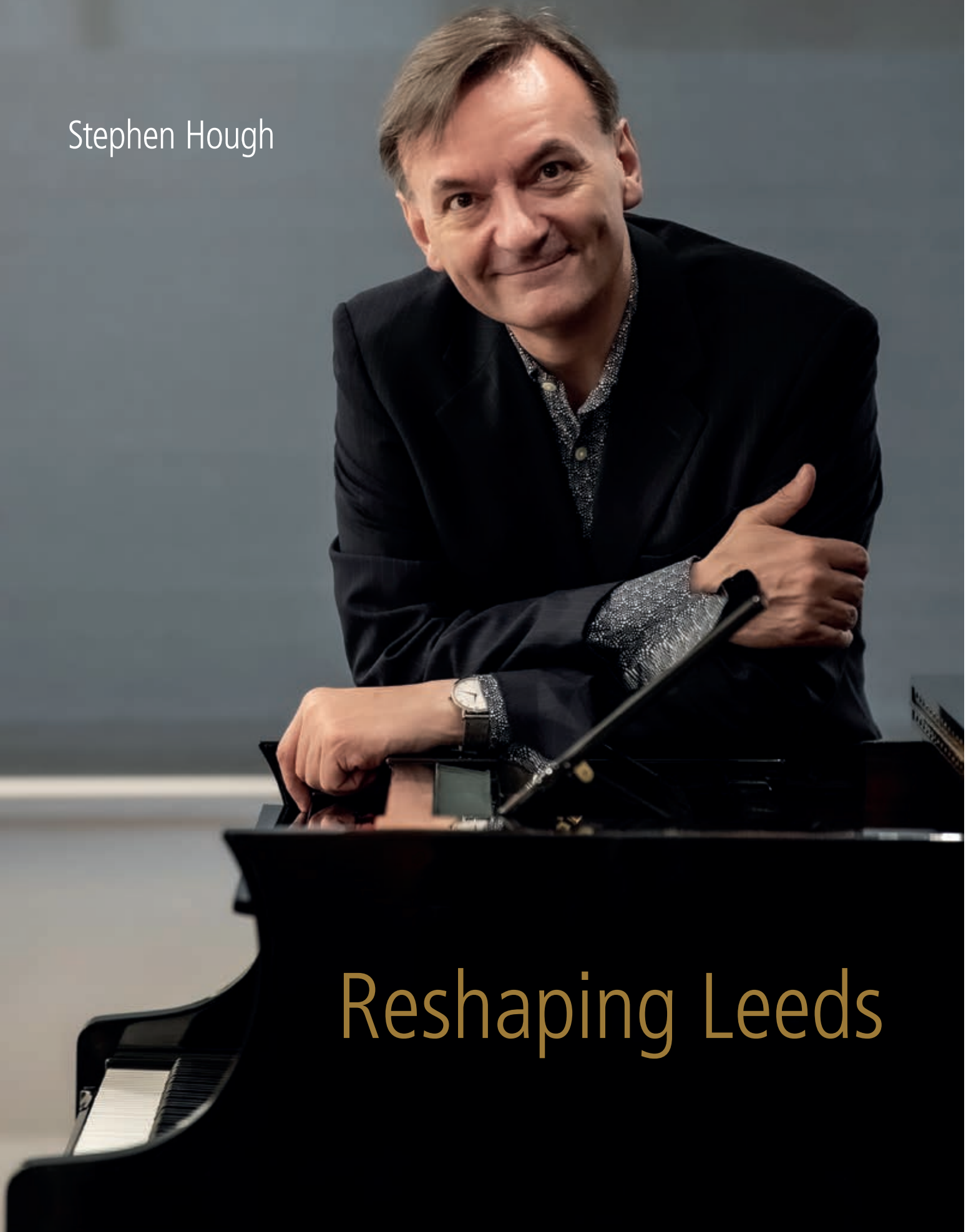
August 28 to September 17, 2027: Violin – Voice – Flute – Piano Trio

September 2028: Viola – Violoncello – Horn – Piano

www.ard-musikwettbewerb.de/en

Stephen Hough

Reshaping Leeds



During a long summer break from the concert stage in Taiwan, we caught up with pianist and composer Stephen Hough to discuss his new role as Artistic Director and Jury Chair of the Leeds International Piano Competition.

You've never been a great supporter of piano competitions and have generally avoided serving on juries. What changed?

Indeed, my experience at the last Van Cliburn Competition changed my perspective. I had composed the compulsory work, which gave me the opportunity to hear around thirty outstanding young pianists perform my music. I was surrounded by wonderful colleagues on the jury and really enjoyed the experience. That said, I wasn't rushing to accept other invitations.

When Leeds approached me, my first instinct was to decline. But after talking with young pianists in masterclasses about their careers, frustrations and hopes, I found myself thinking seriously about what competitions get wrong. I agreed on one condition: that I could make meaningful changes. I don't agree with the way most competitions are run. It comes down to a question of mentality: are we setting traps, or are we inviting gifted young musicians to give a concert? That's what they'll actually be doing in their professional lives, so they should be able to play music they genuinely believe in. I also reject the idea that a great artist must excel equally in every style. History tells us otherwise. Most great musicians have distinctive strengths. I want to discover those strengths, not expose weaknesses.

Many young pianists say they play differently in competitions because they don't dare show too much personality.

Unfortunately that's very true.

So it's actually about re-evaluating the judging criteria?

Exactly. Freedom of repertoire is one part of that. Another was raising the age limit. Thirty always seemed an arbitrary cut-off. I remember a pianist in his late twenties telling me after the Cliburn that he was now too old for competitions and would probably have to abandon a performing career. Not everyone reaches artistic maturity at twenty-three.

I also wanted to send a message to younger pianists: there's no rush. Winning a competition shouldn't be like winning an Olympic gold medal. The important question is what happens the morning after. Do you have enough repertoire? More importantly, do you have something to say?

Leeds embraced those ideas surprisingly readily.

Perhaps they were a little nervous at first because they expected controversy. But the reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. Leeds has always valued musicians with imagination and individuality rather than simply flawless technique. These changes make that philosophy much more explicit.

Earlier generations often had longer to develop.

Exactly. Rubinstein had an early career, then withdrew to rebuild before returning as a mature artist. Richter hardly had an international career until well into his twenties. We're performing works that are two hundred years old. Someone who's ninety can still be the artistic equal of someone who's nineteen. That's one of the beauties of our profession.

