

# THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS

1

2021

Andrey  
Gugnin

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experience*

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## W E L C O M E

### *Dear readers,*

In 1942, Artur Schnabel, the legendary pianist, wrote a little volume he called: *Music, and the line of most resistance*. Great art never takes the easy route: in their days immortal composers had to come to terms with many setbacks and their contemporaries often didn't grasp the true value of the masterpieces we now admire so much.

The year 2020 and as it looks now, we hope and trust, the lesser part of 2021, proved a line of most resistance to millions all across the globe. Unprecedented times for all, artists and musicians not excluded. In 2020, altogether more than 160 international piano competitions were cancelled, our valued expert Gustav Alink informs us in his analysis of the effects of the pandemic on the sector. Piano competitions were prevented from reaching their goals, to help young musicians finding their way onto the concert stage to fulfil their mission of sharing music and in doing so making life more worthwhile and beautiful for all those able to listen.

A mission along the line of most resistance young aspiring artists didn't envision for themselves light-heartedly, being an artist is not a profession by choice. Talents, like Andrey Gugnin, our cover artist of this edition, are chosen, in the firm belief that music is not just entertainment, not something to be taken for granted. No, it is something we need perhaps more than anything else. As Alexander Gavrylyuk, interviewed this time on his ideas about competitions, once said: "Music is the face of our culture, the essence of our existence, it is our identity."

Nowadays, with more people than ever expressing themselves in music, professional and amateurs alike, this is becoming more apparent now. Let us hope that with the support of all involved in the music business, the musicians, the competitions as well as the innovative and creative manufacturers or our treasured instruments and last but not least, the public in the concert hall, you our dear reader, we all can soon celebrate our identity again to the fullest.

**ERIC SCHOONES**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
PIANIST MAGAZINES



## THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS

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media



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### Stay updated!

For upcoming application deadlines etc. check:

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



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THE WORLD FEDERATION  
OF INTERNATIONAL  
MUSIC COMPETITIONS

### WORLD FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL MUSIC COMPETITIONS

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

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



European Union of Music  
Competitions for Youth

### EUROPEAN UNION OF MUSIC COMPETITIONS FOR YOUTH

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

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



### ALINK-ARGERICH FOUNDATION

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

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



### PIANO STREET

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

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Andrey Gugin



DANIEL BOUD

# Getting started

The Sydney International Piano Competition is about to take place from 2-18 July, online this time, and we spoke to Andrey Gugin, the winner of the last edition of 2016. This exceptional artist openheartedly shares his views on competitions, about the work and the enjoyment, about doubts and self-confidence gained.



*“In competitions  
I felt more like a kid in  
a playground.”*

**In 2013, you won the second prize at the Beethoven International Piano Competition in Vienna. Surely that was not your first competition.**

*No, but it was the first major competition where I got a prize. I started doing competitions when I was about ten years old, still in the Music school in Moscow, and when I began my studies with Prof. Gornostaeva at the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatoire, I applied for various competitions, such as Long-Thibaud, Leeds. But I didn't really take it seriously enough. For instance, in Leeds, I put Prokofiev's Third concerto on my list, which I had not really played. My teachers were pushing me all the time, but I was even reluctant to show them my competition programme.*

*Still I had a great time in Leeds. One important element in competitions is socializing with your fellow pianists, from various places, because we have to study so much in solitude. But gradually the year before the Beethoven competition mentioned earlier, I was 25 and thinking about my future. I would love to have a reasonable number of concerts, so I started to work. Also because of having the great example of two fellow students, Lukas Geniušas and Vadym Kholodenko, who both had won big prizes already, and we were like a trio of close friends in Gornostaeva's class.*

**You didn't enjoy playing in competitions?**

*No, in the beginning I didn't, only later did it sometimes feel like a concert. But in Vienna I got the feeling I can succeed. I was proud of myself. I played the Hammerklavier Sonata for first time at the competition, and it was great to immerse myself completely in the music of one composer. Playing at the Musikverein was very special; I only wished I had won the first prize, which was a Bösendorfer piano!*

**One year after Vienna, you won the Gold Medal and Audience Award at the International Gina Bachauer Piano Competition in the USA.**

*I didn't expect much, but I wanted to do my best. I stayed with a lovely host family – we are still friends – and they had a great Steinway piano for me to practice on. I was quite nervous in the first round, but later with Prokofiev's Seventh Sonata and Pictures at an Exhibition by Mussorgski it felt like a concert. For the finals I chose Rachmaninoff's Concerto No. 3.*

**That is a good one for competitions ...**

*Yes, it's a bit overplayed, but I adore that concerto. The Bachauer was a great experience too, it was wonderful, the competition arranged a number of concert engagements and my first solo-CD with the Steinway label; in addition, there was a good cash prize, which was helpful.*

**So you could buy your Bösendorfer?**

*[Laughing] After that I went to Sydney, mainly because I wanted to go to Australia. After preselection, the competition covered all expenses, which was nice, and I would have enjoyed being in Sydney regardless of the result. I think picking an interesting program played a significant role in my success, because for the jury it must be nice to listen to less familiar repertoire as well, so I chose Beethoven's Fantasy opus 77 and Medtner's Sonata Romantica, which worked very well with Chopin's Etudes opus 25.*

*The atmosphere was delightful: the organisation made us feel very welcome and supported. It was very well organised, always volunteers in the green room, nice snacks between practicing. And each day of the auditions would start with some young local kids playing. The jury also gave them feedback, which was nice for them and for us, the candidates: it took the stress off having to start the day. It may seem like a tiny detail, but it made a huge difference. Moreover we got to play on four different brands of pianos, all very well serviced.*

**Just like when you are touring.**

*Exactly, it was a great preparation for real-life situations and I was happy not having to choose a piano, because I always have doubts, thinking I may have picked the wrong one. With Fazioli, I love the feel of the keyboard, the control and the well-projected sound: crisp and powerful. Steinway may not always be consistent in quality but can give really unique colours and that keep you excited on stage. Kawai is very pleasant to play, again with great control, and I especially adore some older Yamahas I played in Japan. And actually for my second recording for Hyperion, with pieces dedicated to Godowsky, I used a Bechstein, and that nostalgic soft sound worked extremely well with that program. Playing all those different pianos didn't cause extra stress, I enjoyed it very much.*



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BORIS SCTAR

#### You got the chance to see the continent.

*Oh yes, I went back to Australia and New Zealand many times, even for a 33-concert tour!*

*I received a concert with Gergiev as a prize, but at the last moment he cancelled his appearance due to personal matters. The concert was rescheduled to the next year and finally it happened. We were playing Shostakovich's Concerto No. 1 and I was extremely nervous. I remember at some point forgetting the text for a moment and playing a wrong note in a very exposed simple melody in the 2nd movement. I still vividly remember the look he gave me, at that moment I merely wanted to die but we still had two more movements to play. Overall, though, Sydney helped me to become more confident, because the other competitors all played so well and I still got the first prize. Then I still wanted to do the Tchaikovsky Competition. I entered twice, in 2015 and 2019, although I didn't really need it career-wise, but for us Russians it is like the holy grail. Sadly I didn't pass to the final; the stress was unbearable, even more so for Russians since the audience knew us very well and that gave an additional weight of responsibility. I don't think my failure affected my career, but nevertheless I felt devastated.*

*By that time I had more than 100 concerts a season, but I was still without proper management, and then suddenly, some time after the Tchaikovsky, two agencies contacted me on the very same day! I chose IMG, we signed but then Covid started so not so much has happened until now.*

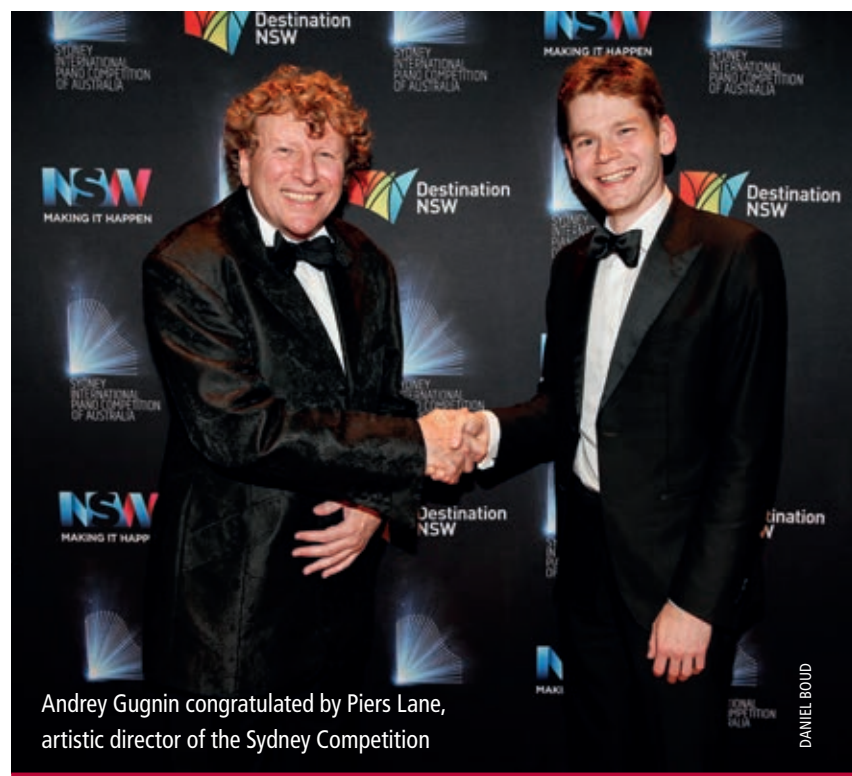
#### Your plans for the future?

*There are lots of interesting projects coming up. A few recordings, for example transcriptions of Petrushka, Firebird and the Sacre for Hyperion, and I will record Scriabin's Piano concerto with the Russian National Orchestra for Russian Television this June. Also, hopefully, I'll have my debut recital at the chamber hall of Berliner Philharmonie later this year.*

**Last year the BBC Music Magazine Awards named you the winner of the Instrumental Award for this recording Shostakovich: 24 Preludes – Piano Sonatas 1 & 2 (Hyperion). Did that perhaps feel like winning a competition?**

*In competitions I felt more like a kid in a playground, but this was perhaps more serious. It made me feel like a real artist.*

**ERIC SCHOONES**



Andrey Gugin congratulated by Piers Lane, artistic director of the Sydney Competition

DANIEL BOUD

Piano Trio  
Voice  
Wind Quintet  
Oboe  
Trumpet  
Piano  
Percussion  
Viola  
Clarinete  
Flute  
Violoncello  
Bassoon  
Trombone  
Harp  
French Horn  
Piano Duo  
String Quartet  
Violin  
Double Bass  
Organ  
Guitar

# ARD International Music Competition



JeungBeum Sohn  
1st prize piano 2017



Prizewinners  
piano duo 2015



Aoi Trio  
1st prize piano trio 2018

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

September 3 to 11, 2022  
Piano solo  
First prize 10,000 €

September 1 to 9, 2023  
Piano trio  
First prize 18,000 €

WORLD CULTURE NETWORKS

STEINWAY & SONS

《스타인웨이 워너 콘서트》는 세계적으로 명망 있는 피아노 회사인 스타인웨이와 국제 피아노 공쿠로 수상자 가운데 뛰어난 수상자들을 선발해 연주회를 개최하고 연주 기회를 제공하는 콘서트이다.

