

**The 23rd International Chopin Piano Competition in ASIA**  
**Message from Polish Jury Members**  
**Senior High School Category**

●Jury member A

Summarising the performances of this group, it should be stated with satisfaction that the candidates were very well prepared for the performance in terms of their ability to play the instrument and their memory abilities. The programme included etudes and large forms of Chopin. In order to fulfil the tasks set in this repertoire, knowledge of the interpretation of Chopin's works is essential.

- 1) In etudes it is important to not focus solely on instrumental problems, but to notice the richness of articulation as well as timbral and melodic elements. Chopin's pedalization may serve as an example of such aspect that is not a solely technical problem;
- 2) In large-scale works the issue is very complex, as it requires knowledge of the transformations of Chopin's style in different periods of his activity, e.g. rondos in the brillante style feature a different kind of treatment of sound, ornamentation, or pedalization. I recommend using source editions, such as the National Edition, and the invaluable performance commentaries they contain. A number of performances have shown a misreading of the score, distorting the composer's intentions. The honest approach to the text opens up new horizons of understanding Chopin's ideas, making it possible to convey the truth and beauty of this music that is filled with noble and sublime content and emotions.

●Jury member B

First of all, I would like to thank and congratulate everyone whose work contributed to the fact that, despite the very difficult and long months of the pandemic, the already traditional "23rd International Chopin Piano Competition in Asia" could take place. In definitely different conditions - but the most important thing is that it took place ! Bravo !

The competition, for many years now, draws attention not only because its high artistic level, but also because the unusually large crowds of participants in the Competition Finals - in each of the equally numerous categories of the Competition.

The artistic level in the categories that I had a pleasure to judge - High School and University - was generally very high, but at the same time often very diverse. As it is usually the case in online competitions, we heard recordings made often in extremely different acoustic conditions, which certainly makes it difficult for the jury to make a completely objective assessment.

Since the admissible repertoire in those two groups was almost identical, let me briefly describe my general impressions concerning the total of 62 listened video recordings in both mentioned categories.

Generally speaking, the technical skills demonstrated by pianists in the Etudes, drew particular attention. But it is worth remembering that the value of an interpretation of Chopin's music fortunately does not consist of, and is not linked alone to the pianist's technical excellence. And it

turned out quite often that audible and visible serious interpretation problems, appeared in performances of Ballades, Scherzos, Sonatas or Polonaises...

At this point, it is worth emphasising that special attention and recognition is due to those interpretations in which the pianists clearly understand the depth of the content of the performed piece - and not only more or less successfully struggle with pianistic technical difficulties.

Attention and recognition to pianists, who not only perform correctly the details of the score text, but young musicians, whose talent manifests itself in careful listening to the narration of their playing, whose creativity of imagination and power of artistic personality compels the listener to follow the development of the presented interpretation. Such impressions, however, we have only in contact with a pianist possessing a certain artistic personality, which is the basic condition of what we call "talent" - which, after years of hard work, can transform a good "pianist" into a real "artist".

Most often, however, we are dealing with young pianists whose main - audible and visible - challenge and ambition seems to be a correct realization of the text written in the scores. On the other hand, such realization of the text is obviously a very important and valuable attitude for any young musician. However, this is definitely not enough to think about effectively conveying their emotions, expression and imagination to the audience. We as pianists always play for someone, we tell in our playing about something that is hidden in the score, and our task is to find this content and convey it to the listeners by means of a narration which is a result of our imagination and its creativity.

We could write for a long time about the importance of such elements of interpretation as a phrase and its structure, about a flexible narrative whose fluidity is based on its content - and not just on the indications of a metronome. We could write about differentiated articulation, self-control and moderation of agogics and dynamics, which of course should not be considered as the source of expression but only its result! We could write about the extremely important pedalisation, controlled down to the smallest detail and about deep understanding of the form and harmonic structure of a piece. All this should be well supported by knowledge of the history of music, the style of the period in which the piece was composed, and the artistic profile and achievements of the composer.

