

## ***The 22nd International Chopin Piano Competition in ASIA – Final Round***

### ***University Category***

I do totally understand and appreciate the idea of the Competition Organisers, who ensure that one of the main aims of the Competition is to provide pedagogical assistance to young pianists.

Of course, it is much more difficult, and sometimes even impossible, to express one's impressions or suggestions in a fully responsible manner, when one does not have the opportunity to have direct contact with the talent and artistic personality of the young pianist. That is why I decided to write these few general sentences of my thoughts, which concern practically all groups-categories that are part of the Competition Chopin in ASIA.

One of my frequent impressions when listening to Competition recordings was the impression of poorly defined or even non-existent artistic personalities of some pianists. On the other hand, a strong concentration on the exact execution of all the notes and the pedagogue's instructions is often evident. Unfortunately, we often do not hear a free, flexible, creative transmission of the pianist's interpretation. Then, we hear only an accurate but unfortunately often very mechanical realization of the text of the piece, too often subjected to the pressure of the rhythmic, metronomic tempo. Such a way of playing and music understanding guarantees limited development of the artistic personality of a young pianist and development of his musical imagination and a deep understanding of music.

What is completely different is the playing of a young pianist during everyday practice. Then an important source of information - but only information - may be the metronome. However, it is a complete misunderstanding if during a concert or a recording, instead of a narrative phrase we feel and hear... a metronome! We hear all the notes, pauses, accents etc. written in the score, but we do not hear the understanding of their role in the whole musical narration of the piece. Such mechanical execution of the score are particularly irritating in the interpretation of deeply narrative Chopin's works.

Of course I understand perfectly well the fundamental differences in problems that the youngest pianists have, different from pianists from secondary schools and those who are already students of music universities. But in each of these groups - while maintaining obvious differences in the level of skills - the freedom of natural, creative expression and the joy of contact with music should be audible and visible! I particularly underline the term "natural transmission", and not a transmission based on artificially learned external, sometimes even theatrical gestures and movements, which are supposed to suggest understanding of the musical narrative.

Another, quite common problem is the proper understanding of what is the so-called expression in music and passion in playing. Unfortunately, very often we encounter interpretations of young pianists, whose performer understands and conveys to the audience the suggestion that expression is closely related to the fast tempo and dynamics of playing!

In my opinion, this is one of the fundamental musical errors and interpretive misunderstandings! I believe that tempo and dynamics **are not the source** of musical expression - on the contrary, the source of expression is and should be our mind, truly deep imagination and the artistic personality of the pianist, while the tempo and dynamics of interpretation **are only the result** of an extremely necessary imagination.

Finally, it is artistic imagination and the ability to communicate it to the audience - such an understanding of pianistic problems, which allows us to distinguish even good pianists from truly creative great artists.

And I wish to all our young pianists to look for and to use such an understanding of music and problems of interpretation!

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Proportions and harmony are the most important elements of beauty – when performing music, everybody should look for this. Meanwhile, young performers very often would like to show their own ideas, their liberty which brings exaggeration and make musical form not clear. On the other hand, one can observe neutral performances which are formally correct but expression-deficient which makes listeners bored with lack of emotions.

I wish all young performers to look for good balance between those elements because only simplicity assures beautiful performance which could keep audience guessing.

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Dear Participants, dear Teachers,

I am very happy that I could listen to all your recordings. I find the level very high and your performances were absolutely professional, so it was not easy to award points. I would like to share some of my thoughts after listening to all recordings. I guess that the most important thing in understanding Chopin's music properly is finding a balance of all important elements in every piece you play: playing rubato and playing with simplicity, finding good balance in tempo, playing with strong fingertips but also with great delicately. It is always very important to respect the music text (all indications, dynamics, tempo, expression) provided by the composer. We should not exaggerate the expression.

One of the biggest challenges is playing with good sound quality (sometimes great expression causes that we play with sound that is too sharp and too hard). I think that very good lesson for all of us is to record performances every few days and listen to it carefully; it is one of the best ways to correct all important aspects that are so hard to control when we play (time, narration, sound quality). It is very often that we play something too fast and we don't realize that a bit slower tempo would be much better for the listeners. After we listen to our own performance, it is easier for us to correct it.

Remember that good practicing means asking yourself many important questions all along the way: e.g what is my biggest problem in the piece I am playing and what is the fastest possible way to solve it? What can I do to play this note/motive/phrase/part/piece better? Is my sound / articulation / expression quality the best possible? What can I do with my finger/wrist/arm/shoulder/upper body to make it better?

I wish all of you all the best for the future. Keep on developing your skills and musical imagination. Remember that improving your piano playing means being a better person each day.