2007년부터 시작된 스타인웨이 워너 콘서트는 독일 라이프치히 게빈트 하우스를 비롯한 세계 8개국 콘서트홀에서 열렸으며, 2016~2017년 시즌에는 총 30명의 연주자가 독주회 기회를 갖게 되었다.

2017년부터 한국 경서 피트너로 WCN(대표 송호숙)이 선정되면서 《스타인웨이 워너 콘서트 인 코리아》 한국 투어를 일게 되었으며, 2018년 5월 부조니 공쿠로 우승자인 이반 크로한 리사이를 투어를 시작으로 2019년 5월 리즈 국제 피아노 공쿠로의 우승자인 에릭 루 리사이를 한국 투어가 진행되었다. 2021년에는 2019년 중국 제1회 국제 피아노 공쿠로 우승자 토니옌의 친국투어가 진행된다.

\*\*\*\*\*

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HISTORY

2018 STEINWAY PRIZEWINNER CONCERTS IN KOREA  
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이반 크로한 IVAN KRPAN

2019 STEINWAY PRIZEWINNER CONCERTS IN KOREA  
리즈 국제 피아노 공쿠로 우승자 | 2018  
에릭 루 ERIC LU

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KUMOH ART HALL YONSEI

2021. 06.21 SUN 19:30 **인동 문화예술의전당 객조홀**  
INDONG CULTURE ART CENTER

2021. 06.24 SUN 19:30 **울산 중구문화예천당 합창홀**  
ULSAN JUNG-GU CULTURE CENTER

2021. 06.26 SUN 19:30 **광주 문화예술회관 소극장**  
KWANGJU CULTURE ART CENTER

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주최 | WCN 후원 | STEINWAY & SONS

Brochure of the SPCN tour

# Challenges and chances

## Steinway Prizewinner Concerts Network

“There are mountains which one has to conquer, otherwise the path does not continue” (Ludwig Thoma). Doubtlessly, the pandemic is exactly such a mountain and yet it is not clear how high it really is. Culture itself and its economics are heavily affected, artists in particular, and more especially the young.

And let's not to forget the audiences. Everyone is longing to attend a concert and fed up with the seemingly never-ending postponements and cancelations. Streaming events may be proper kind of work-around, but in the end, they make evident how essential and irreplaceable live audiences are. Referring to the editorial note and Arthur Schnabel's view of things, presently culture and concerts are in times of “most resistance”. A mix of challenges and chances ... What to do? Whatever the epidemiologists say and the politicians decide, is there a better alternative to keeping faith and patience, creativity and persistence? Being ready to go on as soon as it is possible again?

The *Steinway Prizewinner Concerts Network* too has been facing quite a standstill. Numerous concerts had to be postponed repeatedly. In some cases, cancelations were inevitable. Everywhere? Well not in South Korea. A cultural life became possible again there, with a restricted audience, though. South Korea has a concert promoter with vision and endurance, who never gives in: The *World Culture Networks* (WCN) based in Seoul and Vienna.

In 2020, they had scheduled Tony Yun, winner of the China International Piano Competition 2019, for a recital tour through the

whole country, following Ivan Krpan (*Concorso Busoni*) and Eric Lu (*The Leeds*), who were invited in the years before. Covid-19 completely nullified it that year but the project was not dropped and this June it will eventually take place: Eight days with concerts in five cities, with live audiences, press and media exposure – and generous hospitality. A perfect Korean debut.

As waiting and patience were required to reach this far, they still are: Before Tony Yun may perform on stage, a 14-day quarantine is mandatory! A rather small „mountain to conquer“ – and certainly worth it!

The *World Culture Networks* have meanwhile established the *Steinway Prizewinner Concerts* as a series. Inspired by the success they will expand it and will in the future invite two international piano competitions per year. For 2022, the *Concours Géza Anda* and *The Leeds* are already booked. And the ideas which competitions to invite for 2023 are on the table ...

This encouraging example stands for many others of whom we know they are ready to go. The paths across the mountain will continue!

GERRIT GLANER



Florian Riem,  
Secretary General,  
World Federation of  
Intl. Music Competitions

SIHOON KIM

# Making the Case *for* Competitions

Among almost 70 WFIMC member music competitions scheduled for the year 2020, only 12 took place. Most of these 12 were held before the pandemic even hit, and only a handful „survived“ the worldwide lockdowns and restrictions. The year 2021 is looking somewhat better, but mostly because competitions have taken the initiative to go online - some only in part, some entirely. Among some of the more prominent is the Leeds International Piano Competition, which just finished its first round of recordings. Its Chief Executive Fiona Sinclair writes, „From the outset, we knew demand was likely to increase for our 2021 competition. Pianists had more time at home practising their repertoire and crafting their applications. But we were not prepared for the avalanche of submissions we received: an increase of 43%. Intensified through the lens of lockdown and cut off from their audiences, it was humbling to read the hopes and dreams of musicians contained in each submission“.

The Leeds is not the only competition seeing a rise in applications. Around the world, interest in competitions has increased. With live performances cancelled almost everywhere, with thousands of musicians having lost their work, being unable to make a living, many have turned to competitions as a way to salvage their future and career. Interestingly, prize money has become less important over the years - it is career management, public relations, performance contracts and recording projects that really can make a difference.

For many, going to a competition is like becoming part of a family. „Their encouragement meant so much to me“ says Yekwon Sunwoo, winner of the 2017 Cliburn Competition. „Their sincerity and warmth can make you feel like a part of the family! It does not matter where you come from, or how you do in the competition. Everyone there is so welcoming and shows sincere appreciation for you and your work.“

Obviously, an online competition cannot offer the same kind of care and devotion that a live competition would. But in the end, „being part of the family“ is key: competitions will work hard to promote their winners, to give them the public exposure and media presence they need.

While in the past, video recordings have been used only for preliminary rounds, recorded performances and livestreams have become now commonplace up until the finals. Cooperations with piano makers, recording studios and concert halls around the globe ensure a video and audio quality far above what we have been used to, and the future will certainly bring further

innovations and improvements. While some competitions have worked with holography, the Chopin Competition has already announced its next edition with live streaming in virtual reality. A year ago we started to become worried about the impact that Covid-19 would have on classical music. Cuts in government funding and increasingly restrictive health regulations threatened, and keep threatening, our competitions. But today, a year later, while many of us are still struggling, it has become clear that competitions will not only survive this crisis- they will have become more important than ever for the future of young artists.

**FLORIAN RIEM**

## 2021 WFIMC PIANO COMPETITIONS

### Competition dates

CITY | COUNTRY

Competition Name

Information | Application deadline

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

for individual competition information and websites!

All information is subject to change.

**3–29 May 2021**

**BRUSSELS | BELGIUM**

*Queen Elisabeth Competition*

No audience—all rounds live streamed

[queenelisabethcompetition.be](http://queenelisabethcompetition.be)

**21–23 May 2021**

**BUCHAREST | ROMANIA**

*George Enescu International Competition*

Semi-Finals and Finals/no audience—live streamed

[festivalenescu.ro/en](http://festivalenescu.ro/en)

**6–15 May 2021**

**PRAGUE | CZECH REPUBLIC**

*Prague Spring International Music Competition*

First round online, live from second round

No audience—all rounds live streamed

[festival.cz/en](http://festival.cz/en)

**27 May–5 June 2021**

**ZURICH | SWITZERLAND**

*Geza Anda International Piano Competition*

[geza-anda.ch](http://geza-anda.ch)

**10–13 May 2021**

**MONTREAL | CANADA**

*Concours Musical International de Montreal*

Finals—online

[concoursmontreal.ca/en](http://concoursmontreal.ca/en)

**23 June–2 July 2021**

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**8 July – 11 August 2021****CLEVELAND | OHIO, USA**

*Cleveland International Piano Competition*  
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[pianocleveland.org](http://pianocleveland.org)

**24 August – 3 September 2021****BOLZANO | ITALY**

*Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition*  
[concorsobusoni.it](http://concorsobusoni.it)

**2 – 8 September 2021****MUNICH | GERMANY**

*ARD International Music Competition (piano duo)*  
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[br.de/ard-musikwettbewerb](http://br.de/ard-musikwettbewerb)

**8 – 18 September 2021****LEEDS | UK**

*Leeds International Piano Competition*  
 Second round, Semi-Finals and Finals  
[leedspiano.com](http://leedspiano.com)

**12 – 19 September 2021****BUDAPEST | HUNGARY**

*Franz Liszt International Piano Competition*  
[zeneiversenyek.hu/en](http://zeneiversenyek.hu/en)

**14 – 26 September 2021****ZHUHAI | CHINA**

*Zhuhai International Mozart Competition for Young Musicians*  
[en.zhmozart.org](http://en.zhmozart.org)

**24 September – 3 October 2021****DORTMUND | GERMANY**

*International Schubert-Competition Dortmund*  
 Application deadline: 15 June 2021  
[schubert-wettbewerb.de/en](http://schubert-wettbewerb.de/en)

**2 – 23 October 2021****WARSAW | POLAND**

*Fryderyk Chopin International Piano Competition*  
[chopin2020.pl/en](http://chopin2020.pl/en)

**6 – 17 October 2021****VERCELLI | ITALY**

*Viotti Competition*  
[concorsoviotti.it](http://concorsoviotti.it)

**18 – 21 October 2021****VIENNA | AUSTRIA**

*International Beethoven Competition Vienna*  
 First round online  
[beethoven-comp.at](http://beethoven-comp.at)

**26 October – 7 November 2021****SHENZHEN | CHINA**

*China Shenzhen International Piano Competition*  
[csipcc.com.cn](http://csipcc.com.cn)

**27 October – 7 November 2021****WEIMAR | GERMANY**

*International Franz Liszt Piano Competition*  
 Application deadline: 1 June 2021  
[hfm-weimar.de/liszt](http://hfm-weimar.de/liszt)

**12 – 29 November 2021****HAMAMATSU | JAPAN**

*Hamamatsu International Piano Competition*  
[hipic.jp/en](http://hipic.jp/en)

**24 – 27 November 2021****BRATISLAVA | SLOVAKIA**

*Johann Nepomuk Hummel International Piano Competition*  
 Application deadline: 31 May 2021  
 First round online  
[filharmonia.sk/en](http://filharmonia.sk/en)

**29 November – 4 December 2021****MANCHESTER | UK**

*James Mottram International Piano Competition*  
 Details to be announced  
[rncm.ac.uk/jmipc-info](http://rncm.ac.uk/jmipc-info)

**2 – 11 December 2021****BONN | GERMANY**

*International Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn*  
 Application deadline: 14 May 2021  
[telekom-beethoven-competition.de/itbcb-en](http://telekom-beethoven-competition.de/itbcb-en)



A view of the hall during the finals of the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels (2013).

# How are the piano competitions coping with the pandemic?

At first, 2020 was set to be a very exciting year with many major international piano competitions: the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels, the Arthur Rubinstein Competition in Tel Aviv, the Beethoven Competition in Vienna, the Liszt Competition in Utrecht, the Schumann Competition in Zwickau, the Grieg Competition in Bergen, Montreal, Sydney, Cleveland, and last but not least the famous Chopin Competition in Warsaw! But they were all cancelled and postponed. There are also other, highly interesting competitions all over the world. In 2020, altogether more than 160 international piano competitions were cancelled.

Many organisers had to consider what to do. Postponing the competition was already a tough decision, but there seemed to be no alternative. Initially, it was believed that the problems caused by the corona crisis would be temporary and that live events could be resumed in 2021. But now, as the situation in the world is not getting much better, the competition organisers have had to think again. What options do they really have ...?

