

# The International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

The International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition, **launched in 1927**, is one of the oldest music competitions in the world. Constantly evolving over its ninety-year existence, it has improved its form and forged its own rich tradition. The number of rounds, the programme, the method for assessing participants and the number of prizes awarded have all changed. What has remained constant since the very beginning is the interest in the Competition among critics, the media, pianists, ‘culture vultures’ and the public at large.

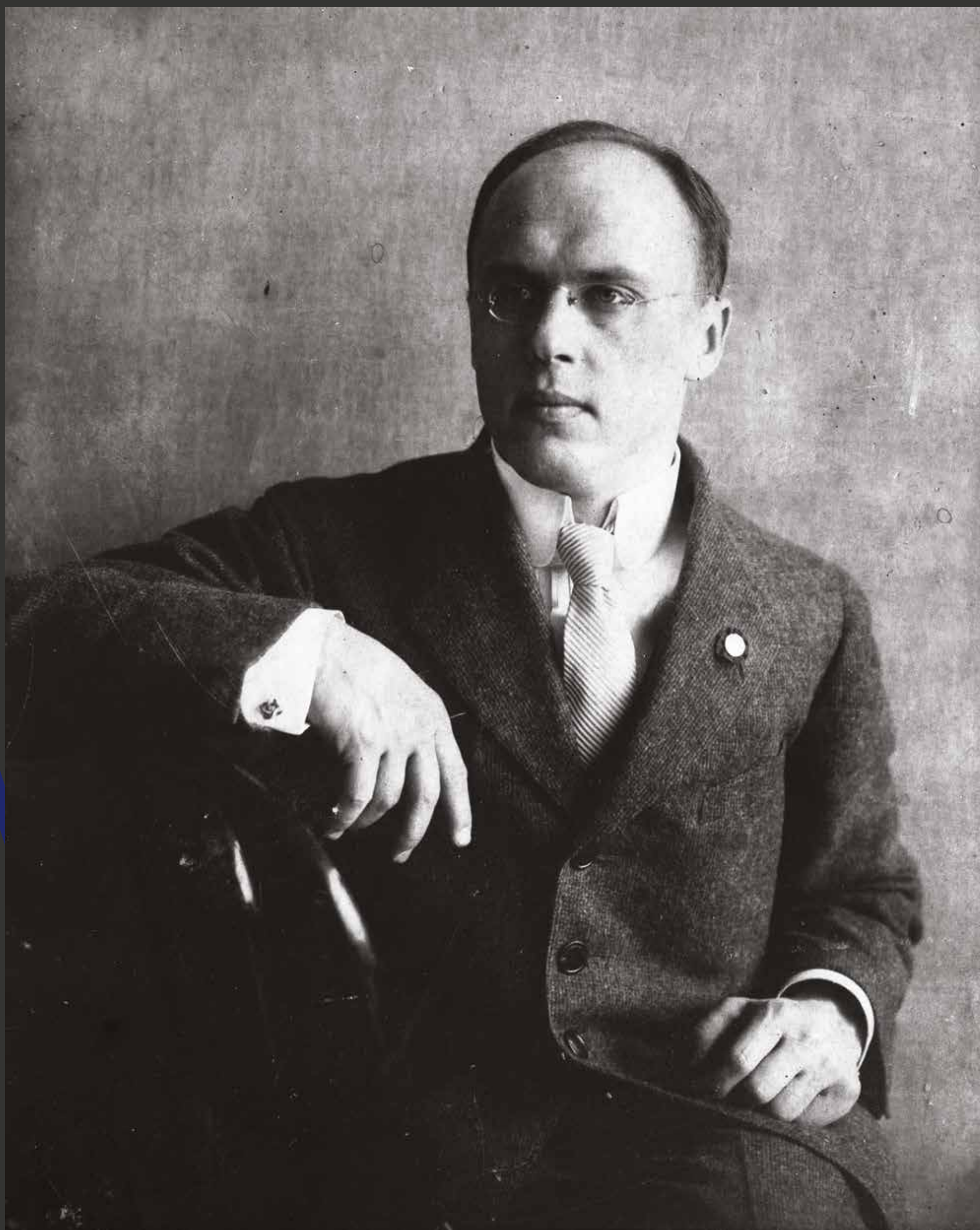
The Competition was born of the need to sustain familiarity with the music of Fryderyk Chopin and to perpetuate the piano playing tradition that was characteristic of his style. The idea for creating the Competition came from the teacher and pianist **Jerzy Żurawlew**. Working with young people, he observed their keenness for rivalry and for displaying their talents, so he considered that a pianistic tournament would be the best way of encouraging them to play Chopin. At that time, implementing such an idea was by no means straightforward, and for years the Warsaw Competition was **the only event of its kind in the world**.

In the first edition of the Competition, held in the winter of 1927, only twenty-six pianists from eight countries took part. Those arriving from outside Warsaw stayed and practised in the private homes of families who had agreed to put them up. Some 200 applications were received for the second edition of the Competition. After three promising editions (the third came in 1937), the organising of the Competition was thwarted for more than a decade by the Second World War, with the tradition resumed in 1949. During the 40s and 50s the Competition gradually achieved a truly international level, and a regular five-year cycle was established. Prize-winners of previous editions joined the large and impressive jury, including Lev Oborin, Yakov Zak and Imré Ungár, as well as one of the most outstanding composers of the twentieth century – Witold Lutosławski.



During the 60s and 70s the Competition was in full bloom, with such **brilliant winners as Maurizio Pollini and Martha Argerich**. The year 1970 proved crucial for American and Japanese pianism, thanks to victory for **Garrick Ohlsson** and second prize for Mitsuko Uchida. Five years later, the host nation triumphed, with **Krystian Zimerman** becoming the first Pole to win for twenty years.

Over time, interest in the Competition and the event's prestige began to surpass that of all other artistic events linked to Chopin. The number of applicants from all the continents continued to grow. In 1980, the 10th Competition was won by the Vietnamese pianist **Dang Thai Son**, while incredibly strong feelings were aroused by the Yugoslav pianist Ivo Pogorelich.



The competition's initiator, and one of the judges, Jerzy Żurawlew, c.1927.

**The twenty-first century has posed new challenges for the Competition** in a changing social, cultural and media environment with which not only the organisers, but also the prize-winners must cope. Both camps are thriving increasingly well: the winner in 2000, **Yundi Li**, is a media superstar. Highly sought-after are the leading lights of the last three competitions: **Rafał Blechacz** (winner in 2005), **Yulianna Avdeeva** (winner in 2010), Daniil Trifonov and Ingolf Wunder, and **Seong-Jin Cho** (winner in 2015). The YouTube recordings and Facebook profiles of all these pianists have had millions of views.

The last Chopin Competition, besides its remarkably high artistic standard, was also exceptional in terms of digital access: all the competition performances could be followed **online in Full HD quality** on the Competition's website and YouTube channel. Another new phenomenon that we observed during the last edition was a **social media revolution**: according to Press Service, around 5 billion pieces of information about the Competition were exchanged in the month of October alone.



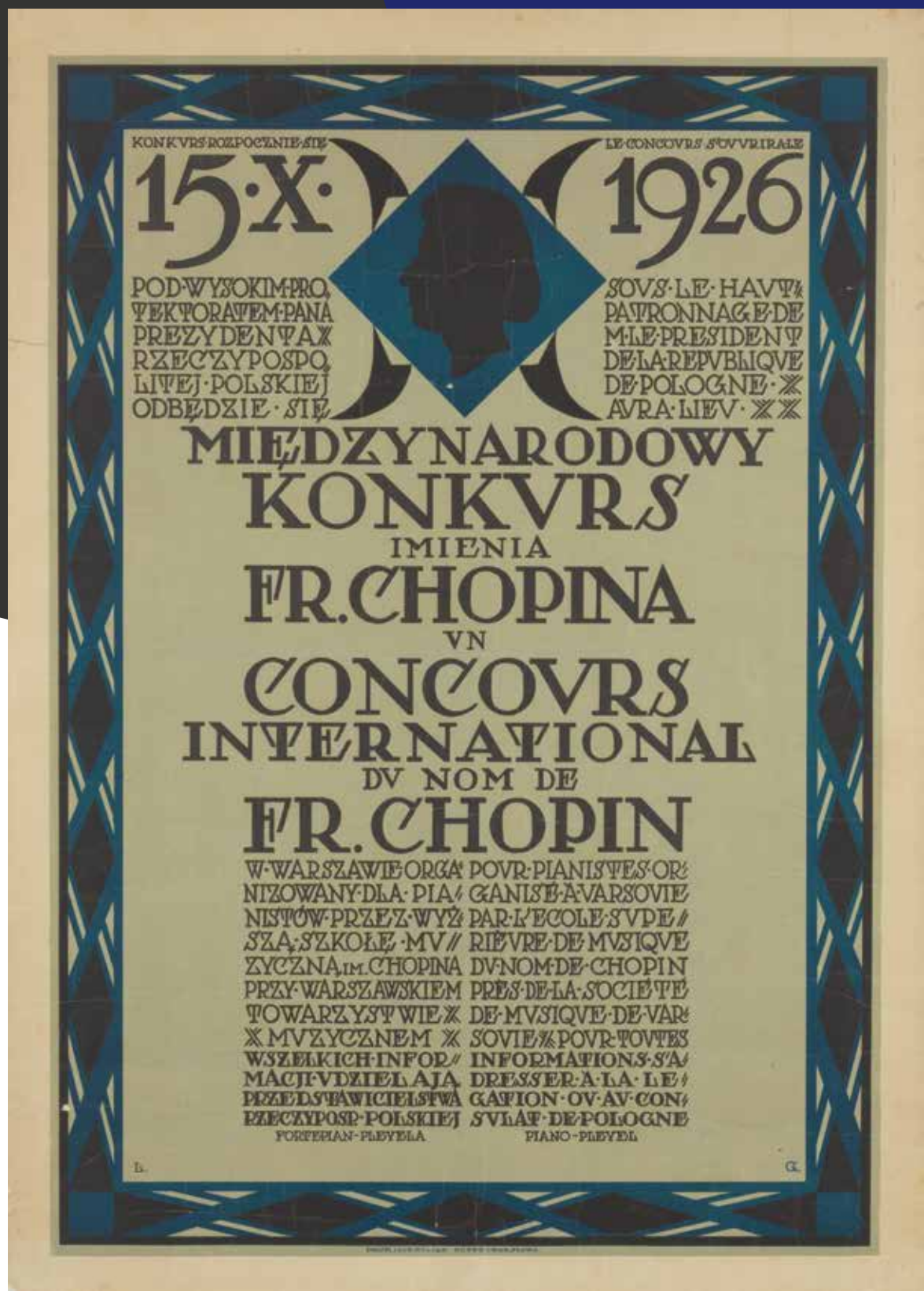


Judges and participants of the 1st International Chopin Competition.