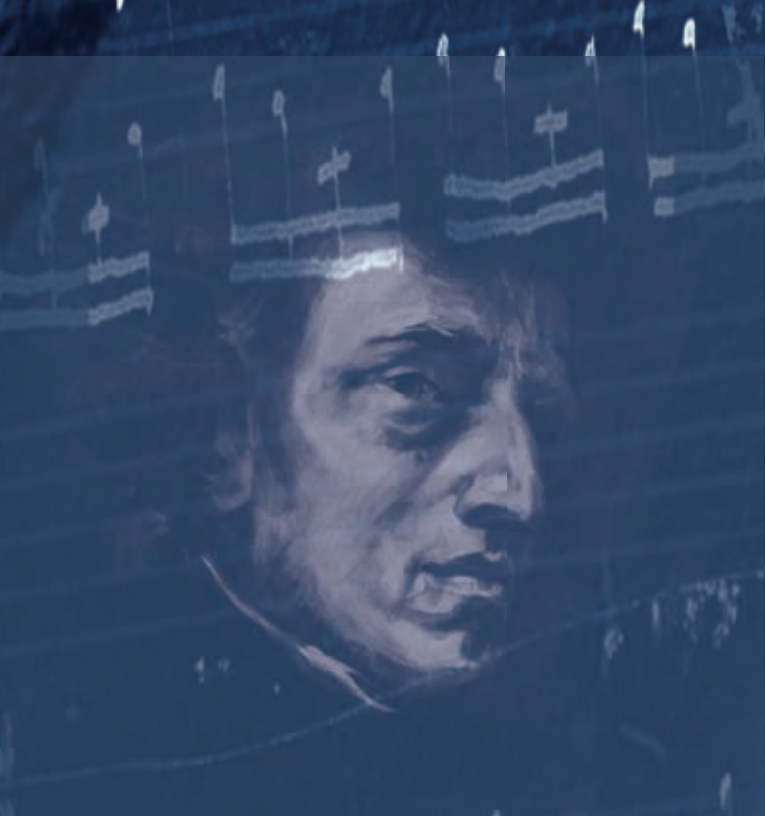
Freedom of repertoire also does away with the kind of set showpieces or technical hurdles other competitions use to test pianists on.

Yes. Some of the greatest pianists – Alfred Brendel and Artur Schnabel, for example – might never have survived the first round of many competitions. Some pianists can walk on stage and play Liszt and Chopin études without breaking a sweat, but what does that really prove?

Competitions increasingly describe themselves as festivals rather than competitions.

I don't want to shy away from the competitive element. But with a different jury on a different day, you may get a different result. There's nothing scientific about it. On the day, we'll decide which pianist has moved or excited us most.

If a final featured Rubinstein, Richter, Gilels and Cortot, everyone would choose someone different. There is no single "best". We're simply deciding which pianist speaks most powerfully to us on a particular day. If audiences disagree, that's perfectly natural. I'd be interested to know why. Many remarkable careers have been launched by pianists who didn't win first prize, including Lucas Debargue in Moscow, Mitsuko Uchida and András Schiff in Leeds. Competitions are only one chapter in a musician's story, and I think audiences should remember that.



XIII Darmstadt International Chopin Piano Competition

9.-15.Oct. 2027

CHOPIN

Competition in 3 rounds

Final round with string quintet

Age limit: Born on or after 1.1.1997

Total prize money: € 30,000

Application period: 15.3. - 15.5.2027



CHOPIN-GESELLSCHAFT
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www.chopin-gesellschaft.de



One of the competition's more unusual innovations is the Encore Prize.

I love encores. They're an important part of recitals and increasingly of concerto performances as well. They reveal something personal about an artist. I thought it would be wonderful to recognise a performance that is charming, unexpected or deeply moving. I'm fascinated to see what the competitors choose. And one prize in the Leeds I particularly love goes to someone who doesn't reach the finals but whom we feel has something really important to say. That's wonderful because we'll inevitably lose remarkable musicians in the early rounds.

Do you think your fellow jurors will share your ideas?

I hope so. I've spoken with Lucas Debargue, who's enthusiastic about the concept, and the other jurors I've talked to have been equally positive. Ultimately we're looking for someone with a genuine artistic voice. Those people are rare.

What about the orchestra?

Every competitor submits three concertos they would be prepared to play in the final. That's very much like professional life. If an orchestra wants to engage you, they may ask exactly that: which three concertos can you offer? We'll choose one of those three, with the conductor involved. If someone is set on playing Rachmaninoff, he can offer the Second, Third and Fourth. If someone proposes the Benjamin Britten Piano Concerto, I would encourage that! Many young pianists can prepare one or two programmes impressively, but can they perform concerts every week? I once asked a student who wanted to enter a competition, "Do you actually want to win? Do you want to play eighty concerts next year?" He thought about it and said, "No."

A concert career is a very particular life. It's demanding, and it requires a very particular set of skills.

After winning the Naumburg Competition, which launched your career, you had your problems.

I was only 21 and completely unprepared. I had to work incredibly hard, practising until two in the morning, and I even spent time in hospital because of the stress. I don't know any successful young pianist who hasn't struggled with mental health issues at some point. It's a very tough life, and you'd better really want it.

ERIC SCHOONES

www.stephenhough.com | www.leedspiano.com





THE 13th
HAMAMATSU
INTERNATIONAL
PIANO
COMPETITION



www.hipic.jp

November 7-29, 2027
Hamamatsu, Japan

The Hamamatsu International Piano Competition

The Hamamatsu International Piano Competition was launched in 1991 to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the founding of Hamamatsu City. Since then, this international cultural event has been held every three years to celebrate the history and tradition of Hamamatsu as a City of Music. The Competition aims to encourage the development of music and culture, promote international cultural exchange, and nurture emerging musicians by giving promising young pianists from around the world a platform to showcase the fruits of their daily study.