One such option is to arrange an online competition. And indeed, many organisers resorted to this. However, having a music competition online is far from satisfactory. As described elsewhere, it comes with serious setbacks and can raise many questions and

concerns. Several organisers stated quite clearly they were not opting for an online event and would rather postpone the competition again, if necessary. (Århus, Bergen, Warsaw ...)

Several other major competitions looked into different solutions. Apart from all the complications with international travelling, the next biggest problem is how to comply with the restrictions of accommodating an audience (if at all possible), a jury, or welcoming a large group of contestants. Therefore, many competitions had to be transformed into a “hybrid” event: the preliminary round was held online, after which a much smaller number of participants could advance to perform live in the (semi)finals. A few competitions contracted studios and even concert halls to provide for fine recording sites in various places in the world (Busoni Competition, the Honens, Leeds, Arthur Rubinstein Competition, ...). Naturally, this also requires an extra effort from the applicants to travel to the place where the recording can be made and perhaps also to stay overnight. On the other hand, had the competition been live, they would also have had to undertake a (longer) trip.

How many pianists may advance to the next (live) stage depends on the traditional structure of the competition. In Tel Aviv, there

will be six finalists, but in Leeds one continues with twenty-four selected pianists for the (live) 2<sup>nd</sup> round. At the Beethoven Competition in Vienna, there will be twelve semi-finalists and in Cleveland there will be eight. The Cleveland Competition has always been very generous. Apart from the chance of winning the extraordinarily high first prize (US\$ 75,000), each semi-finalist receives at least US\$ 2,000. Most other competitions have to be more modest, but it is much appreciated by the contestants if they can receive some compensation for their travel and accommodation. At the Ricard Viñes Competition in Lleida (Spain), all twelve selected semi-finalists will receive 250 Euros.

Interestingly, the jury at the Cleveland Competition this year is also “hybrid”: part of the jury will be present, while the three remaining judges will assess the performances online.

At the time of writing, the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels (3–29 May 2021) is still planned to be entirely live. It had already been postponed from last year and the seventy-four selected pianists are eager to take part in this prestigious competition. It will be an enormous challenge to comply with all the health and safety

restrictions that are imposed and which may still change. It is still uncertain whether and how large an audience can be allowed to attend. Usually, the candidates may stay with host families, but this also has to be reconsidered. It requires much flexibility from everyone involved. Another important matter is the final stage. The performances of one of the great piano concertos by each of the finalists are the culmination of such a magnificent musical event, full of emotions and expectations. The competition organisers will probably have a plan B and a plan C, just in case. Exceptionally, all participants from outside Belgium are being offered a 50% reimbursement of their travel expenses (up to 500 Euros).

The Chopin Competition in Warsaw is also still planning to go ahead with the 2nd phase of the preselection: live auditions of all 163 selected pianists in Warsaw, July 2021.

In Spain, defying all uncertainties, all four stages of the 63<sup>rd</sup> edition of the international piano competition Premio Jaén *were* held live, 8–17 April 2021. The organisers received 89 applicants; the highest number in the history of this competition!

**GUSTAV ALINK**

The Covid-19 pandemic and all the travel restrictions have had a huge impact on everybody's lives and all public events, including the international music competitions.



The winner is surrounded by the press – Boris Giltburg, Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels (2013).

Piano Competitions give us an amazing opportunity to experience more than just the excellence of pianists and composers. For this we need state-of-the-art instruments that deliver the intentions of both the creator of music as well as the artist. Just like in our previous edition we asked young pianists about their piano of choice.

# Pianists and Piano Brands – Mutual Love, Admiration and Fascination

## Charles Szczepanek — Mason & Hamlin

I'm always looking for an instrument I can trust. I need to trust the action and that it's going to respond to the highest demands of speed and power, and yet offer a feeling of control. I need to trust the tone of the instrument in consistency across registers: beautiful and bell-like when I desire, yet growling and demonic when called upon. It only takes about 30 seconds to tell whether the instrument and I will work together in creating music, or if we will be fighting each other through a performance. Once that relationship is established, I can let the instrument shape some of the intricacies of my interpretation.

On the one hand, when playing instruments that don't fit me, I feel that I need to sacrifice some aspects of a performance and my mind tends to be preoccupied with the differences in technique and interpretation that need to be implemented for the sake of the instrument. Overall that may come across as less authentic. On the other, when playing instruments that do fit me, I know that no matter how dramatic I'd like to be, no matter what demands I place on the instrument, it's going to perform and be there for me. That allows me to focus on the story and emotions I'm conveying to the audience.

When playing a Mason & Hamlin, I feel so connected that I forget that I'm even playing an instrument. The action is incredibly fast, yet not light. That means I can control soft and lyrical playing and attain very low volumes when I desire. Those moments when you

want the audience to lean forward in their seats to hear a handful of notes... I can achieve those easily and confidently with a Mason & Hamlin. It's also an instrument that can be pushed to the maximum, dynamically, and it won't give up or start to shut down. In fact, it's the only brand I've ever played where I feel I can make a



real volume difference between ff, fff and ffff. I don't need to act as though the sound is getting bigger, it actually is, and without the loss of tone that is so common at the highest of volumes.

Tonally, I feel as though I have all of the colours of an orchestra available at my fingertips. Lush strings, declarative brass, timpani, crystal clear flutes and clarinets all are colour choices on my palette. Call them orchestral colours or timbres of emotion, I always feel like I can find exactly what I need for each musical moment. One of the craziest things is that whether I'm playing a 6'4" in a recording studio, a 7' in a small hall, or a 9'4" on a large stage, they all exhibit these qualities. It's not limited to only the concert grand flagship of the brand.

### Hannes Minnaar — Maene

When performing a concert, the interpreter is in dialogue on many levels. In the first place with the music – which he cannot let speak other than through his own personality – but also with the audience and, not in the last place, with the instrument. To me, a successful concert is a collaboration between interpreter and instrument, performing the music together with joined forces. Every instrument (as well as every performer) brings its own limitations, but its qualities and artistry can bring inspiration as well.

Chris Maene has had the courage to try something new and bring development back to the piano industry, by using the straight strung technique from the history of piano building in a piano that is in many ways a modern one. The result is a series of instruments that are among the most inspiring that my fingers have met. Not only do they technically function on the highest order, I would even dare to say their playing comfort is unsurpassed... but more importantly: they have their own distinguished, personal sound, both transparent and expressive and suited for a broad range of repertoire.



### Haiou Zhang — Bechstein

Mostly, I make decisions about a concert grand piano after my natural intuition. However, I always try to distinguish the situation between a live concert performance and CD recording. Also, the repertoire plays an important role in the selection of the instrument. Until now, I have often chosen the C. Bechstein D282 for both concerts as well recordings because of the unique touch and sound that most closely brings my musical ideas into the sound pictures I wish to attain. Especially for the French impressionistic pieces I can't think of any other alternatives – it simply satisfies my pianistic needs physically and also imaginatively without any compromise: highest sensitivity, reactivity and precision. So far, I've specifically picked three important solo albums of mine among others recorded on the C. Bechstein D282, as well as prestigious piano recitals in concert halls such as Konzerthaus Berlin, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Brucknerhaus Linz, Beijing Concert Hall and Shanghai Grand Theatre. Moreover, there have been many other concerto performances such as with the National Philharmonic of Russia under Vladimir Spivakov, NDR Radio Philharmonic under Andrew Manze, etc. Undoubtedly, the D282 is a masterpiece that will accompany me throughout the upcoming years and with which I can transfer my passion in the music to an audience all over the globe.

**PATRICK JOVELL**

More in our next edition.

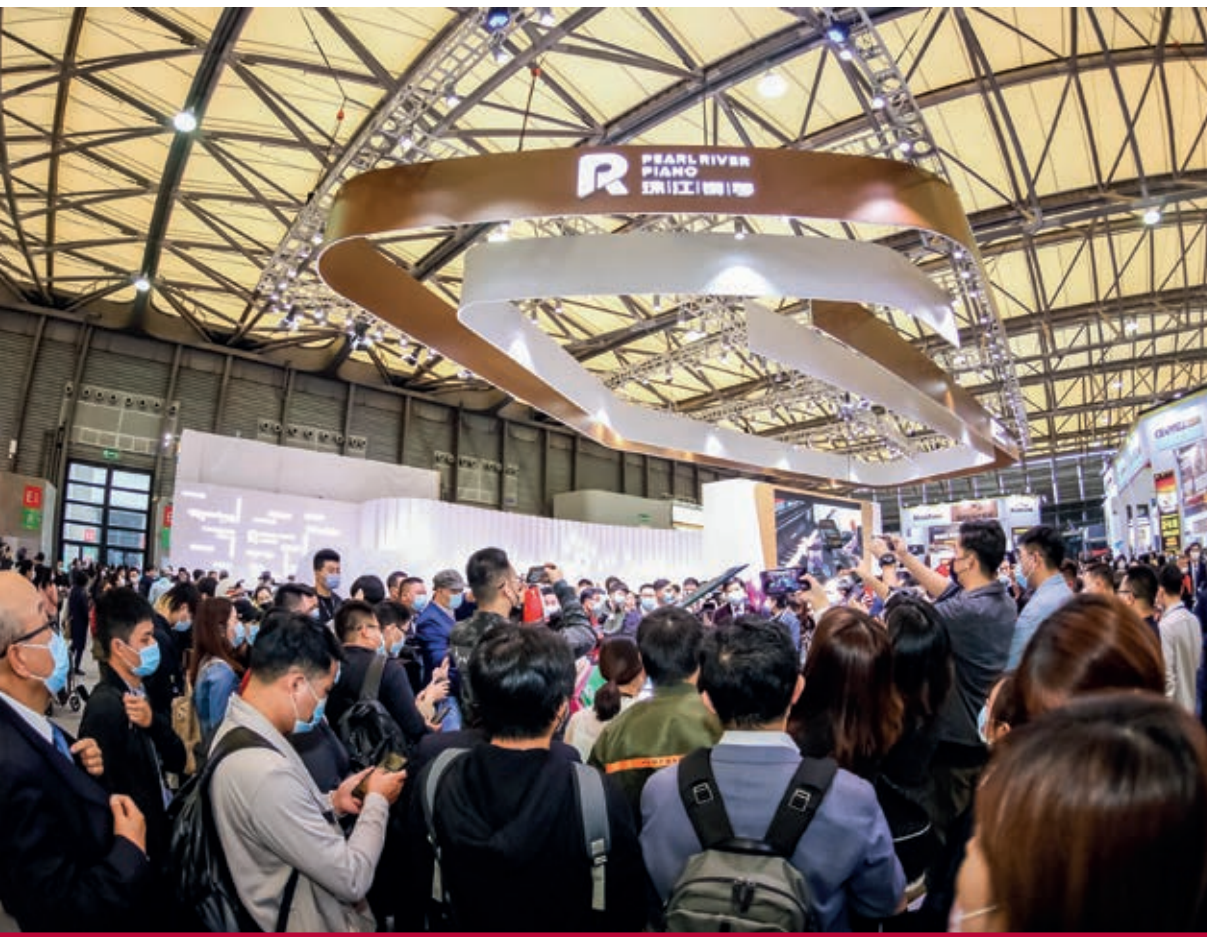
pianostreet.com





# Spacewalk from the 3D printer

Recently, Pearl River Piano Group looked to the future with their first 3D-printed grand piano. With a nod to space travel, this grand piano is inspired by Michael Jackson's Moonwalk: a showcase of inventiveness. We spoke to Leng Tshua, Global Sales and Marketing Director of Pearl River Piano Group.