The 1st International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition took place at the beginning of 1927 (although it was originally planned to commence on 15 October 1926 – the day of the unveiling of Wacław Szymanowski’s Chopin monument in the Royal Łazienki Park).

Auditions were held in the Concert Hall of the Warsaw Philharmonic. The Competition, which was conceived from the outset as an international tournament, hosted 26 pianists from 8 countries. The contingent from the Soviet Union included the then twenty-year-old Dmitry Shostakovich. Although not among the leading competitors, years later he became one of the most outstanding composers of the twentieth century.

The Competition proved a great success: reviewers emphasised the high standard of the participants and the huge emotions that accompanied the rivalry. The organisers were not spared criticism, however: pianists from abroad were not assured of practice rooms and had to make do with instruments in private apartments, which became the subject of jokes.



The competition jury during performances.

# 1927 : 1st International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 23–30 January 1927  
**Applications:** 32  
**Participants:** 26  
**Countries:** 8  
**Age limit:** 28  
**Jury Chair:** Witold Maliszewski

**Prize-winners**  
 First Prize – Lev Oborin (USSR)  
 Second Prize – Stanisław Szpinalski (Poland)  
 Third Prize – Róża Etkin (Poland)  
 Fourth Prize – Grigory Ginzburg (USSR)



Lev Oborin





Competitors at the Warsaw Philharmonic, left to right: Theodor Gutman, Leonid Sagalov, Abram Lufer, Emanuel Grossman.



Entrance ticket.

The 2nd International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition was held, as the organisers had originally planned, five years after the first. In March 1932, 89 pianists from 18 countries arrived in Warsaw. The Competition drew huge interest among the public and attracted correspondents from various corners of the world. Outstanding musical figures from abroad were invited to participate in the work of the jury. Guest of honour was Maurice Ravel, who in a concert on 11 March conducted a performance of his works: the Piano Concerto in G major and *La Valse*.

During the final, there was an unprecedented occurrence: due to a protest from the Hungarian pianist Imré Ungár, who refused to accept equal First Prize with Alexander Uninsky, lots were drawn. The blind Hungarian pianist was not favoured by fortune, however, drawing Second Prize.

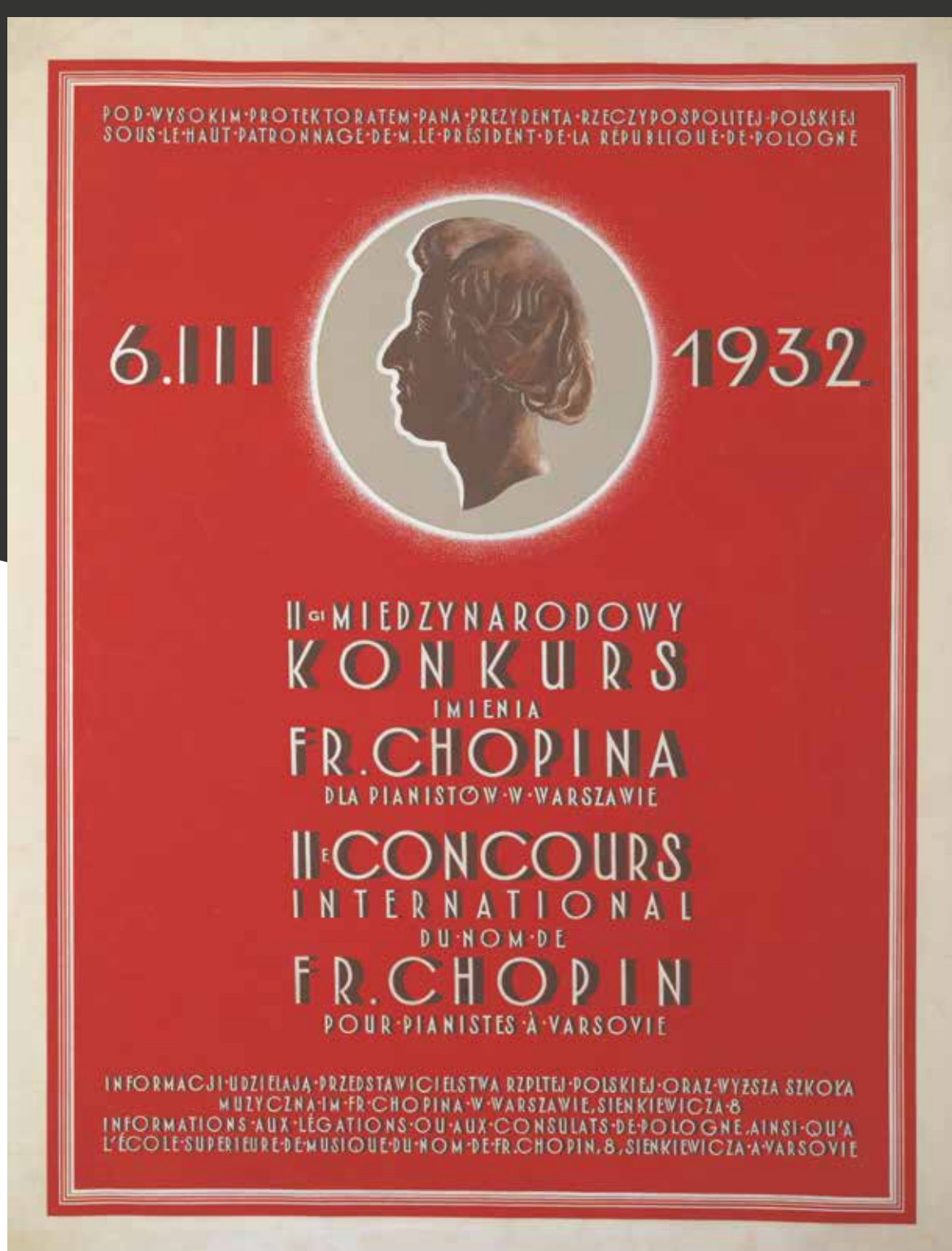
During the Competition, a poll was held to find the best, most popular piano among the instruments on which the young pianists had played. The winner was a Viennese Bösendorfer.



Inauguration of the Competition.



Participants and judges, souvenir photograph.



# 1932 : 2nd International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 6–23 March 1932  
**Applications:** over 200  
**Participants:** 89  
**Countries:** 18  
**Age limit:** 28  
**Jury Chair:** Adam Wieniawski

**Prize-winners**  
 First Prize – Alexander Uninsky (unaffiliated)  
 Second Prize – Imré Ungár (Hungary)  
 Third Prize – Bolesław Kon (Poland)  
 Fourth Prize – Abram Lufer(USSR)  
 Fifth Prize – Lajos Kentner (Hungary)  
 Sixth Prize – Leonid Sagalov (USSR)



Alexander Uninsky





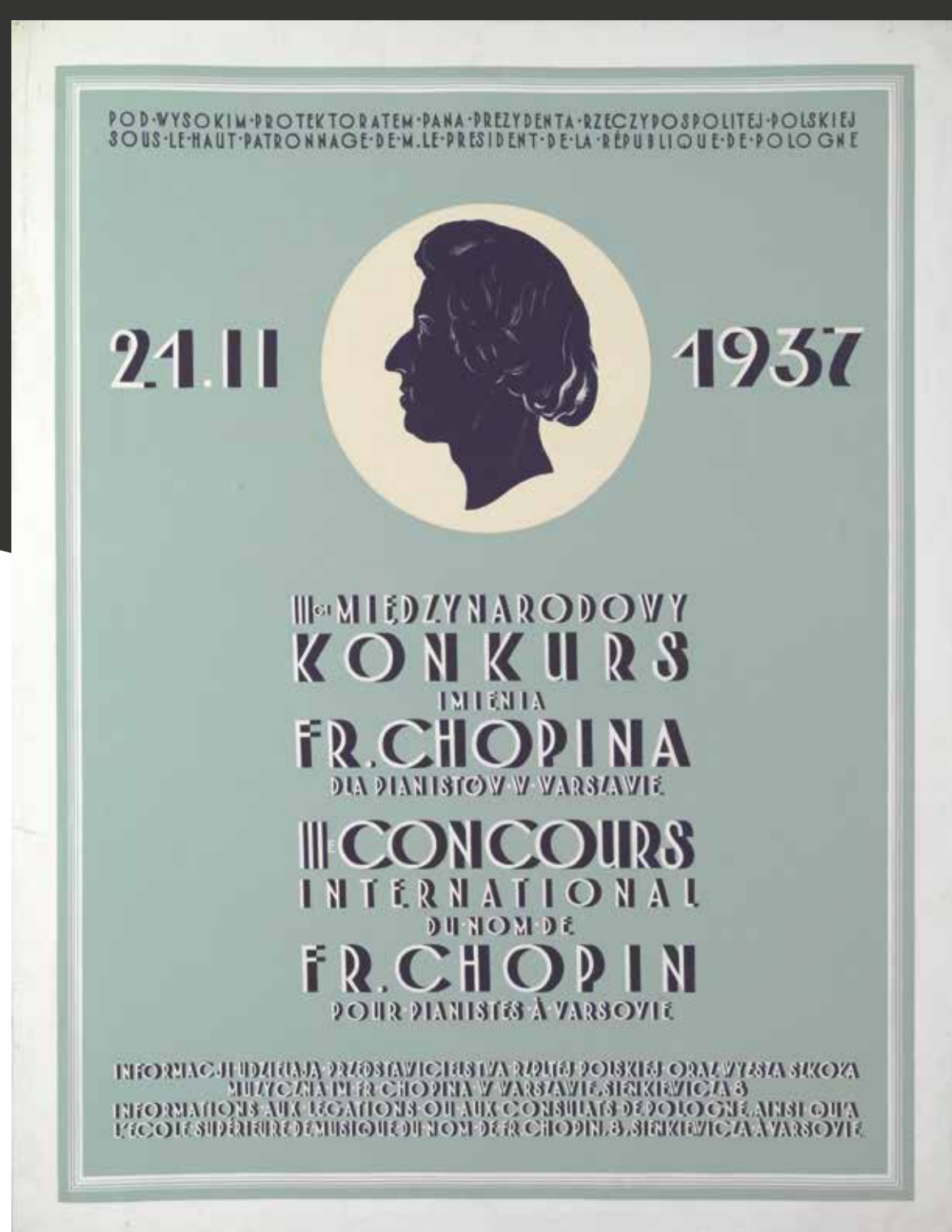
Final of the competition, Witold Małcużyński, winner of Third Prize, at the piano.