The Competition has launched the careers of many pianists now active on the world stage, and numerous past prize-winners have gone on to win awards at other major international piano competitions. As a result, the Hamamatsu International Piano Competition enjoys strong acclaim both in Japan and abroad. Past editions have produced such outstanding pianists as Sergei Babayan, Victor Lyadov, Alessio Bax, Alexander Gavrylyuk, Rafał Blechacz, Alexander Kobrin, Alexej Gorlatch, Seong-Jin Cho, Ilya Rashkovskiy, Alexander Gadjiev, Can Çakmur, and Manami Suzuki. As a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network's City of Music category, Hamamatsu will continue to promote its vision of "Hamamatsu: A City of Music" on the global stage, while contributing to the development of music culture worldwide and to the continued growth of this competition.

The 13th Competition

The upcoming competition will be held in November 2027. Applications will be accepted via an online form from January 8 to February 28, 2027. Following a Preliminary Selection based on video submissions, the competition will proceed as follows:

First Stage: November 13–17, 2027, at ACT CITY Hamamatsu Concert Hall

Second Stage: November 19–21, 2027, including a performance of a new work by Japanese composer Eisuke Tsuchida

Third Stage: November 23–24, 2027, featuring a violin sonata newly added to the repertoire

Final Stage: November 27–28, 2027, at the Main Hall of ACT CITY Hamamatsu, where finalists will perform with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra under conductor Naoto Otomo

All stages will be open to live audiences and streamed online.

The competition proudly presents the jury panel: Momo Kodama (Japan) – Chairperson, Rodolphe Bruneau Boulmier (France), Akiko Ebi (Japan), Till Fellner (Austria), Ralf Gothóni (Finland/Germany), Michael Haeffliger (Switzerland), HaeSun Paik (South Korea), Arabella Pare (Germany/UK), Ewa Pobłocka (Poland), Ayako Uehara (Japan), and Xiaohan Wang (China).

The first prize winner will receive 4 million yen and at least 10 performance opportunities in Japan and abroad.

www.hipic.jp



Manami Suzuki,
winner of the
12th Hamamatsu
International Piano
Competition



The opening ceremony of the second Chopin Competition, 1932

The Chopin Competition Centenary

How did it all begin?

The launch was not without difficulties. Initially, the Chopin Competition was scheduled to begin on October 15, 1926 – coinciding almost exactly with the anniversary of Chopin's death. This date was chosen to align with the unveiling ceremony of the composer's monument in Łazienki Park in Warsaw (the setting for the open-air Chopin recitals held every summer, which draw thousands of Varsovians and tourists). However, as construction work was not completed on time, the 1st Chopin Competition was postponed to the final ten days of January the following year.



Jury members and laureates, of the second Chopin Competition, 1932

It is widely believed that Professor Jerzy Żurawlew (1887–1980) was the creator of the Chopin Competition. As Stanisław Dybowski, an expert on the subject, writes: “That is partly true, but the impetus for establishing the competition came from Aleksander Michałowski (1851–1938), a professor at the Warsaw Conservatory, a magnificent pianist, and an heir to the great Chopin tradition. It was he who pointed out that, since Poland regained its independence in 1918, performers of the works of the genius born in Żelazowa Wola had been increasingly drifting away from the spirit of his music. He sought a way to curb this trend and concluded that a music competition would be a good idea. He began organizing musical gatherings – first at the conservatory and later in his own apartment – to win others over to his idea.”

Jerzy Żurawlew, his talented student and assistant, became a great enthusiast of Michałowski’s idea. Years later, he wrote about his involvement in the initiative:

“After World War I [...] the cult of Chopin seemed to wane. [...] People began to say that Chopin was not modern enough, that he was overly subtle; some even went so far as to argue against including his work in school curricula. Having been raised in the finest traditions of Chopin’s music, I could not accept this. [...] Observing young people [...] I realized that only an event based on noble competition stood a chance of winning young aspiring musicians over to Chopin’s music. Hence, a competition. [...] I tentatively began pushing for the proposal to be considered. I was met with total incomprehension, indifference, and even hostility. The consensus among musicians was that Chopin was so great he could stand on his own merits. At the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment, I was told there were no funds available

[...] and that the idea was altogether unfeasible. I did not give up; I spent hours waiting outside the offices of Ministry officials and endured many humiliations.

The first institution to recognize the significance of the Chopin Competition was the Warsaw Music Society. One of its members [Henryk Rewkiewicz, director of the Match Monopoly] personally guaranteed 15,000 zlotys, making it possible to launch the event. However, I realized that to generate publicity for the competition abroad, I needed the assistance of our diplomatic missions – support I could not secure without the President’s patronage. The President [...] rejected our request for patronage. We were at an impasse. In the meantime, a change of government took place in Poland. I decided to take advantage of this situation [...]. Thanks to the support of influential figures [...], I was granted an audience with President Ignacy Mościcki [a distinguished chemist and enlightened intellectual]. The President took an interest in the competition; he immediately gave his consent, extended his high patronage, and established a First Prize bearing his name. [...] From that moment on, matters proceeded at a rapid pace. [...] The Organizing Committee – comprising the most eminent figures from the music world – was tasked with drafting the Competition’s statutes and musical program, as well as selecting the jury; in short, it handled every aspect regarding the substantive content of the event.”

Żurawlew himself took charge of all the tasks he – out of modesty – did not mention in his account. A man of initiative, convinced of the cause, he saw the organization of the 1st International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition through to fruition.

The Warsaw Music Society became the event’s owner and bore responsibility for its organization. Substantive support was provided

PIANIST

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 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: October 2027