The grand piano was introduced at Music China, the largest music fair in Asia. The four-day exhibition in Shanghai attracted more than 11,000 visitors from 81 countries. Kayserburg's "Celestial Harmony Spacewalk" stole the show among 2,252 exhibitors from 31 countries. Kayserburg, like Pearl River and Ritmüller, is produced by the Pearl River Piano Group, founded in 1956, is now the largest piano manufacturer in the world, with a production of more than 150,000 instruments per year, with a market share of more than 30% worldwide.

The process of 3D printing is revolutionary because it allows designs that are difficult to construct using traditional manufacturing methods. While the piano's cast iron frame and wooden structure remain unchanged, the cabinet is now printed from carbon fiber polyester. This "Celestial Harmony Spacewalk", is based on the Kayserburg GH188A and highly advanced CNC processes combined with 3D printing technology.

**How did the idea come about?**

*We have been thinking about the 3D production potential for several years now.*

**You took car manufacturers as an example, who in turn drew inspiration from the aircraft industry. Is this typical of real innovations that you look beyond your own industry?**

*We certainly need to look beyond the piano industry to make the transition into the new millennium smooth, as our end users are very different now from 60 years ago. The new generation of consumers has been brought up with their smartphones, and we also need to integrate a technology platform into our future products.*

**Self-driving cars were long rejected as "impossible". That also seemed so for the 3D-printed grand piano? How far do you think this evolution will go?**

*Many things that were considered "impossible" thirty years ago are now part of our daily life. See how fast the smartphone has developed and now we can no longer do without it! We are always looking for new technology that can improve our production process.*

**Can we say that this is the ultimate step in piano design, a result of previous developments including carbon, or just the next step, because we don't know where creativity and inventiveness will take us in the future?**

*Given the endless potential of 3D printing technology, our first step is to test the manufacturing capabilities of acoustic instruments with such high-tech technology. And if this becomes a reality for the foreseeable future, it could potentially spark a positive revolution in the industry.*

**As you know the design and manufacture of the rim is something that sets major piano brands apart from others, I just need mention the huge**

*Liszt*  
*Utrecht*

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2022



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**difference between Bösendorfer and Steinway, for example, which directly results in a different sound concept. How do you see this development in that context?**

*It is true that the rim, along with other parts of the piano, are the vital functions of the construction and we are very selective in this process as our ultimate goal remains to produce a great sounding acoustic piano. How does 3D printing affect the sound of the instrument? The piano we launched at Music China 2020 was played by professional musicians and other industry experts, and the feedback was very positive, so I consider this experiment a success.*

**Is production easier? For example, is it less time-consuming or can it be realized with fewer professionals?**

*The 3D printing technology certainly made production much “easier” and also faster. But our workers are still needed and they work in perfect harmony with machines, in heavenly harmony I would almost say!*

**Does this also influence the “feeling” and the appreciation that customers will have for the instruments? Many still experience the piano as an instrument with a “soul” that goes beyond its function to produce sounds.**

*We are well aware that we are makers of acoustic pianos, our intentions are always focused on keeping the soul alive and well!*

**Do you see 3D printing becoming a standard in piano production at Pearl River?**

*Since we have just started with the first step towards a futuristic concept, we are now investigating the market potential after Music China 2020. I think that in the coming years we may be able to do realistic projections to offer such 3D-printed pianos.*

**Can this also be used in upright pianos in addition to grand pianos?**

*Certainly! For this design we also use plexiglass, and we are currently looking for other materials suitable for acoustic properties for the piano.*

**How many pianos are being produced?**

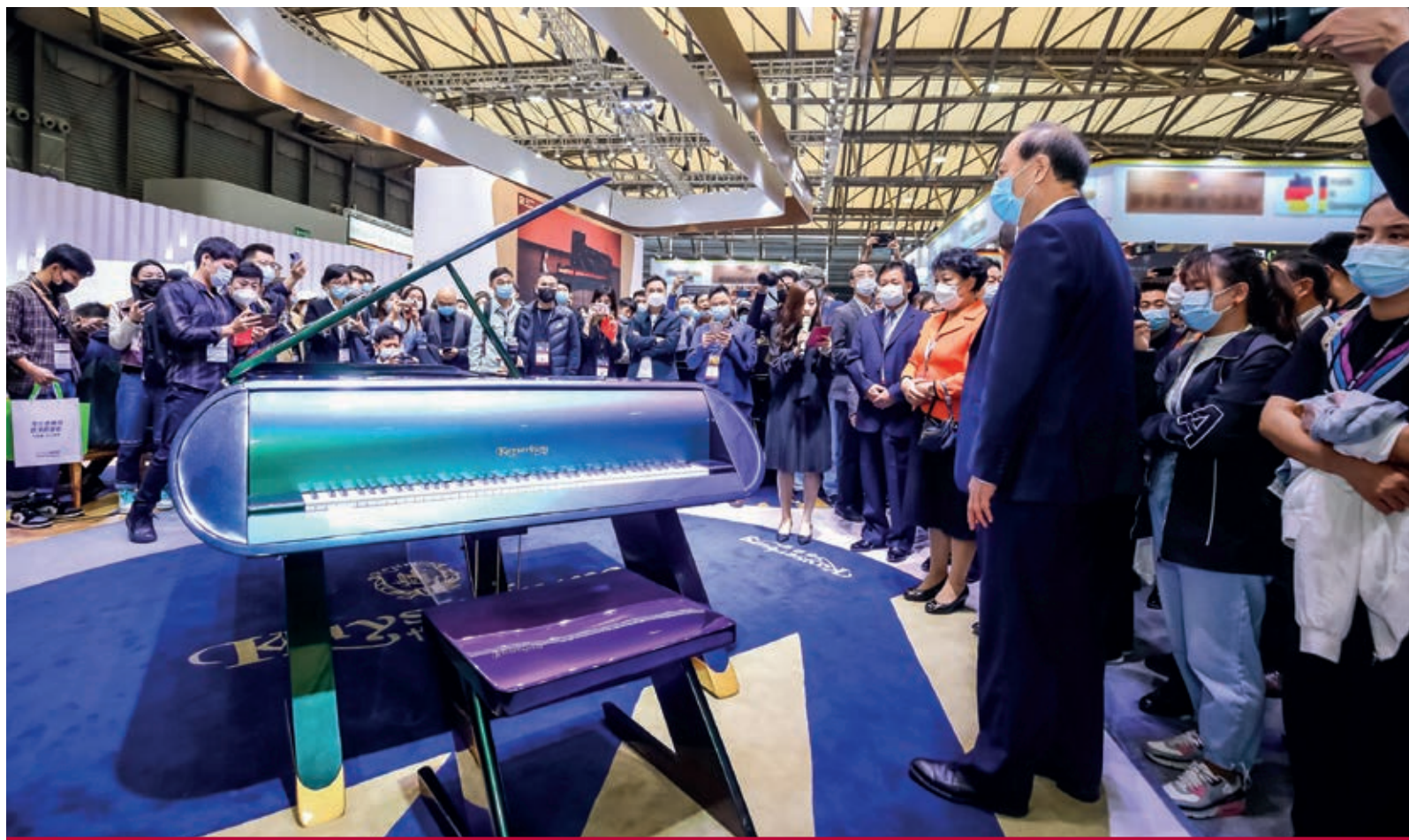
*We don't have a projection of that yet, but we look forward to the interest in this.*

**Can we see a printed piano in Europe soon?**

*I certainly expect that!*

ERIC SCHOONES

PEARL RIVER PIANO GROUP





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The Lessingtheater  
in Wolfenbüttel

ACHIM MEURER

# Creativity and imagination

The International Schimmel Piano Competition, organized by the Wilhelm Schimmel Pianofortefabrik GmbH and originally planned for last year, will now hopefully take place in September. The organisation has chosen a unique concept to help young artists prepare for a future career.

All candidates who applied in 2020 will be considered; the competition has been rescheduled and now 24 professionally trained pianists aged 18 to 32 years, who qualified in the preliminary round, will come to Braunschweig. In this illustrious city in the history of piano manufacturing, they will present a concert programme, curated by the participant him- or herself. Moreover, the concert programme should follow a theme of the participant's choice. Lothar Kiesche, CSO of Schimmel, explains: "Yes, we ask creativity and imagination of the candidates. The piano pieces can be chosen freely but should predominantly meet high artistic and pianistic standards. The piano works presented should follow a topic of the participant's choice. There are no restrictions in the choice of a topic. Thematical connections can be established, for example, by programmatic terms such as musical motifs and themes (e. g. 'water', 'night', 'dream', 'time'), characters and people (e. g. 'Scheherazade', 'Undine'), selected composition genres (e. g. 'Préludes', 'Capriccio') or technical elements (e. g. 'staccato', 'Octaves'). The programme's topic can extend far



**INTERNATIONAL  
SCHIMMELPIANO  
COMPETITION**

beyond the given examples. So, it promises to be a varied and exciting competition."

The jury's members include Prof. Wolfgang Zill, who has taught piano for more than 30 years at the Hanover University for Music, Drama and Media, Prof. Markus Becker, who received numerous awards for his CDs and is also a virtuoso jazz pianist, Prof. Yuka Imamine, who besides lecturing at the University for Music and Theatre in Munich, is an active pianist, teacher and jury member in Europe and Asia, and finally, Tim Ovens, based in Hanover and Vienna, who teaches piano at the university for music in Vienna. Ovens has founded a music academy (Vienna Music Academy) in China and teaches at the China Conservatory for Music in Peking as visiting professor.

The final round is planned for September 17–18, 2021 (Schimmel Concert Hall – Braunschweig). The winners' concert will be held on September 19, 2021 in the Lessingtheater Wolfenbüttel.

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



# Virtual Competitions in Reality

Since the corona crisis started, many music competitions have not been able to take place. In 2020, more than 160 international piano competitions were cancelled. Several organisers considered having an online competition instead. This is, of course, a tough decision. It requires a completely new approach.

Apart from the traditional competitions that were transformed into an online event, the corona crisis also motivated other organisers to launch completely new online competitions. In 2020, there were more than 60 online international piano competitions! During this difficult period, in which international travelling is very much restricted, one might see these online competitions as great alternative opportunities for young musicians to be heard

and to win a prize, but not everything is that positive. Let's take a closer look at these online competitions and see how some people have experienced them.

All pianists who applied for one of the competitions that were postponed in 2020 had to be informed. Initially, one would expect that the application fee would be paid back if the competition was not going to take place. Conversely, the rules usually state very



Jury and prize winners together in a wonderful atmosphere (Hamamatsu, Japan).  
Online competitions lack these great festive moments.

clearly that the application fee is not refundable under any circumstances ... This may already have caused some confusion and frustration. As the corona crisis continued, several competition organisers were considerate and specifically mentioned that the application fee would be refunded if the competition had to be cancelled. However, even with such a promise, one of those competitions is still keeping the pianists waiting, is not answering e-mails anymore and the competition website has vanished ... Another competition informed the previously selected candidates that they would automatically qualify for next year's event, ignoring the possibility that some of them might have other plans and would prefer to receive the application fee back. Talking about the application fee, one could also imagine that the amount might be lower for an online competition than for taking part in a live event. Indeed, especially at the beginning of the crisis, it could be seen that several competition organisers lowered the application fee. But now, there is little difference anymore. A 100-Euro application fee has become quite common. There are exceptional cases, where a low fee (25 or 40 Euros) applies or no application fee at all (Vigo, Barletta, ...) or the other extreme, where two online competitions in the U.S.A. demanded a staggering US\$ 250 and US\$ 280 application fee!