Competitors at a meeting with the President of Poland, Ignacy Mościcki, at the Royal Castle in Warsaw.

The 1930s, during which the 2nd and 3rd editions of the Chopin Competition were held, was a time of dynamic expansion for this musical celebration, suddenly cut short by the outbreak of war in 1939. The Competition had soon gained an important place on the map of musical tournaments, attracting the greatest talents from the farthest flung corners of the world. There is no doubt that this was due in part to the international jury, which included eminent figures of musical life, and also to the extensive support from state institutions: the patronage of President Ignacy Mościcki and the appointment of an Honorary Committee chaired by the Prime Minister.

In 1937, the Competition adhered to the successful two-stage format. The Polish pianists, who had previously constituted the largest national group, had to pass through an additional qualifying round. Ultimately, 80 pianists from 22 countries took part in the Competition. They had at their disposal pianos by four different firms: Bechstein, Bösendorfer, Pleyel and Steinway. The female pianists from Japan caused quite a sensation. Although Miwa Kai and Chieko Hara (distinction) were not among the prize-winners, their playing was hugely appreciated by critics and the public. They were the first representatives of the Land of the Rising Sun in the history of the Competition. As in previous editions, representatives of the USSR came out on top.



The jury deliberates.

# 1937 : 3rd International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 21 February – 12 March 1937  
**Applications:** 250  
**Participants:** 80  
**Countries:** 22  
**Age limit:** 16–28  
**Jury Chair:** Adam Wieniawski

**Prize-winners**  
First Prize – Yakov Zak (USSR)  
Second Prize – Roza Tamarkina (USSR)  
Third Prize – Witold Małcużyński (Poland)  
Fourth Prize – Lance Dossor (UK)  
Fifth Prize – Ági Jámbor (Hungary)  
Sixth Prize – Edith Pitch-Axenfeld (Germany)



Yakov Zak



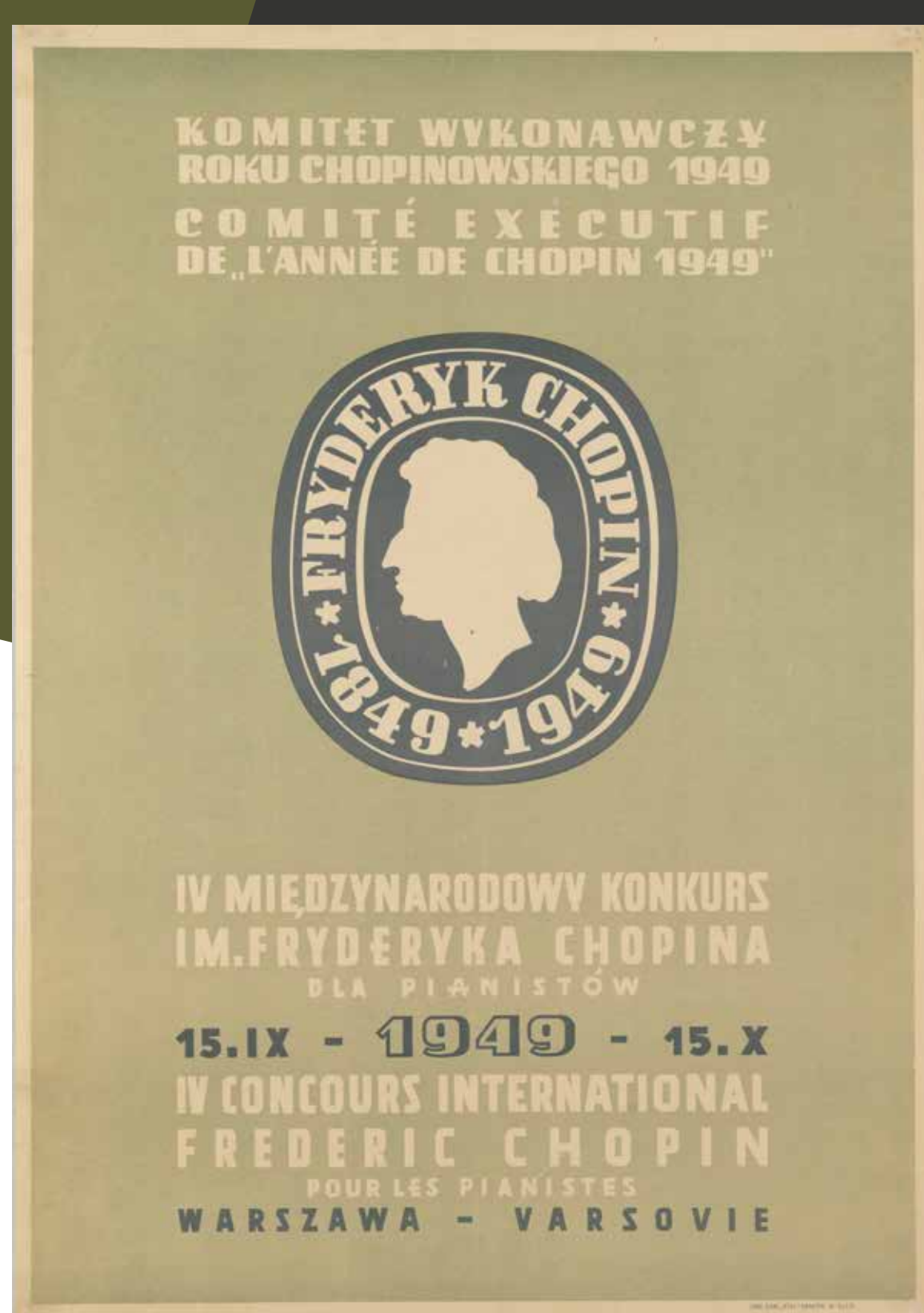
The first post-war International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition was held in 1949. In connection with the centenary of Chopin's death, that year was named Chopin Year by the Council of Ministers. The piano tournament was accompanied by composition and sculpture competitions, stationary and travelling exhibitions, and numerous concerts at home and abroad. A complete edition of Chopin's works was also inaugurated under chief editor Ignacy Jan Paderewski. The Competition was financed from government funds, as were grants and training camps for the Polish pianists. The young musicians were given access to the best pianos, test recordings were made, and the Poznań Philharmonic Orchestra was even brought in to a summer course held in Łagów Lubuski, so that the course participants could practise the concertos with its accompaniment.

Those were conditions that Polish pianists could only have dreamt of up to then. The whole programme of preparations was overseen by a Pedagogic Committee attached to the Ministry of Culture and the Arts, comprising pre-eminent Polish teachers, who followed the progress of each of the participants. The collective work brought excellent results: an exceptionally strong contingent was formed, which made a clean sweep of the podium places (the Polish pianist Halina Czerny-Stefańska shared first place with the Russian Bella Davidovich).

The Competition was divided into three stages, with the addition of a qualifying round without audience (this was for candidates who had not taken part in national qualifying rounds). During the first two rounds, the jury listened behind wooden shutters, so as not to see who was playing. The competitors performed not under their names, but with numbers they had drawn. This was an experiment that failed to catch on and has never been repeated. An innovation for the third round was the performance of a concerto in its entirety (previously, only two movements were played), and the upper age limit was raised to thirty-two. Due to the war-time destruction of the Warsaw Philharmonic, the auditions were held at the Roma Theatre on Nowogrodzka Street.



Inauguration of the Competition, Roma Theatre, a speech by Władysław Rudziński.



National eliminations in 1948. Collective photograph of the jury, competitors and organisers.

# 1949 : 4th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 15 September – 15 October 1949  
**Participants:** 41  
**Countries:** 13  
**Age limit:** 16–32  
**Jury Chair:** Zbigniew Drzewiecki

**Prize-winners**  
First Prize (equal) – Halina Czerny-Stefańska (Poland), Bella Davidovich (USSR)  
Second Prize – Barbara Hesse-Bukowska (Poland)  
Third Prize – Waldemar Maciszewski (Poland)  
Fourth Prize – Georgy Muravlov (USSR)  
Fifth Prize – Władysław Kędra (Poland)  
Sixth Prize – Ryszard Bakst (Poland)



Halina Czerny-Stefańska



Bella Davidovich





Fou Ts'ong,  
winner of Third Prize.



Inauguration of the Competition  
at the Warsaw Philharmonic.



Prize-winners of the 5th International Chopin  
Competition, left to right: Vladimir Ashkenazy,  
Andrzej Czajkowski, Bernard Ringeissen,  
Dmitry Paperno.

The year 1955 brought the return of the Competition to the rebuilt Warsaw Philharmonic. The finishing touches were still being put to the building moments before the inauguration, and so the Competition was moved from October 1954 to February the following year, which exceptionally increased the gap between editions to six years. Its starting date was linked on this occasion not to the anniversary of Fryderyk Chopin's death, but to the date of his birth, which according to current research was 22 February. The Competition would be held in the winter also in 1960 and 1965, before returning to the autumn in 1970. For participants in the 5th edition, the bar was raised very high. In each of the three rounds, the pianists had to tackle a lengthy programme. And that was after having battled through the qualifying rounds. Seventy practice pianos were installed at the Hotel Polonia, where the participants were accommodated. The jury, which during pre-war editions of the Competition had sat on the concert platform, was moved to a much more secluded spot – on the balcony of the auditorium, where it has traditionally been located ever since.