For all inquiries please contact: e.schoones@pianistmagazine.nl

www.pianistmagazine.nl  www.pianist-magazin.de

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

GUIDO ZIMMERMANN

PRESIDENT STEINWAY & SONS EUROPE





Jury members and participants of the first Chopin Competition, 1927

Entry ticket for the auditions, 1932



Poster announcing the Chopin Competition, 1927



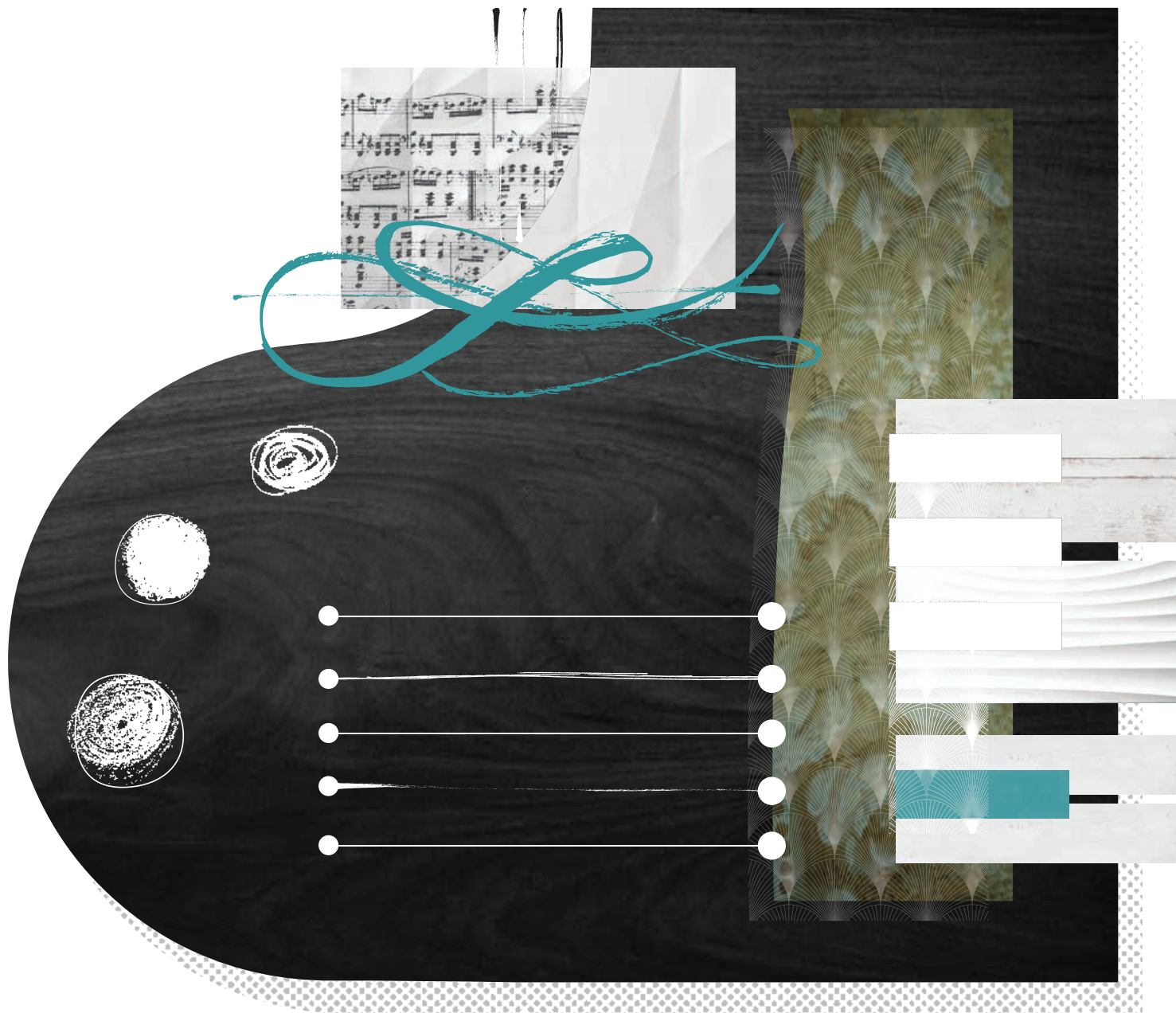
by the Fryderyk Chopin Higher School of Music, while financial backing came from the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment (the equivalent of today's Ministry of Culture and National Heritage).

Professor Żurawlew's efforts were supported by an organizing committee comprising luminaries of the musical scene of the time: Aleksander Michałowski, Antoni Ponikowski (President of the Federation of Polish Choral and Musical Societies), Tadeusz Grabowski (historian), Włodzimierz Czetwertyński (President of the Warsaw Music Society), Felicjan Szopski (composer, music critic), Ferdynand Hoesick (Chopin scholar, publisher), Władysław de Bondy, Tadeusz Czerniawski (composer), Witold Maliszewski (composer, director of the Warsaw Music Society), Józef Śmidowicz (pianist, professor at the Fryderyk Chopin Higher School of Music), Leopold Binental (violinist, Chopin scholar), Mateusz Gliński (conductor, music critic), Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski (writer, publicist) and Michał Wyszynski (conductor).

One hundred years on, Żurawlew's brainchild is flourishing on a global scale, as each edition of the Chopin Competition attracts more participants and many more listeners. Suffice it to say that tickets for the 2025 edition sold out in under three hours.

ALEKSANDER LASKOWSKI

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2027

CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION

JULY 27-AUGUST 8, 2027

PIANOCLEVELAND.ORG/2027-CIPC



A defining moment
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performing alongside
The Cleveland Orchestra

Cleveland International Piano Competition

The 2027 Cleveland International Piano Competition (CIPC) is built around a simple idea:
a competition should showcase the pianist as a whole artist.

For pianists in the CIPC, artistry means more than repertoire and technique. It means communicating with an audience, collaborating with other musicians, shaping compelling programs, and exhibiting an artistic identity. This philosophy is reflected throughout a competition designed to give pianists more opportunities to show who they are and what kind of artist they aspire to be.

The competition tests pianists' versatility. The 50-60 First Round contestants play a free repertoire where stylistic diversity is key. Sixteen Quarter-Finalists will travel to Cleveland to play collaboratively in pop music in addition to a recital round. Eight Semi-Finalists then present a salon recital incorporating speaking and storytelling, alongside a piano trio performed with members of The Cleveland Orchestra. Four Finalists face a new "Final Four(hand) Challenge" before the Final Concerto Round with The Cleveland Orchestra.

The stakes are substantial. The \$100,000 Rankin First Prize is one of the largest prizes in the classical competition world. The package includes a Carnegie Hall debut recital, a Steinway & Sons recording, and professional management services and mentorship through Arabella Arts and Piano Cleveland. Second, third, and fourth prizes are \$50,000, \$25,000, and \$15,000 respectively.

The competition's investment in artists extends beyond its top prize winners. The CIPC Artist Development Program serves Quarter-Finalists through Finalists, offering mentorship, university residencies, performance opportunities, and practical training in areas such as personal branding, artist finances, social media, and audience engagement. Special prizes recognize achievements beyond

conventional rankings, including the Cynthia Reece Prize for the woman pianist advancing furthest in the competition—a package valued at more than \$20,000. The newly-established Roe Green Travel Fund covers the cost for all contestants traveling to Cleveland during the summer portion of the competition and provides stipends for First Round contestant travel.