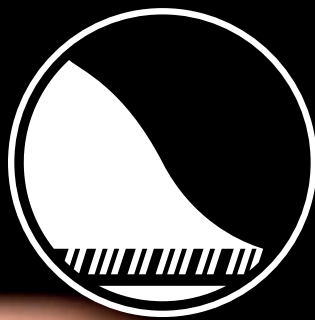
Most of the major international music competitions would not consider going entirely online. But there was one exception: the

Montreal Competition, which had also been postponed from 2020. The first prize at this competition is high: CAD 80,000. Another issue of a major piano competition is the importance of the final stage with orchestra. When the entire competition is online, it is practically impossible to have excellent recordings of comparable quality concerning the finalists' performances of a piano concerto with orchestra. This was indeed a concession that the Montreal Competition had to make: this year's online competition will only consist of recordings of the two solo rounds. As with many of the major competitions, which had been postponed from last year, the selection of candidates had already been made more than a year ago. Every competition organiser is anxious to see how many pianists will apply. Especially now, during this corona crisis, everything seems unpredictable. However, the number of applicants for some of these online competitions went sky-high and surpassed the boldest expectations! An organiser can already be very happy if there are more than 100 applicants, but one of the brand-new online competitions already attracted 200 candidates, while another attracted around 300, and yet another proudly announced having received the recordings of more than 450 applicants ... True, this was the sum of applicants for all the different age categories, but it makes one wonder: how can a jury listen to so many recordings from beginning to end? How can they properly compare them and come to a decent judgment? We know of a pianist who had accepted to be on the jury for different online competitions and who had to listen to more than 300 recordings for one competition and an additional 100 recordings for the other competition, almost at the same time.

And what to think of the pianist who applied for more than 24 competitions in 2020 and used the same recording many times over ...? Naturally, most of the respectable competitions require that a new recording be made (and with a special code, this can easily be verified), but there are still many competitions that also accept older recordings. And so, another pianist used the official recording of his prize-winning performance from a live competition to win another prize in an online competition. The rules always state that the recording may not be edited, but when all the videos were published, it was found that some of them had nonetheless been edited and had been accepted.

The awards at these online competitions are not always as attractive as what one would wish. Pianists not only need recognition, but also money and some concerts. A masterclass with the competition organiser or a 3000 Euro scholarship is not the same as 3000 Euro cash. Moreover, an additional clause that the prize will only be given if the jury votes unanimously only makes the chances of winning slimmer. In another online competition, the organiser thought to make nearly all the participants happy by announcing 24 first prizes, 50 second prizes and 56 third prize winners! The remaining 18 pianists received a special mention. Let's hope that the aspiring young pianists will soon be able to once again be present for the traditional live competitions.

**GUSTAV ALINK**



# CONCOURS GEZA-ANDA

15<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION  
**ZURICH 27 MAY > 5 JUNE 2021**

JURY PRESIDENT  
**NELSON FREIRE**

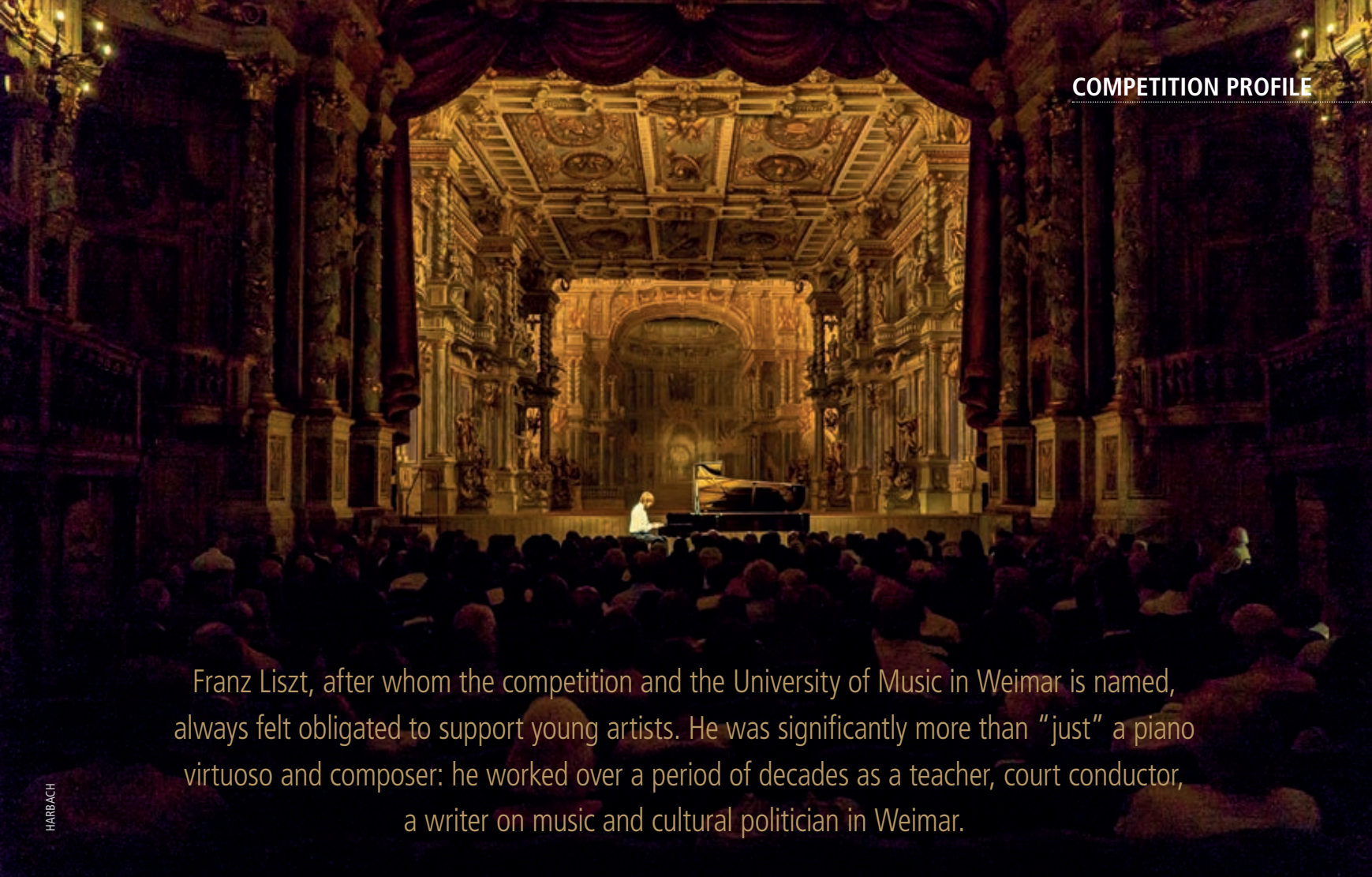
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Géza Anda Audience Prize  
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Franz Liszt, after whom the competition and the University of Music in Weimar is named, always felt obligated to support young artists. He was significantly more than “just” a piano virtuoso and composer: he worked over a period of decades as a teacher, court conductor, a writer on music and cultural politician in Weimar.

## Liszt in Weimar and Bayreuth

His (never implemented) plans for a Goethe-Stiftung (Goethe foundation) were intended to annually award prizes in the areas of music, painting, sculpture and literature – the International Franz Liszt Piano Competition Weimar-Bayreuth still keeps several of these ideas alive even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Liszt probably would have liked the idea of a pianist performance comparison in his own name. In every summer of the last few years of his life, he gave a free, week-long masterclass to eleven selected pianists in the Weimar “Hofgärtnerei” (court garden) – today known as the Liszt house.

Liszt was equally at home in Bayreuth and this city of the prestigious Steingraeber piano factory is organizing a Liszt Festival that will take place in November. The new Liszt Festival is being launched by the Cultural Department of the City of Bayreuth as part of the major Franz Liszt Piano Competition Weimar-Bayreuth, and will be inaugurated with a lecture by Nike Wagner

on November 1 in the Steingraeber Chamber Music Hall. Steingraeber is organizing a permanent exhibition entitled “Franz Liszt as Photographed in His Time: The Ernst Burger Collection at Steingraeber Haus Bayreuth”. Steingraeber was absolutely thrilled in 2020 to be able to acquire this, the world’s largest collection of original photographs for the expansion of its Steingraeber Piano Museum, and amongst some of the historic items are individual pieces that feature Liszt’s own dedications and comments.

Dezső Ránki and Edit Klukon will perform a selection of Liszt’s Symphonic Poems arranged for piano duo at the opening concert of the competition at the Markgräfliches Opernhaus Bayreuth on October 27, 2021. Above Danil Trifonov plays a Steingraeber concert grand at this unique venue in 2018.

[www.hfm-weimar.de](http://www.hfm-weimar.de)



*Géza Anda  
was the first pianist  
to record all Mozart concerti*

## Géza Anda Competition

# *A helping hand*

Géza Anda was absolutely devoted to helping young musicians and he gave generous advice whenever he could. But his performing and recording career at the time was incredibly intense. He played all over Europe, he toured the USA 17 times, he visited Japan and South Africa. He loved to give masterclasses, which he took over in Lucerne from his mentor Edwin Fischer and continued later in Zurich. Meanwhile, Hortense Anda-Bührle had seen many young pianists asking her husband for help. After Géza Anda's passing, she decided to create a competition that was unusual in that the actual contest was not a kind of ending for participants (they pick up their awards and disperse all over the world) but rather a beginning of a long process of slowly and sustainably developing artists and their careers for 20 or 30 years to come. With her powerful personality, endless generosity and overwhelming hospitality, Hortense Anda-Bührle lay the basis of what became known as a special „Géza Anda spirit“. For 40 years until her retirement last September, Ruth Bossart supported Hortense Anda-Bührle as administrator and general secretary of the Foundation. She was a well-known personality in the piano world and she cultivated friendships with former laureates, "... who were always welcomed and given a helpful hand. Over the years, Hortense Anda-Bührle and Ruth Bossart created not only a family of former prize winners but also a large network of people willing to help former laureates with a place to stay, an instrument to study on, or some practical

This year the music world celebrates the 100th anniversary of the birthday of the famous Hungarian-Swiss pianist Géza Anda (1921–1976). After his untimely death, his widow Hortense Anda-Bührle founded the Géza Anda Foundation to help and mentor the laureates of the Géza Anda Competition. Among them we find Georges Pludermacher, Dénes Várjon, Pietro De Maria, Alexei Volodin, Konstantin Scherbakov, and Claire Huangci from the last edition in 2018. The general secretary of the competition, Markus Wyler, tells the story.





Géza and Hortense Anda in 1966



In Luzern with the English Chamber Orchestra in 1964

advice. During the competition, candidates tend to stay with host families, and many lifelong friendships developed.

### Awards

Nowadays, a competition is one of the few remaining ways for young musicians to present themselves, if not the only one. Agents usually no longer hold auditions and concert promoters are reluctant to engage young musicians not well known yet; journalists rarely review concerts of newcomers. At the same time, publicity, multi-media and PR have become far more important in order to acquire a certain reputation.