The Competition was a grand musical and society event, playing host to Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, and seventy concerts and eighty recitals were given in Warsaw and other cities. In the pianistic tournament, victory went to a representative of the host nation: Adam Harasiewicz secured the win with an excellent performance in the final. Vladimir Ashkenazy, who had been leading up to then, performed less strongly at the final stage and ultimately came second.

1955

## 5th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 22 February – 21 March 1955

**Participants:** 77

**Countries:** 25

**Age limit:** 16–32

**Jury Chair:** Zbigniew Drzewiecki

### Prize-winners

First Prize – Adam Harasiewicz (Poland)

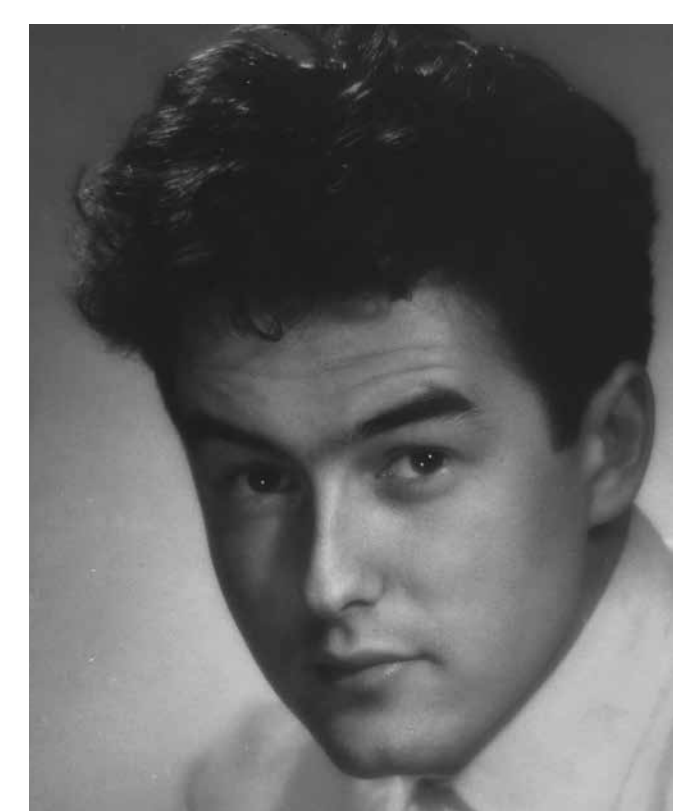
Second Prize – Vladimir Ashkenazy (USSR)

Third Prize – Fou Ts'ong (China)

Fourth Prize – Bernard Ringeissen (France)

Fifth Prize – Naum Shtarkman (USSR)

Sixth Prize – Dmitry Paperno (USSR)



Adam Harasiewicz

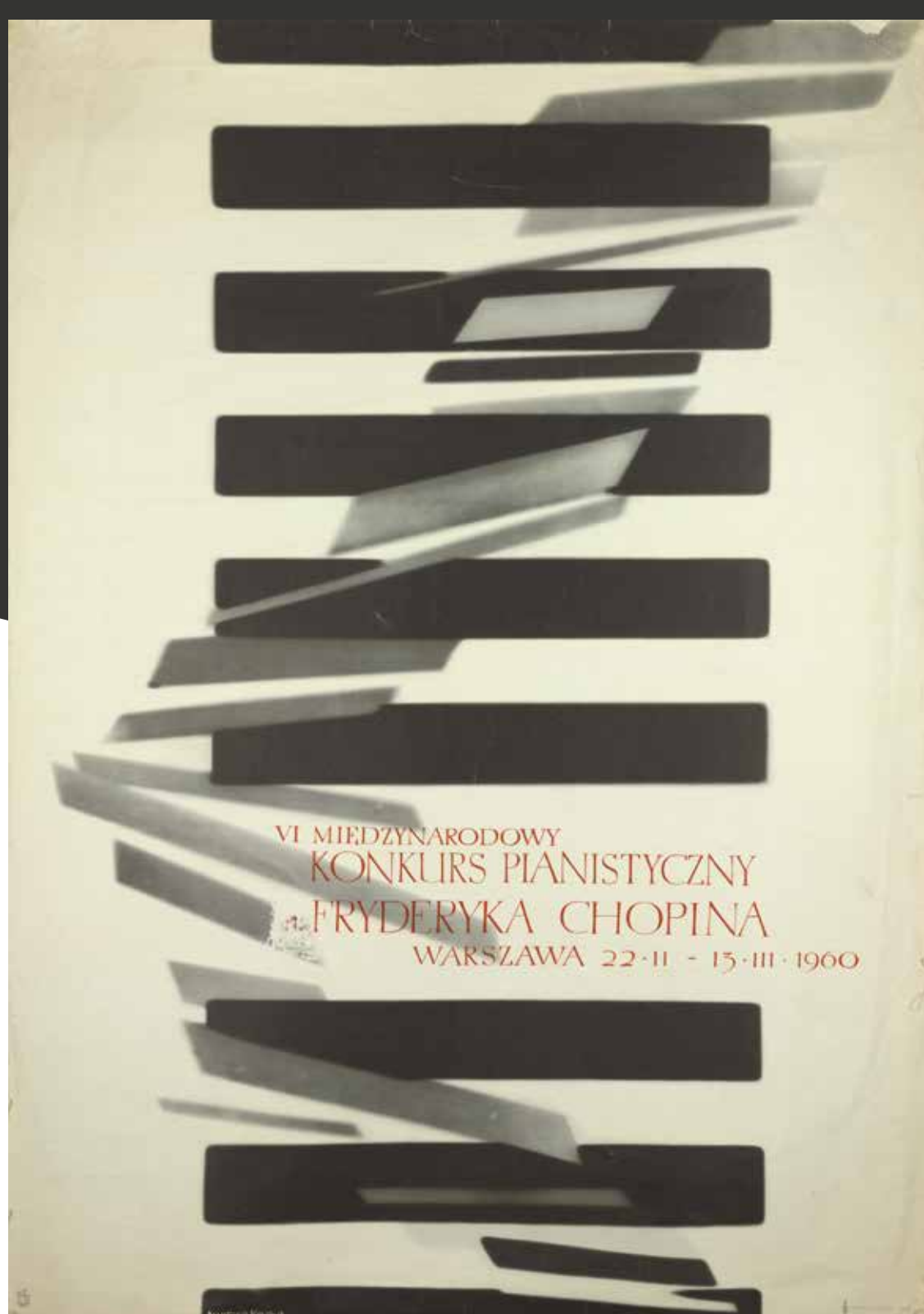




Judges at the Warsaw Philharmonic:  
Artur Rubinstein and Jerzy Żurawlew.



A Competition performance at the Warsaw Philharmonic.



Witold Małcużyński and Nadia Boulanger,  
judges of the 6th International Chopin  
Competition.

The 6th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition was held on the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth. The year 1960 was proclaimed Chopin Year, under the patronage of UNESCO. Chopin's music was present on every major concert platform.

As Stefan Wysocki recalls: 'That was the competition which initiated both the decoration of the hall and the whole ritual of beginning all the auditions with a defilade of the candidates across the stage, the presentation by the programme announcer and all the rest of it, which competition observers know perfectly well and which – thanks to its constancy – sticks in one's heart and mind'. That was also the start of the great career of the then eighteen-year-old Italian pianist Maurizio Pollini, winner of the First Prize. Among the 77 participants from 30 countries, only his name went down in the history of world pianism. The audience favourite, the Mexican Michel Block, the object of great excitement and rumours, failed to win a prize. Arthur Rubinstein, honorary chair of the jury, which was the largest in the Competition's history, decided to respond to the mood in the hall and award Block an hors concours prize.

Incidentally, Rubinstein's great love of doughnuts was revealed during the Competition. During the jury's deliberations, doughnuts were supplied, along with other sweet treats, by Warsaw's finest confectioners. Apparently, the great pianist's appetite beat all records, with a dozen or so doughnuts a day representing no great challenge.

1960

## 6th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 22 February – 13 March 1960  
**Participants:** 78  
**Countries:** 30  
**Age limit:** 16–30  
**Jury Chair:** Zbigniew Drzewiecki

**Prize-winners**  
First Prize – Maurizio Pollini (Italy)  
Second Prize – Irina Zaritskaya (USSR)  
Third Prize – Tania Achot-Haroutounian (Iran)  
Fourth Prize – Li Min-Chan (China)  
Fifth Prize – Zinaida Ignatieva (USSR)  
Sixth Prize – Valery Kastelsky (USSR)



Maurizio Pollini





Opening of the Competition at the Warsaw Philharmonic.