The CIPC features multiple-jury adjudication. A Preliminary Jury evaluates applications; a separate First Round Jury evaluates performances in Beijing, Cleveland, and Paris; and the distinguished CIPC Jury adjudicates the Quarter-Final, Semi-Final and Final Rounds. The 2027 CIPC Jury is chaired by pianist and educator Melvin Chen (Professor in the Practice of Piano, Yale School of Music) and includes Simone Dinnerstein (international concert pianist and Mannes School of Music faculty), Maïke Charlotte Fuchs (Managing Director of Karsten Witt Music), Claire-Marie Le Guay (international concert pianist), Matthew Loden (Lynette S. Autrey Dean of Music and Professor of Executive Music Management at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music), Anne-Marie McDermott (international concert pianist), Sergio Tiempo (international concert pianist), and Danwen Wei (Chair of the Piano Department of Central Conservatory of China in Beijing).

For 2027, CIPC invites pianists ages 18–32 to apply. The application deadline is December 4, 2026, with an early-bird deadline of November 4.

www.pianocleveland.org



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INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION OF LYON

JULY 2027 • FRANCE

Concours international de piano de Lyon & Festival



New edition details online from December 2026

REGISTRATION OPENS
 JANUARY 1, 2027
 APPLICATION DEADLINE
 APRIL 1, 2027

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WWW.PIANOFESTIVALLYON.COM

International jury
 Young pianists from around the world
 Prizes and professional opportunities
 Feedback from internationally renowned musicians

Concerts and recitals
 International artists
 Artistic encounters
 A welcoming and inspiring atmosphere in Lyon

Full information and the new competition programme will be available online from December 2026



Celebrating its 18th edition





Svetlana Eganian and Yolande Kouznetsov



Piano duo Abélard: Yolande Kouznetsov and Héloïse Hervouët

Lyon International Piano Competition & Burgundy International Piano Competition

This is the story of a singular artistic collaboration: mother and daughter, two generations of pianists bound by a shared family and artistic legacy. Since 2009, this bond has found expression both on stage, through their piano duo, and in the creation of competitions where musical traditions, new generations of artists and new forms of expression meet.

Svetlana Eganian trained at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory under Bella Davidovich and Zinaida Ignatieva, herself a student of the legendary Samuel Feinberg. Settling in France, she brought with her the great Russian piano tradition and a deep belief in transmission, teaching for forty-two years at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Lyon. In 1986, she founded the Grand Concours International de Piano (GCIP) and an International Summer Piano Academy, creating opportunities for young pianists at a time when international competitions were still rare in France.

Growing up in this world, Yolande Kouznetsov discovered its inner workings from an early age. A concert pianist and laureate of several international competitions, including First Prize at the Cantù Competition in Italy, she knows firsthand the challenges candidates face. Alongside her performing career, she has pursued an open vision of classical music: touring European stadiums with the piano duo Abélard as the opening act on industrial metal band Rammstein's tour, performing for more than a million spectators, and taking part in the Piano Speculum project linking Paris and Bilbao through connected pianos – exploring new artistic spaces without losing classical music's identity.

For seventeen years, this shared vision has taken shape through the Lyon International Piano Competition. Founded in 2009, it has become recognised for its artistic rigour, the quality of its juries and its attention to young performers, welcoming candidates through

host families in a city rich in heritage. Supported by the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region, the City of Lyon, the Conservatoire à Rayonnement Régional, the Caisse des Dépôts and Crédit Mutuel, it has welcomed talents such as Arseni Moon, Hayato Sumino, Yeonmin Park and Philippe Raskin, among many others who are now leading figures on the international scene.

In 2026, the first Burgundy International Piano Competition opens a new chapter. Rooted in the heritage of Beaune and Burgundy, it builds its own identity around the dialogue between music and visual arts: recitals are staged alongside a scenography and an exhibition of paintings, offering candidates and audiences an immersive experience beyond the traditional competition format. It also welcomes children, immersing the youngest in this exceptional atmosphere, with the support of the City of Beaune, the Conservatoire de Beaune, the prestigious Hostellerie Levernois, a network of host families, local institutions providing accommodation for candidates, and members of Burgundy's wine-growing community.

They keep alive the spirit of these musical gatherings, bringing together young musicians from around the world – not only to compete, but to share moments of connection and openness, where music becomes a universal language, in a world not merely “all order and beauty, luxury, calm and pleasure” (Baudelaire).

www.gpipl.fr | www.bourgogne-pianocompetition.com

THE 3rd INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION FOR YOUNG PIANISTS KRONBERG

2 | 3 | 4
APRIL 2027

Location: Casals Forum

Beethovenplatz 1, 61476 Kronberg Ts. Germany



C. BECHSTEIN

7 age groups - 6 to 19 y. o.

Prize money
40.000 EUR



Registration: Oct 1st, 2026 – Jan 16th, 2027
www.piano-competition-kronberg.de/en



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COMPETITION PROFILE

The 3rd International Piano Competition for Young Pianists Kronberg invites highly talented pianists aged 6 to 19 to participate from 2 to 4 April 2027 at the renowned Casals Forum in Kronberg, Germany (piano-competition-kronberg.de). The competition is organised by the non-profit association International Piano Competition Taunus e.V.

3rd International Piano Competition for Young Pianists Kronberg

Following its second edition, the competition has established itself as a major international competition for this age group. Its innovative concept of providing exceptionally comprehensive, long-term support for young talents has made it a magnet for participants from around the world.

Now in its third edition, the competition once again offers prize money totalling €40,000, including valuable special prizes such as master-classes, scholarships, follow-up concerts, and professional audio and video production. The Casals Forum at Kronberg Academy provides an ideal setting, and the competition has earned a strong reputation thanks to its excellent organisation and warm atmosphere.

Seven age groups, each comprising two age cohorts; a high-calibre

jury including Prof. Matthias Kirschnereit, Prof. Christian A. Pohl, Prof. Claudia Schellenberger, and Ulrike Danne-Feldmann; a winners' concert broadcast via livestream; and a supporting programme featuring excursions and workshops, among others, contribute to making the competition a unique and inspiring experience. All performances are professionally recorded in audio and video.