Naturally, this engagement is particularly important during the current pandemic, when the situation for young musicians is extremely trying. This is why the board of the Géza Anda-Foundation is doing its best to carry out the 15th Concours: to set a mark for culture and music, to give a group of excellent young musicians a challenge and something to look forward to, to hopefully alleviate the situation for some of them with the augmented prize money, some new prizes and some opportunities to perform during the forthcoming season. It is very important, however, to remember throughout the process that a competition shows an artist under specific conditions at a particular moment in time. Everyone's life conditions change continuously, as does one's experience and consequently one's technique and one's expressivity. Yet another reason for the Géza Anda Competition to offer a wide range of awards: the Hortense Anda-Bührle grant for a young pianist, the new Bartók-Liszt prize, the Mozart prize, etc.

### Hungarian school

As an artist Géza Anda was deeply rooted in the Hungarian school: at the same time as, for instance, Cziffra and Sebök, he studied with Dohnányi, Weiner and Kodály. Like most Hungarian musicians, the breadth of their musical training and an extremely clear-sighted analysis of the score's texture also formed the basis

for Anda's musicianship, who stipulated that equipped with this knowledge the pianist must search for his own interpretation. Géza Anda's Mozart and Bartók interpretations remain legendary. He was the first pianist to record all Mozart concerti, between 1967 and 1972 and he popularized the Bartók concertos. The second he performed in public more than 300 times, and he recorded all of them on several occasions. This repertoire still plays an important role in the competition, and the semi-finals are exclusively devoted to Mozart concertos. But for the 2021 finals, candidates choose from concertos by Beethoven, Bartók and Liszt. The Liszt concertos must be complemented by further pieces for piano and orchestra, or the little-known "Variations on a Nursery Tune" by Ernst von Dohnányi, who was one of Anda's teachers. Solo works by Bartók may also be chosen for the recital round, as a new Bartók-Liszt award was created for this occasion.

The repertoire of the competition is very demanding, but the music business requires pianists to have a large repertoire in their fingers from the start. The Géza Anda-Foundation acts as an artist's management for the laureates and strives to provide them with opportunities to play regularly, in large and small venues, and in different settings. The aim is to achieve a regularity and to let the laureates gain experience. At this stage, the aim is not necessarily to throw them into the Musikverein or the Berlin Philharmonic, which is dangerous if someone still has little experience, but to give the prize winners time to grow and to learn about all the other challenges surrounding an artist in his or her life.

### Audience

Currently, there will be 44 candidates from all over the world taking part in the preliminary round, where each presents him- or herself with about half an hour of music from different periods. Around a dozen will be invited to play a Recital (2nd Round) of about 55 minutes. The programme is selected by the jury from three proposals made by the candidate. Six candidates will pass

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## Lorenzo Soulès

Isaac Albéniz  
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## Joseph Moog

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Johannes Brahms  
Rhapsody in g Minor op. 79/2

Robert Schumann  
Six Etudes after Paganini's  
Caprices op. 3

Gabriel Fauré  
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Géza Anda in Zürich, 1960

to the Mozart Semi-finals, three to the Finals, where they will be asked to play a concerto by Beethoven, Bartók or Liszt. The prestigious jury, with chairman Nelson Freire and many luminaries from the piano world, is formed according to the traditions established by Mrs Anda. It consists largely of performing pianists from various countries and pianistic traditions, has a Swiss element, might contain former laureates of the Concours Géza Anda, with a conductor and a personality from another field of music or the music industry.

Obviously, the 15<sup>th</sup> Géza Anda Competition will be carried out in accordance with the regulations of the Swiss Federal Health Department regarding the curbing of the Corona pandemic. The question we are most worried about is whether we may invite an audience to attend or not because previously this was one of the most important elements of the Concours Géza Anda, and friends and families have been eagerly anticipating the event. But we will see. In any case, all rounds will be streamed on [www.geza-anda.ch](http://www.geza-anda.ch) and the finals are planned to be televised.

## Bechstein lends a hand

The Carl Bechstein Foundation will support eighteen young pianists with a scholarship this year. These are musicians who have completed their master's degree and have studied in Germany or Austria for at least two years.

They will receive 1,000 euros per month to compensate for missing income because concerts did not take place during the Corona period. Gregor Willmes, member of the board of directors of the Carl Bechstein Foundation and head of cultural management at C. Bechstein Pianoforte AG: "In response to the corona pandemic, we have advertised these scholarships at relatively short notice. And we are very satisfied with the result of this call, because a large number of outstanding young pianists have applied for a scholarship. At the same time it was also depressing to learn because this shows how great the economic hardship has become among freelance musicians due to the pandemic. Pianists starting their careers finance their lives through concerts and competition prizes. However, both of these almost completely disappeared in the last year. We want to try to compensate a little."

[www.carl-bechstein-stiftung.de](http://www.carl-bechstein-stiftung.de)



Scholarship holder  
Aaron Pilsan  
and Gregor Willmes

Alexander Gavrylyuk

# The right mindset



MARCO BORGREVE

Alexander Gavrylyuk is a unique artist; he travels the world as a super virtuoso and many will remember his BBC Proms performance – labelled as ‘revelatory’ by The Times – of one of his signature pieces: Rachmaninov’s Third Piano Concerto. But he can equally do miracles with a Sonata by Mozart or Schumann’s *Kinderszenen*.

He is also a more and more prominent pedagogue, mainly as Artist-in-Residence at the Chautauqua Institution where he leads the piano program. Each summer the best students from schools, like Juilliard and Curtis, benefit from his insights and with his ideas about the meaning of music in modern society he brings a special touch to his artistry.

This year he was invited to join the jury of three prestigious competitions. The first was The Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Masters Competition in Tel Aviv, which he had to decline because of his concert schedule. However, he will be on the jury of the Hamamatsu International Piano Competition in the fall and in Utrecht for the Liszt Competition next year. As a youngster he was successful in two of those competitions himself. He won First Prize and Gold Medal at the Horowitz International Piano Competition (1999), First Prize in Hamamatsu (2000) and the Gold Medal in Tel Aviv (2005).

The very first competition I participated in was in Senigallia, when I was eleven years old. And the Horowitz competition I did twice: after getting second prize in 1998, I went back for the first prize the year after. Those are perhaps things you do when are you thirteen.

Now I am looking forward to Hamamatsu and Utrecht. I have never been on a jury before, but I feel I can contribute something worthwhile, inspired by my teaching experience. I never tell my students how a certain passage should go, that is absolutely a no-go zone for me, as there is nothing absolute in music in my opinion. I could say something that may inspire students, just to allow for them to express their own thoughts in the most natural way. Some musicologists who seem to know exactly how things should be performed can be irritating from time to time. For me that is wrong – that is not what music is about.

And to get away from any political arguments, I believe the process should be as transparent as possible, with every jury member on camera constantly and all discussions available to the public. Some jury members may not like this, but it should also be a learning experience, with after each round a discussion with candidates who didn’t pass. They should get analysis, suggestions and comments, good and bad. They need to know what to work on.

In that context I would like to make an effort to change the concept of competitions, beginning with another name, something more like a festival, for example. I am very happy to learn that Liszt Utrecht is already working in that direction. Young people need better guidance and as long as professors have this mindset of “my students

are the best, because they won competitions here and there”, it will be hard for the students to break away from this. Because with a mindset of competing and proving yourself, you are putting boundaries on yourself and setting yourself up for a very conditional way of thinking, you are going to poison your life with negative ways of looking at yourself. You will never be good enough to prove yourself, so you will not enjoy the process in the end and the music will never be free.

Under any circumstances you should be able to concentrate on the music itself and your immersion in it, despite the jury watching you every moment, and the competitors looking at you, hoping they will be better than you.

I feel with the correct mindset and correct approach competitions can be an amazing helping hand for young musicians. If you see a competition as an opportunity to increase your stamina and your ability to withstand stressful situations, it can help. It is so important to know how to protect yourself on an energetic level. Some people might not be kind to you and negative experiences in general help to develop a thick skin as a tool you can pull out anytime you need it. You need that to be selfless in your approach to music. Practicing with the focus on music and not on the interpreter is a crucial first step. That already gives you a good perspective on music in general and competitions also, and this – perhaps all too obvious so people sometimes forget – is the only way that will allow music to manifest itself as what it really is: a very simple and beautiful message from the heart.

**ERIC SCHOONES**

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ALLARD WILLEMSE

# Liszt Utrecht **New ways**

With the cancellation of the last edition of the Utrecht Liszt Competition, director Rob Hilberink seized the opportunity to redesign this event into a festival, in its continued efforts to support young professionals. The upcoming edition of 2022 will see many changes.

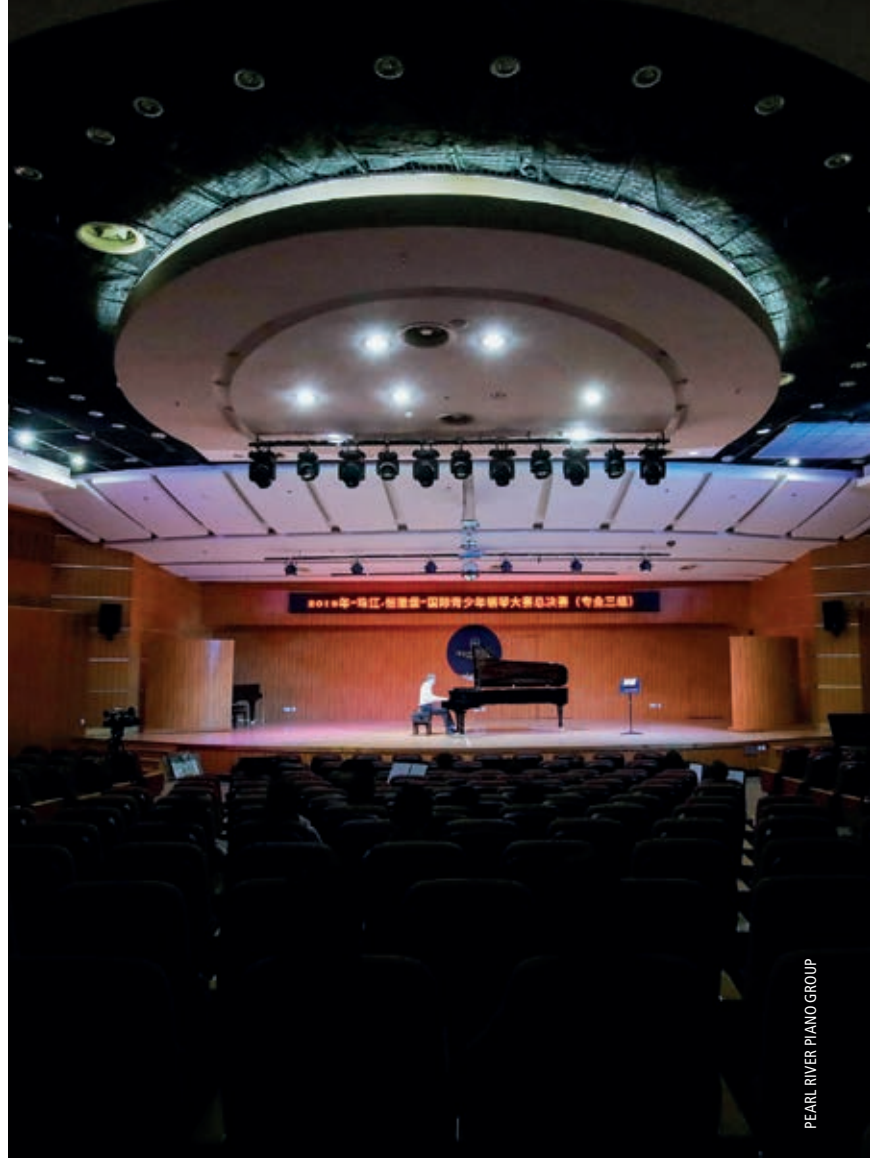
Rob Hilberink: “With the renaming ‘Liszt Utrecht’ and the elimination of the word ‘competition’ we are aiming to change the general perspective on our mission: showcasing and developing talented pianists. We are noticing a changed attitude towards the competitive aspect, by the industry, the participants and the audience. I am not saying we are not a competition anymore, as I absolutely believe that competitions are vital to the classical music eco-system: they provide a chance to any aspiring musician to enter a market without connections. And, indeed, Liszt Utrecht still selects winners who are offered a career program, but we want to send a clear message that all the pianists we present are budding professionals. To demonstrate that we take our performers seriously, we should provide the best possible conditions to these musicians to present themselves, including the payment of a fee to every pianist. Some elements were already introduced in the past, for example allowing participants to play multiple rounds before an elimination. In 2022 all pianists will have a chance to perform all the repertoire they prepared in four recitals. To make it a real festival we have a horizontal programming, starting each day with solo recitals, then chamber music, followed by a song recital, including a newly commissioned work, and solo recitals in the evening. This makes it more

appealing to the public and for the musicians it means the drawing of lots no longer determines the time of day they will perform. Each recital will use an instrument of a different manufacturer Yamaha, Maene, Steinway and Fazioli, so the pianists perform on all pianos throughout the festival. This is much like actual concert practice, where musicians need to adapt to the piano available. Also, from a repertoire standpoint, we programme it as a festival, where we highlight different works each edition; in 2022 we will focus on Schubert, through the eyes of Liszt of course.