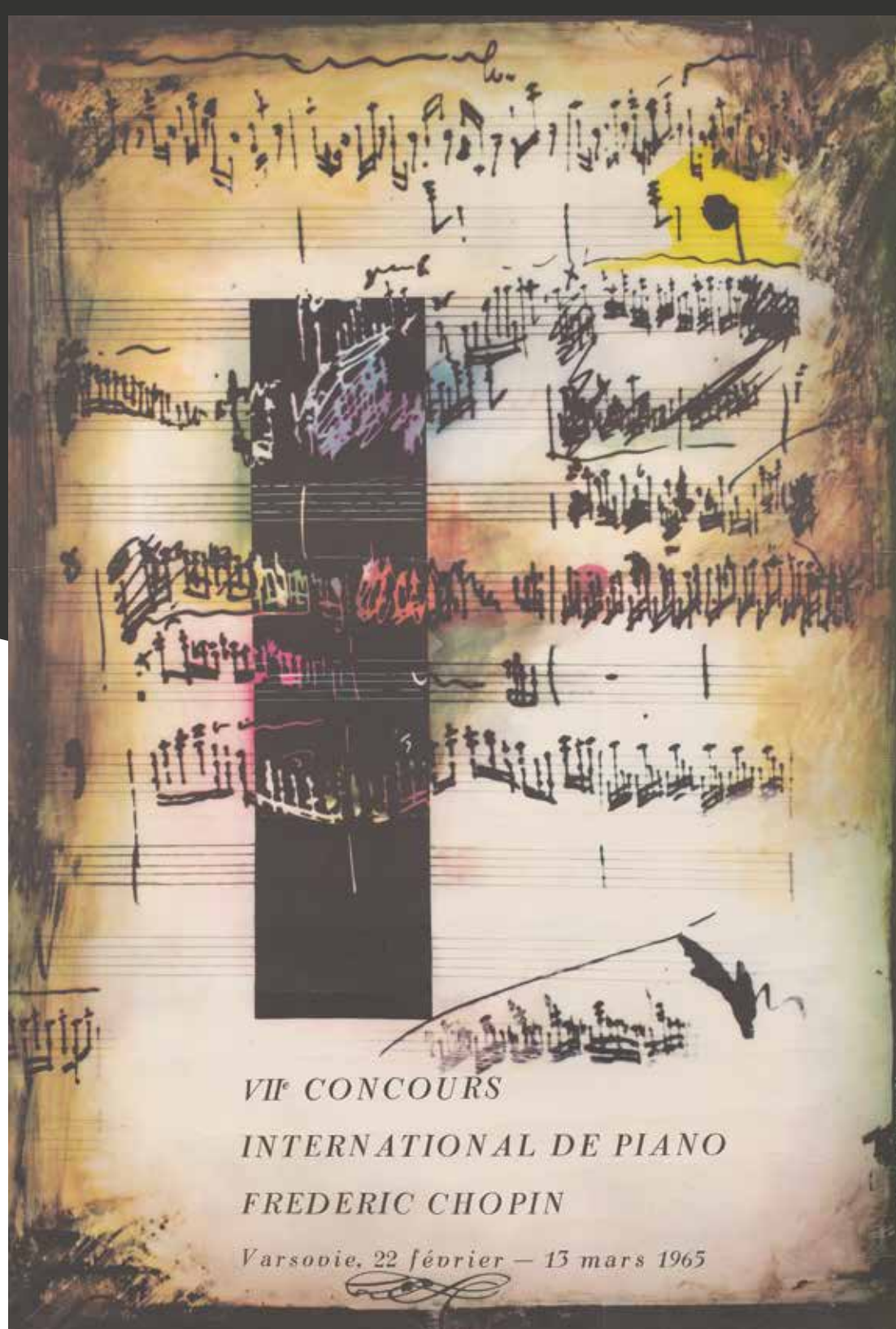
A contemporary music concert to inaugurate the Chopin Competition? That is what happened in 1965, with the audience treated to works by the Polish composers Kazimierz Serocki, Witold Szalonek, Tadeusz Baird and Karol Szymanowski. The very high standard represented by the pianists and also the introduction of an additional fourth round (henceforth, the four rounds became the norm) meant that the 7th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition is often referred to as the ‘Great’ Competition. It also remained in the memory of its participants on account of the influenza that was raging in Warsaw at the time, which struck down young competitors and jurors alike.

Four pianists from Latin America received prizes and distinctions. There was also great success for the New York teacher Rosine Lhévinne, who had as many as five pupils among the prize-winners.

It was Martha Argerich -the ‘black panther of the piano’ -who emerged triumphant, although she began her first performance in rather unusual fashion... fleeing before her entrance on stage. Her tempi were described as ‘rocket-powered’, and her playing style was compared to the interpretations of the legendary Vladimir Horowitz.



Arthur Moreira Lima at the piano.



The jury deliberates.

# 1965 : 7th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 22 February – 13 March 1965  
**Applications:** 109  
**Participants:** 76  
**Countries:** 30  
**Age limit:** 17–30  
**Jury Chair:** Zbigniew Drzewiecki

**Prize-winners**  
 First Prize – Martha Argerich (Argentina)  
 Second Prize – Arthur Moreira Lima (Brazil)  
 Third Prize – Marta Sosińska (Poland)  
 Fourth Prize – Hiroko Nakamura (Japan)  
 Fifth Prize – Edward Auer (USA)  
 Sixth Prize – Elżbieta Głąbówna (Poland)



Martha Argerich

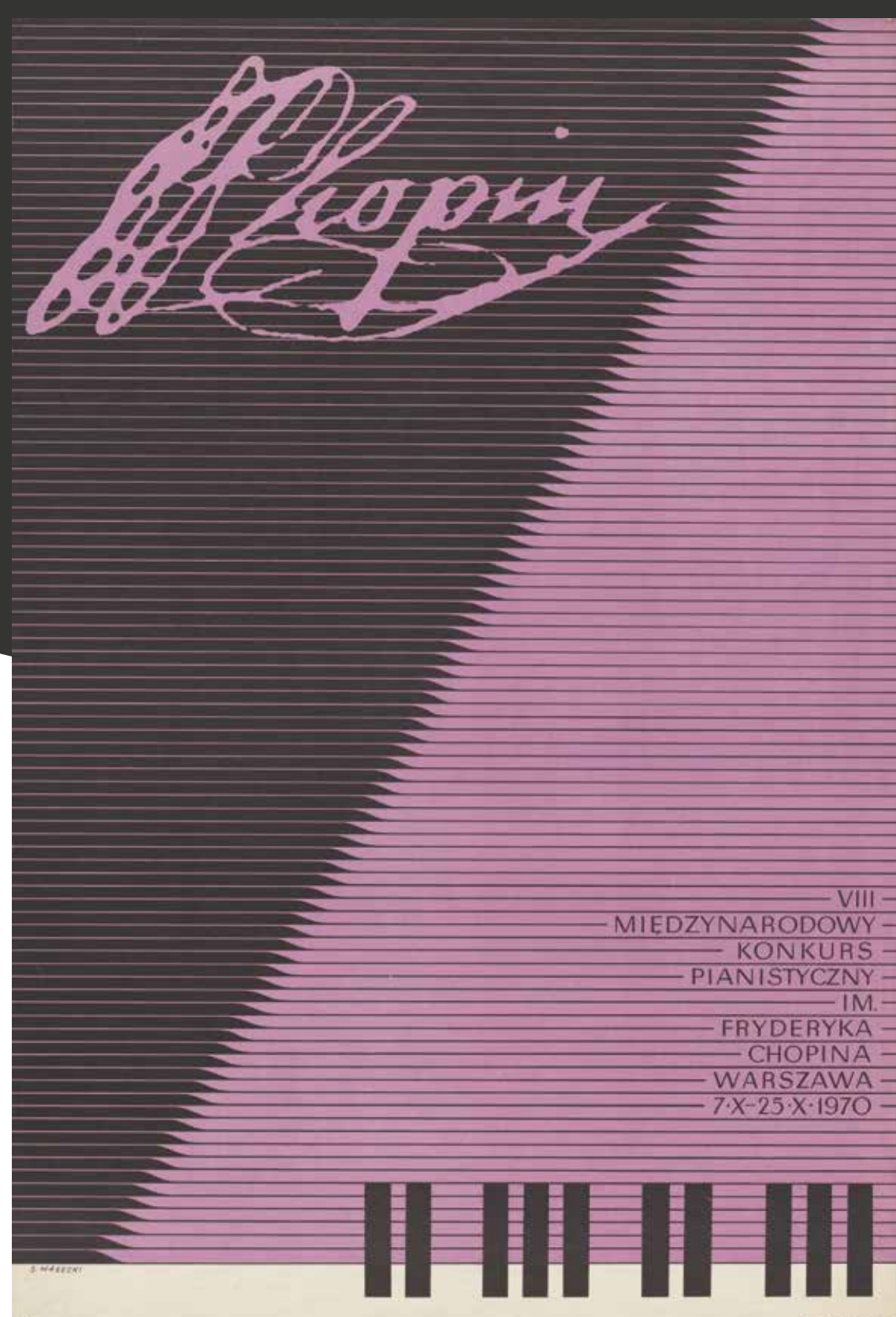




Judges in the conference room.



Exhibition of Competition posters at the Warsaw Philharmonic.



Mariko Hayashi signs autographs at the Warsaw Philharmonic.

‘It turned out [...] that in February our climate is too different from that in many other countries of the world, as a result of which the exotic candidates in particular caught cold on arriving in Warsaw. In the autumn, meanwhile, the climate is closer to the global average’, wrote Jerzy Waldorff in 1970 on the idea of moving the Competition to October. The experiences of 1965 showed unequivocally that the Chopin Competition ought not to be a Winter Olympiad, but at worst an early autumn competition. The 8th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition was a great triumph for the American school: First Prize to Garrick Ohlsson, Fourth Prize to Eugen Indjic and a distinction for Emanuel Ax. It was also an historical success for Japanese pianism: Second Prize for Mitsuko Uchida and a distinction for Ikuko Endo.

There was huge interest in the Warsaw Chopin Concerts held at the Teatr Rozrywki on the Vistula embankment. Participants in the Competition performed there, usually in the programme they had presented the previous day during the auditions at the Warsaw Philharmonic. Nearly all the pianists taking part in the musical tournament performed during the twenty concerts.

The Competition was phenomenal – people on the streets were engrossed in the rivalry, taking to heart the successes and failures of their favourites, with emotions often running sky high. As Waldorff relates: ‘Over these days, the entire city talks only about piano playing, and every taxi driver knows best how the finale of the B flat minor Sonata should be played. On trams and buses, people are at one another’s throats over their favourites for the prizes. In front of the Philharmonic: crowds of people who couldn’t get a ticket. Sometimes, the militia has to be called to assist, but that doesn’t always help!’

1970

## 8th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 7–25 October 1970

**Applications:** 123

**Participants:** 80

**Countries:** 28

**Age limit:** 17–30

**Jury Chair:** Kazimierz Sikorski

### Prize-winners

First Prize – Garrick Ohlsson (USA)

Second Prize – Mitsuko Uchida (Japan)

Third Prize – Piotr Paleczny (Poland)

Fourth Prize – Eugen Indjic (USA)

Fifth Prize – Natalia Gavrilova (USSR)

Sixth Prize – Janusz Olejniczak (Poland)



Garrick Ohlsson





Krystian Zimerman performs with orchestra.

Competition medal, reverse,  
Second Prize, silver.