Registration for the digital preliminary round opens on 1 October 2026 and closes on 16 January 2027. Applicants must submit a completed registration form, the registration fee of €30, and an unedited video recording. Approximately 60 participants will be admitted to the competition.

XIII International Chopin Piano Competition Darmstadt

Darmstadt will once again become an international meeting place for outstanding piano artistry as young pianists from around the world compete in the XIII International Chopin Piano Competition Darmstadt – a prestigious event devoted exclusively to the music of Fryderyk Chopin.

The competition is open to pianists of all nationalities up to 30 years of age. Applications will be accepted from 15 March to 15 May 2027. Prize money will total more than €30,000, complemented by valuable concert engagements for the laureates. Regarded as one of the world's leading Chopin competitions, the XIII edition will consist of a video first round followed by two public live rounds.

The inaugural gala concert will take place on 9 October at the Orangerie Darmstadt, featuring the jury members. The second round will bring together 24 pianists, selected from the video first round, at the Akademie für Tonkunst Darmstadt. The six finalists will perform Chopin's celebrated piano concertos in the chamber version

with string quintet. The competition will conclude on 15 October 2027 with the Awards Ceremony and Prizewinners' Concert at the Orangerie Darmstadt.

www.chopin-gesellschaft.de





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Cooperative Conservatory: Conservatorio Superior de Música de Málaga

Key Highlights

Career-Launching Performance Opportunity –

The winner of the Professional Artist Division earns the chance to perform with the Iberian Sinfonietta orchestra, a concrete professional collaboration.

Clear Mission –

The competition is dedicated to discovering and promoting rising young talents by offering performance platforms and career development resources worldwide.

Prestigious Final Stage –

Top winners are invited to perform at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall in New York, a globally recognized venue that adds significant weight to any musician's resume.

Scan to

Register for the competition 2027



Preliminary Round Date: Jan. - Apr. 2027

Preliminary Application Deadline: Apr. 1st 2027

Contestant may choose In-Person or Online

Preliminary Round Repertoire:

Submit a video of a 10-minute piece of own choice.

Final Round Date: Jul. 2027

Final Application Deadline: May 1st 2027

Final Round Repertoire:

1. A 15-minute pieces of own choice.
2. Live performance of a concerto movement.

MORE INFORMATION:



www.gocaamusic.com

gocaamusic@gmail.com



GOCAA Artist poster for Hongjian Yan China Tour Cities: Shijiazhuang – Nanping – Jiaxing – Jiangyin – Jincheng – Yuncheng – Nanyang

Outstanding laureates are invited to perform in the GOCAA Laureate Classics – China Concert Tour, a prestigious series of performances in major concert halls across ten cities in China. Featuring prize-winning musicians from around the world, the tour celebrates artistic excellence and cultural exchange through Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Contemporary repertoire. Beyond the concert experience, it provides valuable international performance opportunities and connections with diverse audiences.

Exceptional winners may also be selected for the GOCAA International Artists Roster, an exclusive artist management and career-development program supporting emerging classical musicians on the global stage. Selected artists receive opportunities including international representation, professional career development, concert touring in China and Asia, performances in premier concert halls, collaborations with festivals and orchestras, global media promotion, educational outreach, and masterclasses.

Together, these initiatives reflect GOCAA's commitment to discovering, nurturing, and promoting the next generation of outstanding classical musicians while building bridges between cultures through the universal language of music.

Hongjian Yan

Acclaimed Chinese pianist and Steinway Honorary Teacher Hongjian Yan, received the GOCAA Professional Artist Award in 2026. At the 2nd GOCAA Spain – China Concerto Festival, he delivered a remarkable performance of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5, "Emperor," with the Málaga Youth Symphony Orchestra. His performance earned enthusiastic acclaim for its "masterful technique and expressive depth," demonstrating exceptional artistry and profound musicality.

The Global Outstanding Chinese Artists Association

This association (GOCAA) is a U.S. federally recognized nonprofit arts organization founded by Fangfang Pan to promote Chinese artists, support outstanding young musicians, and foster international cultural exchange through music. Winners of the GOCAA Professional Artist Competition gain access to two prestigious career-development initiatives designed to elevate their international artistic profiles.

With a deep passion for performance, Yan brings extraordinary energy, sensitivity, and conviction to the concert stage. His performances combine technical precision, powerful musical expression, and a distinctive ability to connect with audiences.

Yan earned his Bachelor of Music with high academic distinction from the New England Conservatory, followed by a Master of Music from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and a Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where he studied on a full scholarship. His principal teachers and mentors include Sara Daneshpour, Polina Besspalko, André Watts, Gabriel Chodos, and Alexander Korsantia.

As an accomplished concert pianist, Yan has performed on prestigious stages in the United States and internationally, including Carnegie Hall and Jordan Hall at the New England Conservatory. His artistry is recognized for exceptional technical command, depth of interpretation, and emotional authenticity.

Through GOCAA's China Concert Tour, Yan presented seven solo recitals across China, including a performance in Jiangyin, bringing his artistry to audiences in multiple cities while strengthening cultural and musical connections between China and the international classical music community. His performances have received strong critical acclaim: "Not only did his performance demonstrate technical perfection, but it also enabled the audience to feel the emotions behind the music."

With his outstanding musical credentials, international concert experience, and passionate stage presence, Hongjian Yan continues to establish himself as a compelling voice among the new generation of Chinese concert pianists on the international stage.

www.gocaamusic.com/artists



Impression of the final round
in Shanghai

Ralf Gothóni on the Shanghai International Musician Competition

Pianist Ralf Gothóni, chairman of the jury and founder of the Shanghai International Musician Competition, explains that the event grew out of two influences: the exceptional standards of the Shanghai Conservatory and the holistic philosophy of the Savonlinna International Music Academy, which he built. His aim was to cultivate "holistic pianism" — the ability to draw on every dimension of the instrument, whether performing solo recitals, playing chamber music, accompanying song, or directing a concerto from the keyboard. He notes that almost no pianists specialize purely in solo performance today, singling out Grigory Sokolov as a rare exception who has earned the right to that solitary path.

Having served on juries for many major competitions, Gothóni says his frustration was never with technical standards, which remain remarkably high, but with a recurring gap: many highly skilled pianists struggle to communicate real emotional and artistic depth. For him, this means letting melody and phrasing evoke poetic experience, letting harmony and color paint an artistic world, and mastering the fine, ever-shifting nuances of rhythm and timing — without which even brilliant technique can sound lifeless.