As we only invite ten pianists to the festival, the selection round has become more important. In the past we hosted auditions around the world with different conditions. Now, after a video screening, we bring 40 pianists to Utrecht for a live selection round. This is a 40 minutes recital in front of our loyal audience in Utrecht. Last year made us realise the importance of live music; the interaction between performer and the public is something the jury must consider.

To help the ten pianists fulfil their full potential, we offer them an Academy before the festival to finetune their repertoire. Another new element is ‘NLiszt’ a festival-line for five Dutch pianists (16-21 years), which offers them a priceless learning experience.”

**Application deadline:** 1 September, 2021 · **Selection rounds:** 6–9 January, 2022 · **Festival:** 22–29 September, 2022 · **Website:** [www.liszt.nl](http://www.liszt.nl)





Pearl River · Kayserburg International Youth Piano Competition is the continuation and expansion of the 1983 Pearl River Cup National Youth Piano Invitational Competition, which was originally founded by Pearl River Piano Group in Guangzhou, China.

# Pearl River · Kayserburg International Youth Piano Competition

Designated as National Cultural Export Key Enterprise and National Cultural Industry Demonstration Base, for the last 65 years, Pearl River Piano Group has spared no efforts in supporting the development of piano performing arts around the world.

Starting in 1983, Pearl River Piano Group held the first Pearl River Cup National Youth Piano Invitational Competition in Guangzhou, China. This was the first time a Chinese domestic enterprise held a professional piano competition, immediately creating a high-profile showcase of deserving young artists from around China. It was a great way to kickstart their journey into professional music careers and many of the competition's past winners have become outstanding pianists and educators in the world today.

In 2009, Pearl River Piano launched the first Pearl River · Kayserburg Nationwide Youth Piano Competition. Their mission was to promote and popularize piano education for young families in major cities, and to develop excellent pianists for China in the immediate future. As a biennial event, the competition is co-sponsored by the China Committee for Promoting Art Education and Guangzhou Pearl River Piano Group Co., Ltd; in 2017, the competition was renamed Pearl River · Kayserburg International Youth Piano Competition. With the great support of famous artists, piano performers and educators around the world, the competition grew exponentially to becoming the world's largest youth piano competition, attracting 100,000 participants in 2019. Today, Pearl River · Kayserburg International Youth Piano Competition reso-

nates with many around the world, and is a major influencer for China's domestic piano industry.

For 2021, Pearl River · Kayserburg International Youth Piano Competition and its organizing committee will host a total of 36 competition areas in China, covering 30 provinces and municipalities, which will include more than 300 cities in China. Internationally, young artists representing USA, Canada, Australia, Ecuador, Poland, the Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia and Iran will be sharing center stage with their Chinese counterparts in Guangzhou from November 12 through 15 during the Grand Finals; there will be more than 400 semifinalists from the professional and amateur groups pre-selected to participate in the festivities. The International Grand Finals of this competition will be served by a prestigious global panel of judges: juries from the United States, Russia, Italy, as well as pianists and music educators from China will select the next Grand Prize Winners for 2021. During the final rounds of Pearl River · Kayserburg International Youth Piano Competition, a series of cultural activities will be held in Guangzhou concurrently, including piano solo concerts, lectures and master classes, as well as various musical festivals. The award presentation at the concluding concert of the competition will showcase the top winners of this year's top young artists. All such activities further sustain global exchange in recognition of deserving young artists during the formative years of their artistic development and also support the advancement in music education for the next generation of piano lovers.



ALLAN MCKENZIE/SWPIC.COM

## International Piano Competitions During Pandemic

# Can't Stop The Music

With borders and concert halls closed, competitions are left with two options: arranging everything online or hybrid. The Montréal and Sydney Competitions have chosen to produce online competitions, while Leeds, as a consequence of successful vaccine programs, and Cleveland, who already produced a hybrid version in 2020, will arrange the final rounds in person, in full accordance with current audience restrictions and associated public precautions.

Going online is not necessarily a drawback. Montreal was surprised that contributions from their sponsors were so generous going from \$160,000 total prize money in 2019 to \$235,000 in 2021. “We are happy to give out such prizes, especially during these difficult times for musicians in general”, says Executive & Artistic Director Christiane LeBlanc.

Sydney also decided on the online option. The Australian government directly played a part in the planning of the reimagined 2021 Sydney International Online Piano Competition. The Australian borders remain firmly shut to the majority of non-Australian international travellers. “In our Online competition we are not intending or attempting to replicate a live performance in a concert hall. What we are giving, in this unique situation, is live recordings, so that audiences can engage with The Sydney and our young artists if they want”, says Chief Executive Marcus Barker.

The Leeds already presented itself as a hybrid competition in their last edition in 2018, so the extra changes they made to prepare for the 2021 competition, were seen as a natural development. Their audiences love the way the digital content enhances their competition experience and Leeds’ aim is to create an enriching artistic programme for both live and virtual audiences with broadcast partners, including medici.tv and the BBC. This means programmes and interactive elements that offer deeper insights into the musicians and the music. “The competition has pledged to create a zero-carbon future, so the pandemic created unexpected opportunities to reduce its environmental impact”, says CEO Fiona Sinclair.

The restrictions on international travel meant finding venues for the competitors close to their home base. As a result, the first round will take place in 17 different countries, which means providing excellent acoustic spaces with top-level instruments and sourcing high-quality audio-visual specialists to film the pianists.

### Virtu(al)oso

Piano Cleveland hosted a new global online competition for artist relief called “Virtu(al)oso” last summer. The goal was to provide exceptional musical content and relief to artists, so prize money was equalized across contestants and audience members could give directly to their artist of choice. The initiative raised more than \$63,000 for the contestants from donors around the world, reaching over 36,000 views in 71 countries. This experience along with safety for the contestants suggested a hybrid solution. “The first two rounds are pre-recorded in ten locations worldwide, based on the contestants’ location at the scheduled time of recordings. Piano Cleveland ensures the quality of recordings with a clear set of guidelines and covers all hall and recording expenses for the contestants.” says President Yaron Kohlberg.

The Semi-Finals and Finals will be held in Cleveland in person, as it was important for organizers to keep a live component for audiences to enjoy. They are hoping as many people as possible will be able to access performances live. At the moment, vaccinations are going well in Ohio and organizers are optimistic about having an audience during the events.

<b>Montréal</b>	April 26 to May 14	<a href="http://www.concoursmontreal.ca">www.concoursmontreal.ca</a>
<b>Leeds</b>	September 8–18	<a href="http://www.leedspiano.com">www.leedspiano.com</a>
<b>Sydney</b>	July 2–18	<a href="http://www.thesydney.com">www.thesydney.com</a>
<b>Cleveland</b>	July 8 to August 11	<a href="http://www.pianocleveland.org">www.pianocleveland.org</a>

### Piano Trail

The altered formats of the competitions have enabled both creativity and new ideas. Montreal has connected the transmission to a multitude of media platforms and will let the winner perform with the Orchestre symphonique de Montreal next season. The Leeds will introduce “Leeds Piano Trail” – a network of beautiful artist-decorated pianos that will animate the city's streets with music, including a unique sculpture trail made from recycled pianos. This shall come to life through a two-week festival with their communities, all documented on film.

Digital media also allows ideas on artistic development. Sydney creates an artist storyline by letting contestants make a rapport with the audience and developing their personality and marketability as an artist. This includes presentations on how they think about the construction of their programs from an audience’s or concert promoter’s perspective and their life outside the competition. Contestants will also introduce and verbally present their programs in the competition.

Variations in repertoire contents offers new angles in terms of discovery and development. Cleveland introduces a new prize for works by female composers to inspire contestants to broaden the traditional classical repertoire. The semifinal round will feature virtuosic popular music transcriptions, especially for the occasion. It will also present paired contestants in a new two-piano format, allowing them to showcase their collaborative skills.

In summary, the pandemic situation has forced society to take a major leap in discovering possibilities and trials never tried before. It’s impossible to imagine that the post-pandemic world and its international piano competitions will go back to a 100 percent “old-fashioned normal” in the future.

**PATRICK JOVELL**

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# Santander International Piano Competition

A reunion that has been repeated in Santander for 50 years now will be held, for the 20<sup>th</sup> time, between July and August 2022. Twenty young pianists coming from all five continents get together for two weeks. They do so to boost their emerging careers and to offer 50 concerts both to the music lovers of Santander and the world.

Paloma O’Shea, president of the competition: “As the application period for the 20<sup>th</sup> Santander International Piano Competition opens, we remember the hundreds of pianists who have experienced the competition since its creation in the summer of 1972. Throughout this time, I have noticed that the mere fact of applying and preparing for the phases is already a transforming experience that allows participants to advance as artists and as persons. I encourage them to do so. In Santander we will be welcoming the selected participants as the outstanding artists they already are. Here, they will find a jury made up of international experts presided over by an exceptional pianist, Joaquín Achúcarro, as well as by a team of artistic collaborators that reveals our interest in making the Santander Competition not just a reunion of pianists, but a celebration of music in all its dimensions. The RTVE Symphony Orchestra,

which has already performed this task brilliantly on previous occasions, will accompany the six finalists, under the baton of one of today’s most relevant conductors, Pablo Heras-Casado. The importance of chamber music has always been a distinctive element of Santander, which has led us to institute, on this occasion, an Award for the Best Chamber Music Performer. Once again, we will be having with us the extraordinary Casals Quartet. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Santander International Piano Competition comes at a time when we all need the healing power of live music after many months of deprivation. The celebration of our half-century of life must also serve to reaffirm the importance of music in our communities, as a source of happiness and a driver of social cohesion.”

[www.santanderpiano.competition.com](http://www.santanderpiano.competition.com)

ELENA TORCIDA

Final Phase with RTVE Symphony Orchestra of the Santander Piano Competition 2018, with the performance of the winner Dmytro Choni, at the Palacio de Festivales de Cantabria (Spain)



27.09. – 03.10.2021

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From left to right:  
 Prof. Pavel Gililov (Artistic Director of the competition),  
 Shihyun Lee (3<sup>rd</sup> prize),  
 Yuto Takezawa (2<sup>nd</sup> prize),  
 Cunmo Yin (1<sup>st</sup> prize),  
 Tim Hoettges (CEO Deutsche Telekom AG).