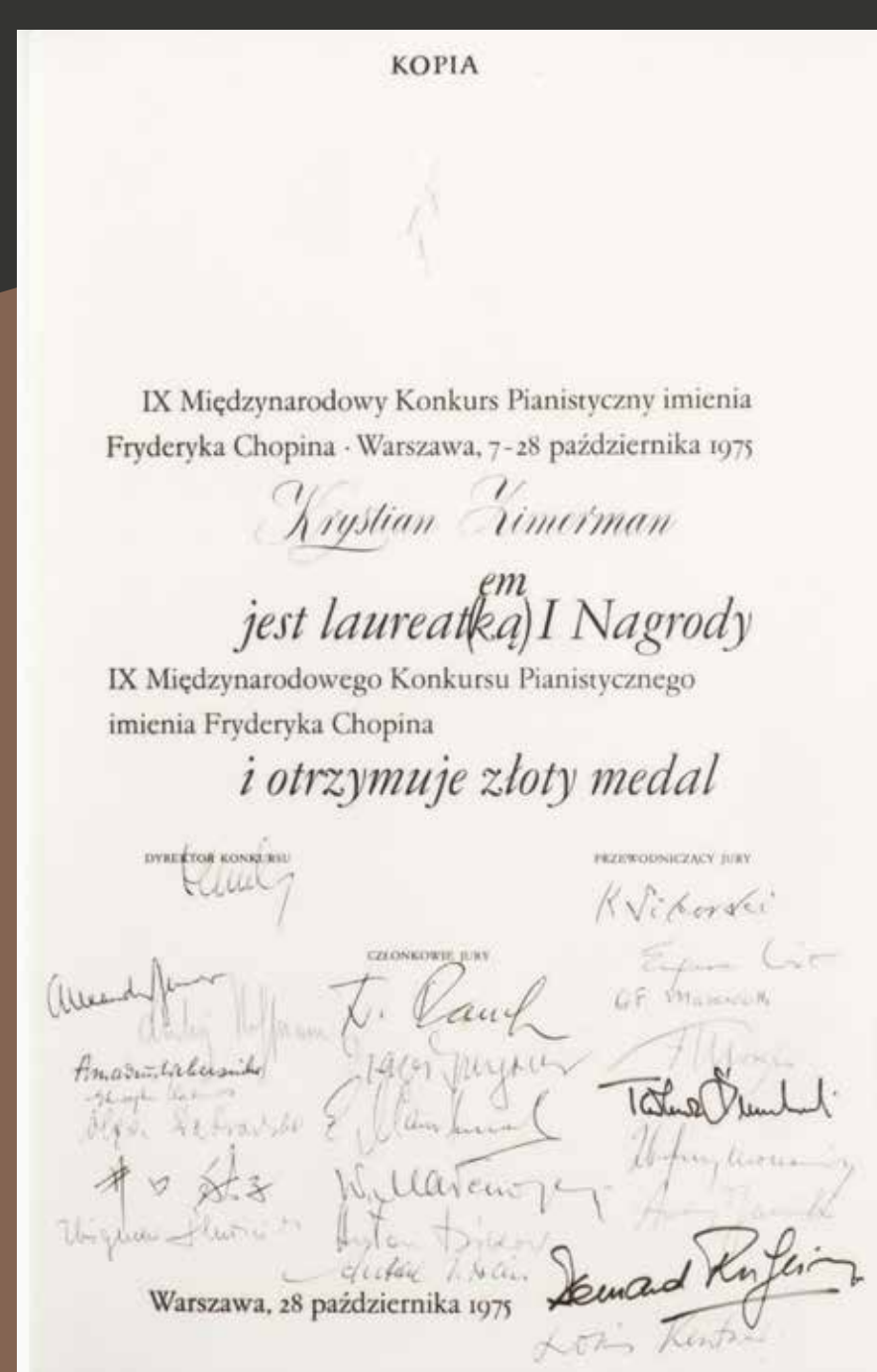


The hosts of the Chopin Competition had to wait twenty years for another home-bred winner. Fortune smiled on the Poles in the 9th edition, held in 1975. Krystian Zimerman, a pupil of Andrzej Jasiński, went down in the history of the Competition as the youngest winner of the first prize and of the special prizes for the best performances of mazurkas and of a polonaise. He was also the undisputed idol of the public. Soviet pianists also enjoyed an upturn in fortunes, occupying the next three places (Dina Yoffe, Tatiana Fedkina and Pavel Gililov in second, third and fourth place respectively).

During the seventies, it became a tradition to perform Mozart's *Requiem* on the anniversary of Fryderyk Chopin's death: 17 October. That work was heard during the composer's solemn funeral at St Mary Magdalene's in Paris in 1849; in Warsaw, the annual concert is held at the Church of the Holy Cross, where Chopin's heart is enshrined. Another innovation was to present the winners of the first three places with medals: gold, silver and bronze. The medals, designed by Józef Markiewicz, were produced by the State Mint.



Donald Ryan during  
a Competition performance.



Krystian Zimerman's diploma.



# 1975 9th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 7–28 October 1975  
**Applications:** 128  
**Participants:** 84  
**Countries:** 22  
**Age limit:** 17–30  
**Jury Chair:** Kazimierz Sikorski

**Prize-winners**  
 First Prize – Krystian Zimerman (Poland)  
 Second Prize – Dina Yoffe (USSR)  
 Third Prize – Tatiana Fedkina (USSR)  
 Fourth Prize – Pavel Gililov (USSR)  
 Fifth Prize – Dean Kramer (USA)  
 Sixth Prize – Diana Kacso (Brazil)



Krystian Zimerman





Hung-Kuan Chen,  
a third-round competitor.



Competition jury, 1 October 1980.



X Międzynarodowy  
Konkurs Pianistyczny  
im. Fryderyka Chopina  
Warszawa  
2-19 października 1980



Ivo Pogorelich,  
a third-round competitor.

During the period of political change that was arising in Poland in 1980, the Chopin Competition gave Poles a rare opportunity to escape the worries of everyday reality. The 10th Competition enjoyed huge interest: a record number of 149 pianists from 36 countries took part. The largest contingents were from Japan and the United States. This time, only three pianists came from the Soviet Union. Vietnam was represented by just a single artist, but it was he who came out on top. Dang Thai Son also received the prizes for the best performance of mazurkas (equal with Ewa Pobłocka), polonaise (together with Tatiana Shebanova) and concerto (also tied with Shebanova). It is worth emphasising that in the finale Dang Thai Son was playing with an orchestra for the first time in his life. The Russian pianists were also of a high standard: Tatiana Shebanova was runner-up, Arutyun Papazyan fourth and Irina Petrova sixth. The opening of the competition was inaugurated with a performance by Martha Argerich and the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Kazimierz Kord.

Shockwaves were felt around the world over the frictions within the jury. After the first round, Louis Kentner left the jury, appalled at the fact that none of his pupils had qualified for the next round; then after the third round, Martha Argerich quit, unable to reconcile herself to the elimination of Ivo Pogorelich. Immediately after the Competition commenced – on 4 October – the initiator of the competition, and long-serving member of the jury, Jerzy Żurawlew died. The jurors paid tribute to the professor at Ostrogi Castle, where his coffin was displayed.

1980

## 10th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 2–19 October 1980

**Applications:** 212

**Participants:** 149

**Countries:** 36

**Age limit:** 17–30

**Jury Chair:** Kazimierz Kord

### Prize-winners

First Prize – Dang Thai Son (Vietnam)

Second Prize – Tatiana Shebanova (USSR)

Third Prize – Arutyun Papazyan (USSR)

Fourth Prize – not awarded

Fifth Prize (equal) – Akiko Ebi (Japan), Ewa Pobłocka (Poland)

Sixth Prize (equal) – Erik Berchot (France), Irina Petrova (USSR)



Dang Thai Son





Competition prize-winners, left to right: Marc Laforêt, Jean-Marc Luisada, Stanislav Bunin, Tatyana Pikayzen, Michie Koyama, Krzysztof Jabłoński.



Warsaw Philharmonic, the audience outside the entrance.



Michie Koyama performs with orchestra, conducted by Tadeusz Strugała.

The year 1985 brought the debut at the Chopin Competition of the firms Yamaha and Kawai. Participants in the 11th Competition could choose between as many as five instruments, which compared to the list of pianos available in previous editions – two Steinways and one Bösendorfer (Bechstein withdrew after its instrument was chosen just once during the 9th Competition) – was a big change.

Again there was no lack of controversy among the jurors: Fou Ts'ong, winner of Third Prize in the Competition in 1955, could not accept the awarding of First Prize to Stanislav Bunin, and as a mark of protest he failed to turn up for the jury's last session and did not sign the verdict. Bunin donated his prize to 'young generations of budding Chopin interpreters'. The Ministry of Culture and the Arts, in accordance with the donor's wishes, paid the prize into the Fund for the Development of Culture. Also associated with the 11th Competition is the institution of the Fryderyk Chopin Society's international phonographic competition the 'Grand Prix du Disque Frédéric Chopin'.

1985

## 11th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 1–20 October 1985

**Applications:** 191

**Participants:** 124

**Countries:** 32

**Age limit:** 17–28

**Jury Chair:** Jan Ekier

### Prize-winners

First Prize – Stanislav Bunin (USSR)

Second Prize – Marc Laforêt (France)

Third Prize – Krzysztof Jabłoński (Poland)

Fourth Prize – Michie Koyama (Japan)

Fifth Prize – Jean-Marc Luisada (France)

Sixth Prize – Tatiana Pikayzen (USSR)



Stanislav Bunin





The public awaits the results.



Queen Sofia of Spain with Elżbieta Penderecka and Krzysztof Penderecki.

The biggest surprise of the 12th Chopin Competition was the lack of a winner. Probably no one had foreseen such a turn of events prior to the inauguration. Second Prize was awarded to Kevin Kenner, who was participating in the Competition for the second time (distinction in 1980). Kenner was also rewarded for the best performance of a polonaise (equal with Wojciech Świtała); for the first time in history, however, no one was given the prize for the best performance of mazurkas. The pianists were clearly not even helped in forging convincing interpretations by the unprecedented choice of as many as seven pianos.

Janusz Ekiert recalls: 'The 12th Competition passed without any manifestations of great admiration and without any great controversy. Youngsters did not choose their idols, and the favourites failed to ignite people's imagination. One was hard pressed to notice any of the feverishly sparkling eyes that one remembered from previous competitions. No one in the audience fainted from emotion; if anyone, only a pianist'. The Competition was honoured by the presence of two crowned heads: Queen Fabiola of Belgium and Queen Sofia of Spain, who opened the exhibition 'Fryderyk Chopin and George Sand's romantic journey to Majorca'.



Kevin Kenner, winner of Second Prize.