The competition was designed to expose young musicians to this broader diversity over several weeks, prompting them to reflect on a real problem in the classical music world: competitions produce far more prizewinners than there are performance opportunities to sustain them, and many young musicians are unprepared for the career shift this requires.

Nature plays a symbolic role too. Gothóni sees people as inseparable from nature, and its infinite variety as something mirrored in music itself. The Shanghai partnership began almost by accident. After years of considering the idea, Gothóni raised it at a farewell dinner following his chamber music courses in Shanghai. The conservatory's rector, baritone Changyong Liao, immediately grasped its significance and traveled to Savonlinna the next summer, where the competition took formal shape.

Asked about his stated goal of identifying musicians who can “navigate life’s spiritual challenges through music,” Gothóni traces classical music’s lineage back to the monophonic Gregorian chant of the 9th century, whose spirit lives in the tension between the earthly and the transcendent. He views the centuries of musical evolution since then as a shared inheritance that performers can explore to find their own artistic roots. Spirituality, in his view, is simply an openness to the wonder of life and the capacity to channel that wonder into performance.

On the jury, he says he was fortunate to assemble a strong and internationally diverse panel of musicians and teachers. Regarding the results, he notes that the quality was evident from the very first



Ralf
Gothóni

video-submission round, and narrowing the field for the final was genuinely difficult — so much so that rewarding standout performances from every individual round, while appealing, wasn’t practically feasible.

Overall, Gothóni is satisfied with how the competition unfolded, believing it achieved its purpose: encouraging participants to build broader, more sustainable musical careers.

One particularly distinctive element was a round requiring finalists to rehearse a Mozart concerto — something rarely seen in piano competitions. Though the most demanding round, it led three finalists to plan further study in Savonlinna, working on both pianistic technique and broader musicianship.

A second edition of the competition is already confirmed, though the schedule has yet to be finalized.

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www.telekom-beethoven-competition.de





TELEKOM BEETHOVEN COMPETITION

From 3 to 11 December 2027, the Telekom Beethoven Competition will bring young pianists from around the world to Bonn. The Competition has established itself as an international meeting point for promising emerging artists, offering them a stage on which musical personality, artistic individuality and an intensive engagement with the music of Ludwig van Beethoven take centre stage.

Applications for the 2027 edition are open from 1 December 2026 to 3 May 2027. Young pianists are invited to apply and to present their individual approach to Beethoven, together with a varied repertoire, before an international jury. Across several rounds of the Competition, participants will have the opportunity to demonstrate their artistic profile, reveal different facets of their playing and reach audiences both in Bonn and around the world.

At the heart of the Telekom Beethoven Competition is the aim of supporting young musicians in the long term as they develop their artistic careers. The Competition therefore places strong emphasis on encounters, visibility and future perspectives alongside the results themselves. It connects emerging pianists with distinguished musicians, presenters and other figures from the international music world, creating valuable relationships that can continue well beyond the Competition. Numerous concert engagements offer prizewinners further opportunities to perform on a range of stages, meet new presenters and audiences, expand their repertoire and continue developing their artistic identity.

The Telekom Beethoven Competition also provides significant financial support. The First Prize is worth € 50,000, the Second Prize € 25,000 and the Third Prize € 10,000. Further special and development prizes recognise individual artistic achievements and can provide additional support for future projects and career development. In this way, the Competition combines recognition during the event with concrete opportunities for the years that follow.

Beethoven is the artistic point of departure for the Competition. His music demands technical precision, interpretative depth, courage and a clear artistic perspective – qualities that are equally important for young pianists building an international career. At the same time, his works leave considerable space for individual interpretations and musical personalities. The question of how a new generation hears, understands and interprets Beethoven today is therefore one of the most compelling aspects of the Competition. Bonn, Beethoven's birthplace, provides a unique setting. Here, musical heritage meets the ideas and perspectives of a new generation. During the Competition, the city becomes a meeting place for young artists from many different countries, all sharing their musical ideas with one another and with the public. For the participants, these days create an intensive experience shaped by performances, exchange, new impulses and a shared engagement with music.

The Telekom Beethoven Competition sees itself as a competition, an international platform and a starting point for long-term artistic development. It invites young pianists to make their individual voices heard, build new connections, gain artistic experience and bring Beethoven's music into the present through their own perspectives.

Further information on applications, eligibility, repertoire and the schedule of the 2027 Competition will be published via the official channels of the Telekom Beethoven Competition.



40 young pianists to take your breath away



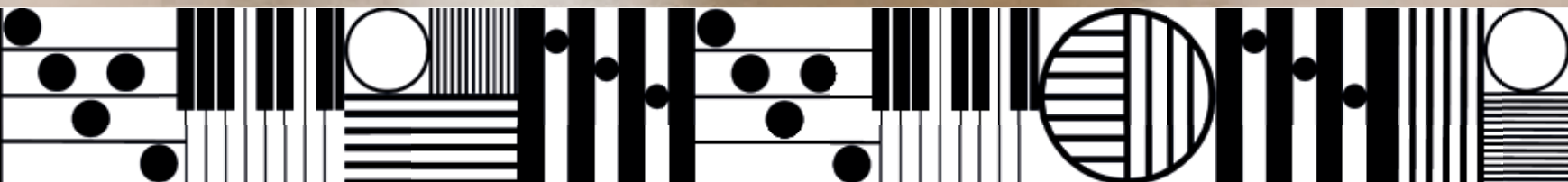
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COMPETITION PROFILE

The 2026 jury (from left to right): Juan Lago, Boris Slutsky, Dinara Klinton (President of the Jury), Professor Vanessa Lataarche, Sir Stephen Hough, Dr Vivian Sui-Rong Li, Jean-Paul Gasparian and Scott Dunn

Hastings International Piano Competition

The Hastings International Piano Competition has established a distinctive place on the international competition circuit. Held biennially in the historic seaside town of Hastings on England's south coast, it puts concerto performance at the heart of the competition – asking young pianists to show how they communicate, collaborate and perform alongside conductor and orchestra.

That emphasis has deep roots. Hastings' association with piano playing stretches back to the Hastings Musical Festival, founded in 1908, whose concerto classes enabled young pianists to perform with an orchestra. Relaunching as an international competition in 2005, today's Hastings Competition carries that tradition onto an international stage.