# International Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn

The competition will culminate in the finale with the Beethoven Orchestra Bonn on December 11, in which the three finalists will each perform one of Beethoven's piano concertos. The chamber music final, newly conceived in 2019, was found to be artistically very enriching: once again, the three finalists here, together with members of the Beethoven Trio Bonn, will perform one of Beethoven's complete piano trios as part of an additional festive concert evening.

For the competition, the participants can expect a top-class jury with numerous musical personalities: Fumiko Eguchi from Japan, Leslie Howard from Australia, Yoheved Kaplinsky from the USA, as well as Daejin Kim (Republic of Korea), Marian Lapšanský (Slovakia) and Jacques Rouvier (France), Konstantin Scherbakov

After the application phase for the Beethoven Competition 2021 ended in mid-May, the 28 selected participants started preparing for the upcoming competition in Bonn in December: Starting on December 2, the pianists will play for a total of more than 70,000 EUR in prize money as well as numerous concert invitations in Germany and abroad.

(Russia) and Yaara Tal (Israel). Jury president Prof. Pavel Gililov (Germany/Austria) will preside over the jury.

Even before the competition itself, the Beethoven Competition invites you to the prize-winners' soirée with Yuto Takezawa (2<sup>nd</sup> in 2019) and Shihyun Lee (3<sup>rd</sup> in 2019). During this festive concert evening, which will be broadcast live from the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn, the two artists will present music by Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms, and Robert Schumann. The concert will start at 8 p. m. Central European Time on June 16, 2021. During the concert, the participants of this year's competition will also be presented to the public for the first time.

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



piano



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BY GROTRIAN - STEINWEG





Piano duo Lok Ping and Lok Ting Chau in the 2015 semi-final.

DANIEL DELANG

# ARD International Music Competition

The ARD International Music Competition takes place every year and now, for the 70th edition, the competition is open for the following categories: Piano Duo, Voice, Horn and Violin.

The competition, because of its scale and prestige, offers a unique opportunity for participants to test their musical mettle against other world-class players, and also offers networking opportunities, and the chance to meet agents and music executives looking to sign up the next big talent. The winners will be invited to take part in the chamber music tour – the Festival of ARD Prize-Winners, which was established in 2001 and communicates the desire of the ARD International Music Competition’s administration to transform the obviously confrontational situation, at least at the end of the event, into the experience of making music together. This year, due to the pandemic, the organization has decided to run the first round online. The invited participants will upload video-recordings between June 10 and 25. The jury (for piano duo consisting of Andreas Groethuysen, Claire Désert, Joseph Paratore, Güher Pekinel, Roberto Prosseda, Götz Schumacher and Begona Uriarte) will then evaluate the recordings that will be available for the public on the competitions website between July 12 and 18 and once again when the 1st round was originally planned from August 31 to September 1, 2021. Hopefully, the competition will be held in Munich as usual from the 2<sup>nd</sup> round on.

[www.br.de/ard-musikwettbewerb](http://www.br.de/ard-musikwettbewerb)

## The International Schubert-Competition Dortmund

This unique competition was established in 1987 and has been held at the heart of the Ruhr since then, invariably with great success. Due to the pandemic the organisation decided to extend the application deadline to June 15, 2021, as many music universities and rehearsal or recording rooms are closed due to the Corona Measures and therefore many musicians can’t record the pre-selection video.

In our previous edition, Chairman Stefan Heucke – a composer who wrote a large-scale set of Diabelli variations, inspired by Beethoven but based on Schubert’s original *Diabelli variation* – explained the philosophy behind the competition: “We believe very strongly that when young artists study the introverted music of Franz Schubert extensively, they will naturally look behind the notes for deeper meaning, and their subsequent interpretations of even the most virtuosic repertoire will benefit from this. With any repertoire, a deeper understanding of the true meaning of music, even if it’s not so easy to recognise it behind perhaps too many notes, is what makes a real artist.”

The international Schubert competition in the category of Piano will take place from September 24th to October 3rd, 2021, in Dortmund and the award-winning concert will be held on October 3rd, 2021, in the compressor hall of the Hansa coking plant as is customary.

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



Esther Valentin (Mezzosoprano) and Anastasia Grishutina (Piano) at the Laureates Concerts 2018

FINN LÖW



Alexandra Kaptein

*I've been under  
Liszt's spell since  
I was a child*

“During competitions there are always external factors that are beyond your control, so you can be eliminated in the first round, no matter how well you played. When you realise that, it is mentally less demanding to participate and you will play more freely during a competition.”  
 Alexandra Kaptein on preparing for the Liszt Competition Weimar-Bayreuth.

Alexandra Kaptein knows all about it: although she is only 22 years old, she has already participated in over 20 piano competitions, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. In more than half of these competitions she reached the final and in seven competitions she won the first prizes. The first time was when, as a six-year-old girl after two years of piano lessons, she participated in the German youth competition “Jugend musiziert”. Her most recent triumph was in 2019 when she won the Concorsi Internazionali di Musica della Val Tidone in Italy, a competition for all ages. Currently, she is preparing for the International Liszt Piano Competition Weimar-Bayreuth, which will take place forthcoming autumn.

“I came up with the idea of taking part in this German Liszt Competition when I was on holiday for a few days in Weimar, the place where Liszt lived and worked for such a long period of time,” says Alexandra. “I thought it would be fantastic to play Liszt’s music in his own surroundings. From a very young age, I have been completely under Liszt’s spell. He has such a distinctive musical language, so open and honest, and his oeuvre is so incredibly versatile. Franz Liszt is often associated with virtuosity, but there is a great depth behind his technically often extremely difficult scores. Yes, technically his compositions are very demanding, but you shouldn’t focus on that too much. When I play Liszt, I immediately have the feeling: it’s all right, he’s that familiar to me.”

Is participating in the Liszt competition a piece of cake for Alexandra? “Well,” she says, “first I have to be admitted. In June there is a preselection round, for which I had to submit a video. I was allowed to make my recordings in the splendid concert hall of the Amsterdam Conservatory, where I am studying for my Master’s with Frank van de Laar. He is very supportive: we have been preparing the competition repertoire for a year.”

### Liszt Utrecht

In 2022, the Liszt Competition will be held in Utrecht (the Netherlands) again. Once she has mastered the extensive repertoire for Weimar, it seems obvious that Alexandra would like also sign up for “Liszt Utrecht”. “Yes, certainly! You know, my two-year older brother Martin took part in the Utrecht Liszt Competition in 2018. I also wanted to participate so badly at the time, but I was too young

and not yet ready for it. I decided that later I would participate in the Utrecht Liszt Competition in any case. But whether it will be in 2022 is still uncertain. The tricky thing is that the repertoire that Utrecht is asking for the 2022 edition is very different from that in Weimar. The programme in Weimar is very nice: about ninety percent Liszt with compositions from all his style periods. Additionally, a sonata from the Classical Period is requested and two works by Camille Saint-Saëns (in 2021 it is the 100th anniversary of his death). In Utrecht, next to Liszt you have to play works by Schubert (in 2022 it is the celebration of his 225th birthday). Liszt’s masterpiece, the Sonata in b minor, compulsory in Weimar, is not part of the Utrecht repertoire, and the piano concerto in the finals is Liszt’s adaptation of Schubert’s *Wanderer Fantasy*. For Weimar, I am studying Liszt’s First Piano Concerto and the *Totentanz* for piano and orchestra. These programmes are not interchangeable. So my participation Utrecht in 2022 is still uncertain...”

### Russian piano education

When Alexandra plays Liszt, Bach, Beethoven or Russian music, it is noticeable that her technique is impeccable and that she loves powerful, passionate interpretations. The fact is that she has had intensive lessons from a Russian teacher since the age of four.

“I am intensely grateful for that solid Russian education. The fact that I definitely wanted to learn to play the piano came after my brother Martin had started piano lessons at the age of four. I was two at the time. I was right on top of him when he studied and I learned a lot. Therefore, when I was allowed to take lessons myself, I already knew a lot and developed quickly.”

After secondary school, Alexandra went to the Artez Conservatory in Zwolle, where she graduated ‘cum laude’ for her Bachelor’s last year. In addition to her current Master’s study in Amsterdam, Alexandra started a main subject study in Music Theory at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. “People often think that it is a dry subject, but it is lively and I love it, because it helps me to really understand the music I perform. I would like to teach Music Theory at a conservatoire in future, but my first priority is to become a concert pianist. To achieve that, competitions are indispensable.”

CHRISTO LELIE

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# Blessing or burden?

Daniel is the grandson of the famous violin virtuoso Leonid Kogan and violinist Elizabeth Gilels, herself the sister of pianist Emil Gilels, all of whom won top prizes at the Queen Elisabeth Competition and its predecessor the Ysaye Competition in Brussels. Daniel's sister, a professional pianist as well, received a diploma at the Tchaikovsky competition and Daniel himself didn't go unnoticed in important competitions either: Queen Elisabeth, Long-Thibaud-Crespin and Yampolsky.

Daniel Kogan: "Becoming a violinist was not my own choice, I was given a violin when I was six years old and I loved it. I worked with my grandmother Elizabeth Gilels and the only negative thing I can think of was when I didn't want to practice as a child. That was not done in our family. Basically, I am a lazy person: I can't practice eight hours every day, but nowadays I don't miss a day of practice. Together with my grandmother I listened to recordings every day and by the time I was 18 I knew the repertoire and many musicians. Of course we listened to recordings by Leonid and Emil; they were Gods in our family. Unfortunately both passed away before I was born. On car trips we took CDs of Emil playing all the Beethoven sonatas – that was his music! At a very early age I accompanied my family to concerts and rehearsals, it was a huge experience. I saw how people act on stage, deal with their nerves, etc. When I was 15, my grandmother died and that was a big shock, it took me years to learn how to practice by myself.

I never thought of becoming a pianist like my mother, who accompanied my grandfather. Later on when she played with me that was very emotional for her.

But the piano was not for me. The piano is a different world: pianists are often considered more intellectual, better educated, but for me the violin with a strong focus on working with sound and emotions, just like singing, so it was the right choice for me. To truly unlock the sound of the violin may take months, even years. Pianists have a very different approach, like a burglar trying to open a safe quickly. We violinists carry our heart with us and I am very lucky to play a Pietro Guarneri violin from 1737. I found a private sponsor in Russia and that is a big advantage because most of good instruments are in the state collection. However, when you play one of those, you are not allowed to take it out of the country.

I don't know if talent is genetic, but in our family everyone has perfect pitch, which is at least something you can measure. My family name doesn't always help. At pre-Juilliard in New York nobody knew my grandfather, but in Russia and Brussels it was very different of course. For my career, the family name didn't really give me an advantage. Agents and organisers will say: 'He is from the Kogan Family; we don't need to help him, he will manage.'

I would never compare myself to my Leonid Kogan; I always lived my own artistic life, but I was and am very proud of my family."

**ERIC SCHOONES**

**Daniel Kogan**

Talent runs in families, that is true, but is a musical background always helpful for a young artist? We asked violinist Daniel Kogan for whom it's sometimes hard to count all the musicians in his family.

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

Upcoming edition of The World of Piano Competitions is published: September 2021  
For all inquiries please contact: [h.bruger@pianist-magazin.de](mailto:h.bruger@pianist-magazin.de)

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