1990

## 12th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 1–20 October 1990

**Applications:** 220

**Participants:** 110

**Countries:** 28

**Age limit:** 17–28

**Jury Chair:** Jan Ekier

### Prize-winners

First Prize – not awarded

Second Prize – Kevin Kenner (USA)

Third Prize – Yukio Yokoyama (Japan)

Fourth Prize (equal) – Corrado Rollero (Italy),  
Margarita Shevchenko (USSR)

Fifth Prize (equal) – Anna Malikova (USSR),  
Takako Takahashi (Japan)

Sixth Prize – Caroline Sageman (France)



Philippe Giusiano,  
winner of equal Second Prize.



The 13th Chopin Competition is associated with the addition of another work with orchestra to the programme of the final besides a concerto, with the pianists offered the choice among the *Variations* on Mozart's 'Là ci darem la mano', *Fantasy on Polish Airs* and *Rondo à la krakowiak*. This was also the first edition of the Competition in which pianists were obliged to include a video cassette of a thirty-minute recording of their Chopin interpretations with their applications.

As five years earlier, the jury failed to find among the participants an artist whose talent, abilities and personality merited the Grand Prix. Second Prize was awarded equally to the French pianist Philippe Giusiano and the public's favourite Alexei Sultanov. The Russian pianist, who saw himself as the favourite, demonstrated his dissatisfaction at the verdict by boycotting the prize-winners' concert; ultimately, however, he decided to perform in the repeat concert.

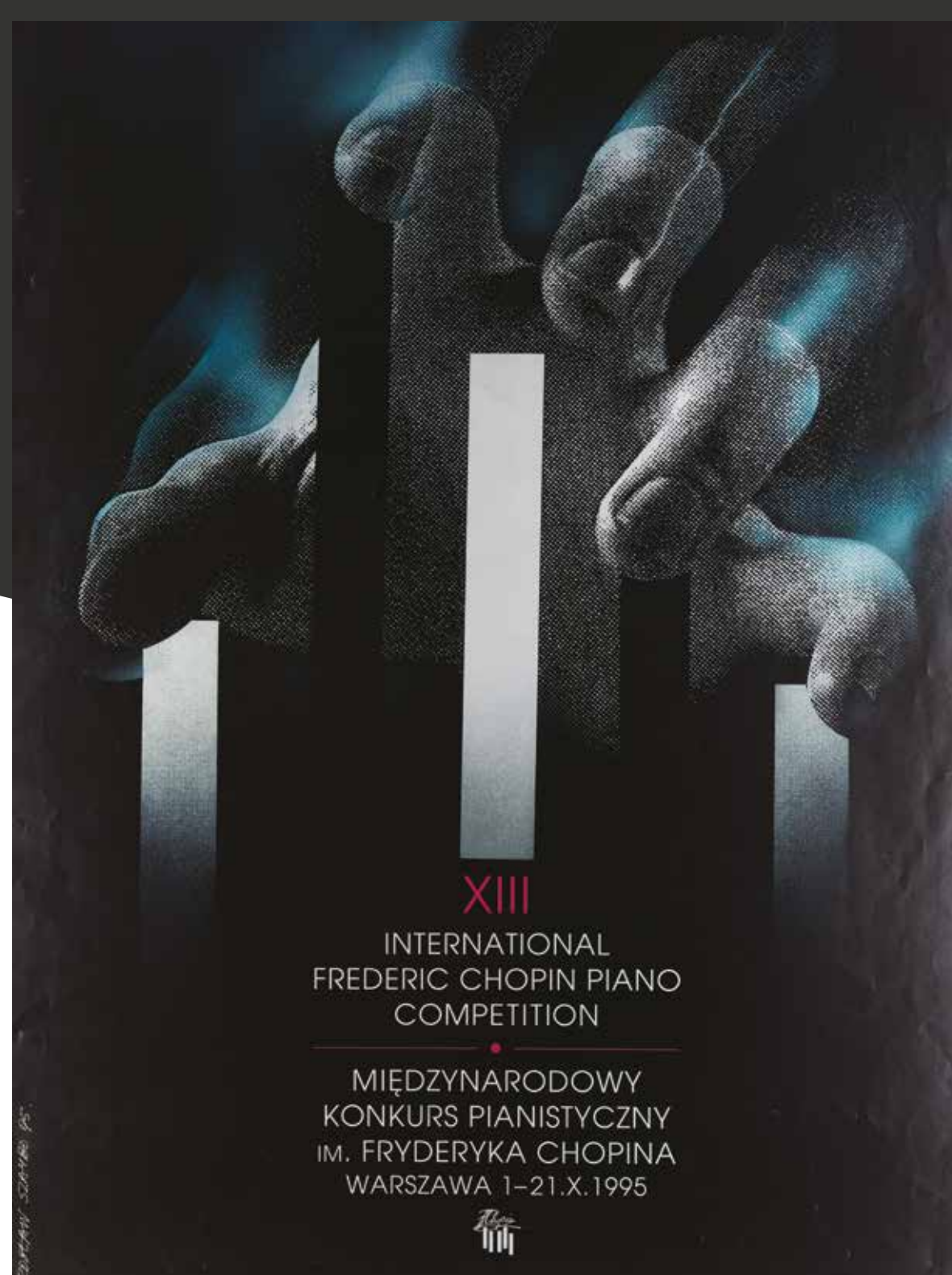
For the only time in the Competition's history, none of the three special prizes (for the best performance of mazurkas, a polonaise and a concerto) was awarded.



The special prizes are awarded. Left to right:  
Michał Ferber, Philippe Giusiano,  
Rem Urasin, Nelson Goerner.



During the final.



1995

## 13th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 1–21 October 1995

**Applications:** 257

**Participants:** 130

**Countries:** 32

**Age limit:** 18–30

**Jury Chair:** Jan Ekier

### Prize-winners

First Prize – not awarded

Second Prize (equal) – Philippe Giusiano (France),  
Alexei Sultanov (Russia)

Third Prize – Gabriela Montero (USA)

Fourth Prize – Rem Urasin (Russia)

Fifth Prize – Rika Miyatani (Japan)

Sixth Prize – Magdalena Lisak (Poland)





Yundi Li, winner of First Prize.

During the 14th Chopin Competition, which fell at the turn of the millennium, many talented pianists from the Far East appeared on the concert platform of the Warsaw Philharmonic. One could hardly say that the chronological watershed brought the anticipated artistic breakthrough to the Competition. Once again, there was no pianist who succeeded in interpreting the Polish idiom contained in the mazurkas or who captivated listeners with the brilliant style of the concerto which he or she performed. The prize for the best performance of a polonaise went to two Chinese pianists: the winner of Fourth Prize, Sa Chen, and the overall winner, Yundi Li. The jury was inclined to withhold the First Prize yet again, but there were fears about possible accusations that the Competition's standing had been lowered.

Once more, a second-time entrant gained success. The Argentinian pianist Ingrid Fliter, winner of Second Prize, had not even qualified for the third round five years earlier. The audience's affections were won by the Romanian pianist Mihaela Ursuleasa. Her striking personality was also appreciated by the jury, which awarded her a distinction. The pianist's sudden death, in 2012, cut short her blossoming career.



The jury deliberates.



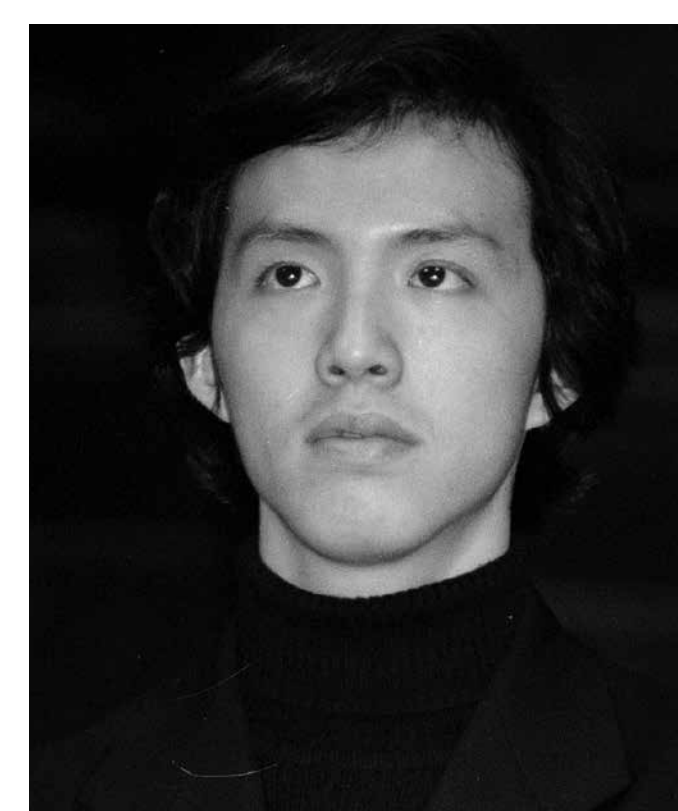
Judge Hiroko Nakamura gives an interview.



## 2000 : 14th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 4–22 October 2000  
**Applications:** 240  
**Participants:** 94  
**Countries:** 25  
**Age limit:** 17–28  
**Jury Chair:** Andrzej Jasiński

**Prize-winners**  
 First Prize – Yundi Li (China)  
 Second Prize – Ingrid Fliter (Argentina)  
 Third Prize – Alexander Kobrin (Russia)  
 Fourth Prize – Sa Chen (China)  
 Fifth Prize – Alberto Nosè (Italy)  
 Sixth Prize – Mika Sato (Japan)



Yundi Li





Kudo Rachel performs with orchestra, conducted by Antoni Wit.



Rafał Blechacz surrounded by reporters.



Rafał Blechacz – all the unforgettable emotions of the 15th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition are associated with that name. The Polish artist became the most decorated pianist in the history of the Competition, winning not only First Prize, but also all the special prizes (for the best performance of mazurkas, polonaise and concerto), as well as the prize funded by Krystian Zimerman for the best performance of a sonata and the audience prize. In the final, while the last chords of the Piano Concerto in E minor performed by Rafał Blechacz were still resounding, an eruption of genuine euphoria broke out among the audience. The orchestra, bringing the work to a close, could not be heard! The verdict was easy to predict.