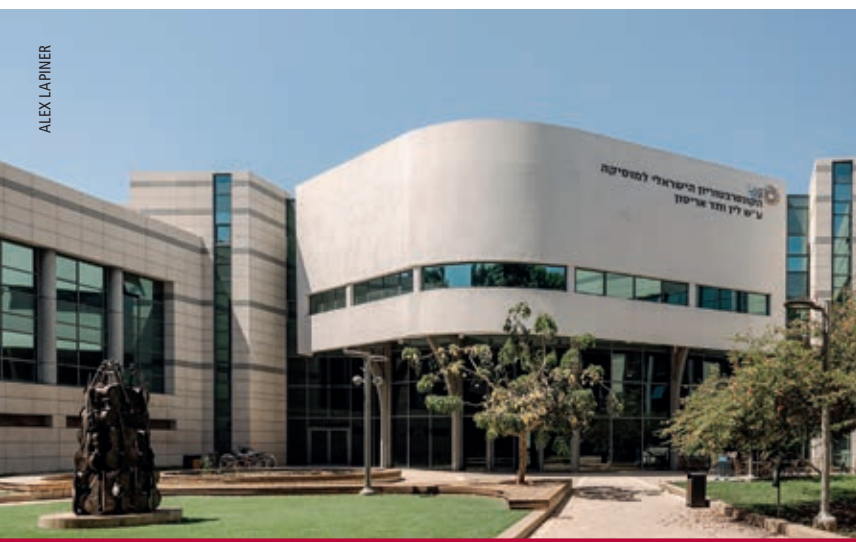
The 2026 Competition was its most international yet. A record 356 pianists from 46 countries applied. Following an international video pre-selection process, 40 pianists aged between 19 and 29, representing 19 countries, travelled to Hastings. Across four rounds, the field was narrowed from 40 to 20, then to ten semi-finalists and finally five finalists. From the outset, competitors must demonstrate exceptional breadth: Round One requires extracts from both Classical and Romantic concerto repertoire; Round Two moves to solo repertoire; the semi-finals return to the concerto, with Classical repertoire performed with a chamber orchestra; and the five finalists perform with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2026, the recital round brought an additional challenge: Metropolis, a newly commissioned work by Hastings patron Sir Stephen Hough. His message to the assembled competitors – "It's quite tricky, sorry" – proved characteristically understated. His presence in Hastings to hear each interpretation made the experience special for audiences and performers. The 2026 First Prize went to 22-year-old Canadian pianist Ryan Zhu, whose performance of Prokofiev's formidable Piano Concerto No. 2 brought the competition to a memorable conclusion. Zhu also won the Orchestra Prize, voted for by members of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Audience Prize.

Artistic Director and President of the Jury, Professor Vanessa Lataarche, says: "We were delighted by the exceptionally high standard of playing and the adventurous choice of repertoire presented this year, with the great Classical and Romantic piano concertos remaining at the heart of the competition."

Beyond the final

For Hastings, the announcement of a winner is not the end of the competition. Increasingly, it is the beginning. The First Prize includes a £20,000 cash award, but the wider package is worth approximately £35,000 and is structured around what happens next. The winner receives the Hastings Fellowship, an artist development and professional coaching programme, alongside performance engagements including a solo recital at Wigmore Hall and further opportunities with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Other laureates receive coaching and performance opportunities, reflecting Hastings' emphasis on supporting young musicians through the transition from competition success to a sustainable professional career. That work continues year-round through concerts, young-artist development, education and community activity, connecting an international competition with the musical life of the town in which it began. With every round live-streamed, alongside professional orchestral experience, mentoring and opportunities beyond the final, Hastings is increasingly focused on a question that reaches further than who wins the competition.

13 May 2027: Entries open | October 2027: 2028 competitors announced
February / March 2028: Competition | www.hastingsinternationalpiano.org



The Israel Conservatory of Music, where Scherzo takes place



Ariel Danilov, one of the prize winners

Scherzo International Piano Competition

In 2027 the competition returns to Tel Aviv for its 10th edition, inviting talented young pianists to perform and be heard. As plans for this special edition take shape, founder Stella Brener looks back at the extraordinary story of Scherzo 2025.

Three weeks before Scherzo 2025, I received an email asking a simple question: would the competition take place as planned? My honest answer was: I had no idea.

The war with Iran had begun only days earlier, and we were spending our days and nights going back and forth to shelters. As the days passed with no sign of the situation ending, I realised I had to make a decision.

Cancelling would have been understandable. No one would have blamed us. And yet I felt that cancelling would mean losing something more than a competition.

For me, Scherzo was never only a competition. From the beginning, I wanted the stage to serve the young musician – not the other way around. Perhaps that was why the decision felt so difficult.

On June 24, a ceasefire was announced, but flights to Israel were still extremely limited. Glenn Riddle, our jury member from Australia, wrote to me: “If my flight goes, I’ll come.” For days it wasn’t clear that it would – until his flight became one of the first to resume service to Israel, and suddenly, his journey was possible.

Days before the competition, the father of a six-year-old participant called – his son had become too anxious during the sirens to practise and would not compete. Another young pianist had missed two weeks of lessons, and her teacher wasn’t sure she was ready. In the end, she decided to take the stage – and finished with a prize.

As a competition organiser, I kept asking myself: how do you encourage a young musician to walk onto a stage when they don’t feel ready? Perhaps our role is not to provide the answer, but to create a stage where they can find their own.

The night before the competition began, another unexpected message arrived. Evgeny Kissin had heard about Scherzo and wanted to help. He later wrote: “Sometimes, music says what words cannot. It cannot stop the war – but it can become a bridge.”

After the competition, we went to Jerusalem. Walking through the Old City, Kissin’s image of a bridge stayed with me. For a brief time, music had become just that: not an escape from reality, and certainly not a solution to it, but another way of reaching one another.

Now, as we look ahead, I find myself thinking about that bridge again. Since 2017, more than 400 young pianists from 25 countries have taken the Scherzo stage. We will continue with what has always defined Scherzo: high professional standards, an independent international jury, and young pianists leaving the stage encouraged – carrying something that lasts.

The future may still be uncertain. But in 2027, for our 10th anniversary edition, we will open that stage once again – and we hope young pianists from around the world will come and make it their own.

www.scherzoil.com



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