Several crucial changes appeared in the rules of the 15th Competition: it was decided to precede the competition proper with a qualifying round, since the organisers found selecting participants solely on the basis of video recordings to be not wholly reliable. The Competition was divided into three stages. The jury's assessment system was simplified: marking on a scale from 1 to 25 was replaced by voting 'yes' or 'no'. An additional points scale from 1 to 100 was treated as secondary. The assessments of all the judges remained secret.

For the first time, the Competition was broadcast in its entirety on radio, television and the Internet.



The jury during the first round.

2005

## 15th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 2–24 October 2005

**Preliminary Round:**

**Applications:** 327

**Participants:** 257

**Countries:** 35

**Competition:**

**Participants:** 80

**Countries:** 19

**Age limit:** 17–28

**Jury Chair:** Andrzej Jasiński

**Prize-winners**

First Prize – Rafał Blechacz (Poland)

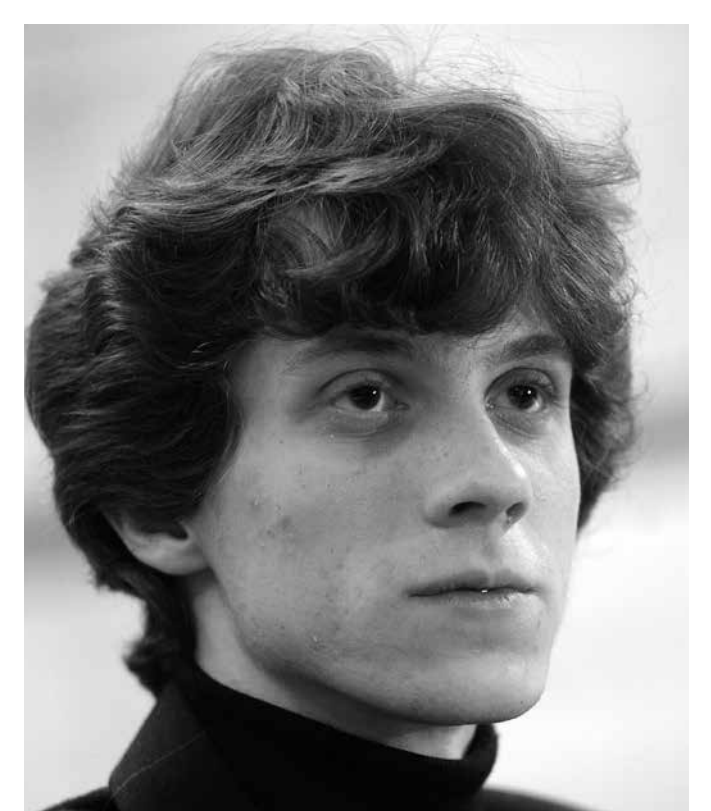
Second Prize – not awarded

Third Prize (equal) – Dong Hyek Lim (South Korea), Dong Min Lim (South Korea)

Fourth Prize (equal) – Shohei Sekimoto (Japan), Takashi Yamamoto (Japan)

Fifth Prize – not awarded

Sixth Prize – Ka Ling Colleen Lee (China, Hong Kong)



Rafał Blechacz





Daniil Trifonov surrounded by reporters.



Miroslav Kultyshev after his performance.



Ingolf Wunder, winner of equal Second Prize.

2010 was the jubilee year of the bicentenary of the birth of Fryderyk Chopin. In connection with the grand anniversary celebrations, Chopin began appearing everywhere and in every possible form: from the most authentic (Chopin on period instruments) to those adhering to popular culture (Chopin in tracksuit top with earphones).

In 2010, the Competition was organised for the first time by the Fryderyk Chopin Institute. The four-stage format was reinstated, and the Sonata in C minor, Op. 4 appeared on the list of works for the third round (giving three sonatas to choose from). Among the pianos, an Italian Fazioli was available for the first time. Many discussions and disputes arose in 2010. The Austrian pianist Ingolf Wunder, although he had fallen at the second hurdle in 2005, was among the favourites for the 16th Competition from the very beginning, and he enjoyed huge favour among the public. Ultimately, he came second, and he had to share that prize with Lukas Geniušas. The jury awarded First Prize to the Russian pianist Yulianna Avdeeva – the fourth woman to be crowned winner of the Chopin Competition. The rivalry could be followed from the first round to the final thanks to simultaneous broadcasts on radio, television and the Internet.

2010

## 16th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 30 September – 23 October 2010

**Preliminary Round:**

**Applications:** 353

**Participants:** 182

**Countries:** 34

**Competition:**

**Participants:** 78

**Countries:** 22

**Age limit:** 17–30

**Jury Chair:** Andrzej Jasiński

### Prize-winners

First Prize – Yulianna Avdeeva (Russia)

Second Prize (equal) – Lukas Geniušas (Russia/Lithuania), Ingolf Wunder (Austria)

Third Prize – Daniil Trifonov (Russia)

Fourth Prize – Evgeni Bozhanov (Bulgaria)

Fifth Prize – François Dumont (France)

Sixth Prize – not awarded



Yulianna Avdeeva





Krzysztof Książek during a performance.



Seong-Jin Cho receives his medal from the President of Poland, Andrzej Duda.



Aimi Kobayashi performs with orchestra, conducted by Jacek Kasprzyk.



Kate Liu before performing.

All observers – international critics, media and advertising market analysts, as well as regular attenders of cultural events – agree that in its reach and attractiveness, the 17th edition of the Chopin Competition exceeded all of its previous editions. The level of artistry presented by the competitors was very highly rated by the jury. Ultimately, a representative of South Korea stood on the podium for the first time in the Competition's history: Seong-Jin Cho. The public's favourites also included Kate Liu and Charles Richard-Hamelin, and above all the Polish representative Szymon Nehring, who received the Audience Prize. Votes could be cast for that prize via the website and a mobile app. The competition was accessible in its entirety to all interested parties on a global scale, thanks to the many broadcast channels, including a competition web page, YouTube channel, smartphone and smart TV apps, Polish Television TVP Kultura, Channel 2 of Polish Radio, Medici.TV and many others. Public Opinion Research Center data show that the progress of the Competition was followed in the media by 29% of the Polish population. The Competition broadcast was heard all over the world by over 31 000 000 people (including ca. 10 000 000 Poles).

A recording featuring the winner of the Chopin Competition was released by Deutsche Grammophon, with selected works performed by Seong-Jin Cho during three rounds of the competition. Within a week of its first release, all 50 thousand albums had been sold in Korea. It seems the popularity of classical music as a whole is growing because of Cho. One of the country's biggest online shopping sites, says that during the week of the album's release, sales of classical music albums soared more than 400 per cent compared to the same period the previous year.

2015

## 17th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 1–23 October 2015

**Preliminary Round:**

**Applications:** 452

**Participants:** 160

**Countries:** 45

**Competition:**

**Participants:** 78

**Countries:** 20

**Age limit:** 16–30

**Jury Chair:** Katarzyna Popowa-Zydroń

**Prize-winners**

First Prize – Seong-Jin Cho (South Korea)

Second Prize – Charles Richard-Hamelin (Canada)

Third Prize – Kate Liu (United States)

Fourth Prize – Eric Lu (United States)

Fifth Prize – Tony Yike Yang (Canada)

Sixth Prize – Dmitry Shishkin (Russia)



Seong-Jin Cho





Last moments before entering the stage.  
Arsenii Mun – the representative of Russia

Due to the world-wide SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the 18<sup>th</sup> Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition has been postponed by one year. All the pianists who qualified in 2020 retain the right to participate in 2021.

The Competition was officially launched on 2 October with an inaugural concert featuring prize-winners from previous editions. The Competition Jury comprised, as always, outstanding Chopin interpreters, former Competition laureates, teachers and experts on the life and work of Fryderyk Chopin. Like previously, the participants had at their disposal the pianos by four different firms: Steinway, Yamaha, Fazioli and Kawai.



Jury's session and voting



The concert of the prize winners in the Grand Theatre – the National Opera. Performing on stage: Leonora Armellini, the Fifth Prize Winner



As early as from the first stage, attention was drawn to an exceptionally high artistic level of the performance and excellent preparation of the pianists. The evidence of recognition was the unprecedented selection of as many as eight prize-winners. Bruce (Xiaoyu) Liu, the representative of Canada, triumphed, who charmed the audience with his brilliant, charismatic playing and extraordinary repertoire. The fourth prize, equally with the Pole Jakub Kuszlik, was won by Aimi Kobayashi, the representative of Japan who performed in the Competition for the second time. Leonora Armellini, the representative of Italy, who performed before the Warsaw audience as early as in 2010, was again the prize winner taking part in the Competition challenges. However, not all audience favourites were honoured by the Jury – the seventeen-years-old Eva Gevorgyan whose name was frequently mentioned among favourites had to enjoy reaching the final round.

The mass media used in the previous edition were developed and technologically-improved in the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of the Competition. In addition to the traditional ones, an extended, user-friendly application, 4K transmission or Weibo channel enabling transmission in China were used. In the YouTube channel of the Fryderyk Chopin Institute the Competition-related materials were displayed almost 38 million times while during the online transmission peak time the viewers were posting more than 20 comments per second! Some short films in social media gained popularity as well – from behind the scenes of the Competition on Instagram and on TikTok – the film showing the Competition through the eyes of the mascot frogs: Frycek and Franek. This has contributed to accomplishing the subsequent record-breaking viewing figures which was appreciated by the international audience at the time of pandemic.

# 2021 18th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition

**Dates:** 2–23 October 2021

**Preliminary Round:**

**Applications:** 502

**Participants:** 151

**Countries:** 29

**Competition:**

**Participants:** 87

**Countries:** 18

**Age limit:** 16–30

**Jury Chair:** Katarzyna Popowa-Zydroń

**Prize-winners**

First Prize – Bruce (Xiaoyu) Liu (Canada)

Second Prize (equal) – Alexander Gadjiev (Italy/Slovenia), Kyohei Sorita (Japan)

Third Prize – Martín García García (Spain)

Fourth Prize – (equal) – Aimi Kobayashi (Japan), Jakub Kuszlik (Poland)

Fifth Prize – Leonora Armellini (Italy)

Sixth Prize – J J Jun Li Bui (Canada)



Bruce (Xiaoyu) Liu