Yes, without doubts - the profession of a pianist or musician is not an easy one!

Fortunately, the competition video recordings of the finalists of the 23rd International Chopin Piano Competition in Asia, which I had the pleasure to listen to, clearly show that we have a very numerous and exceptionally talented young people, who with the help of their teachers and their own work, should achieve the expected, very positive results.

Please remember - the important purpose of participation in competitions are not the awards! Competitions help us to consciously increase our repertoire, they give us specific and deadline tasks, they have a positive influence on our ambition and concentration at work. Competitions are the important and positive element in the development of every young musician.

To conclude my perhaps a bit overlong comments, let me convey from the bottom of my heart, my best wishes to all participants of the Competition, also to their teachers and parents. I wish you all much of joy from the artistic achievements of their children and students, and satisfaction in the peaceful observation of the natural development of the talent of our piano youth.

●Jury member C

Dear Participants, I would like to congratulate you for all your performances in the Competition and for qualifying to the Final. I listened to your recordings with great pleasure and I fully appreciate the enormous amount of work you put into preparing for the Contest.

Almost all of the finalists presented very high piano skills and technical preparation. However, I would like to draw your attention to a few aspects which, in my opinion, could or should be taken into consideration in the further development of your artistic work.

My first reflection after listening to all the presentations is the necessity of being more engaged with the content and emotional depth of the piece. Having a great piano technique at your disposal, you have all the possibilities to delve deeper into the piece and show more interpretive details, show how you understand the piece and what you want to express through the music. This will require a certain dose of creativity and artistic imagination.

Another important element I would point out is the care given to sound quality. When we build an expressive climax, especially in forte dynamics, we have a need to support it with a full sound - this is natural and proper. However, it can never be a hard and harsh sound, but a deep and noble one - especially when we talk about the Chopin's music. Being sensitive to sound is not only a search for its beauty, but also a care for its variety and a desire to bring out different colors of sound from the instrument, and consequently the use of different types of articulation. We can safely say that Chopin's favourite type of articulation was legato cantabile. The other, very frequently used articulation was leggiero - both kinds of creating the sound were missing in many of the Chopin's forms presented during the Competition - particularly the singing nocturnes, lyrical ballades, or dances. The use of varied articulation and a wide range of colors of the sound is essential for showing the different layers of sound, emphasizing the leading voices in the piece, and achieving the right balance between them. It is never the case that all notes are equally important - some of them are our artistic goal, others only lead us to that goal.

Another element of performance that in many cases needs to be constantly improved is the natural use of agogic in the piece. The sense of musical time is very important in building expression, climaxes, in giving the piece a natural narration. Much is contained, in such a beautiful, yet difficult to grasp, Chopin's term "tempo rubato". Naturally, this does not mean evenly; sometimes the manifestation of naturalness will be a greater breath, a calming, and sometimes a kind of impatient "stretto". All this, however, while maintaining the continuity of the narration and the long phrase.

One more aspect I would like to touch upon in relation to the competition presentations is the correct reading of the text. I have two issues in mind, firstly a too literal reading of dynamic, agogic or articulation marks. When you see a staccato dot or an accent, remember that a lot depends on the context and the character of the piece. We will play the accent differently in piano dynamics, and differently in forte. We play a different kind of staccato in a lyrical Waltz, and a different one in a lively Oberek. The second, more literal meaning of correct reading of the text is playing correct notes

and rhythmic structures. It was quite common to hear misread notes that significantly altered the harmony and therefore the musical sense of a piece. Today we have access to many editions, recordings and we can easily verify this kind of elementary errors, which show, as it were, a very superficial approach to the piece.

I realize that performing in front of a camera and microphone without the presence of an audience and concert atmosphere does not come easily. Nevertheless, I wish you, Dear Pianists, to find joy and inspiration for creating music "live", to find a certain spontaneity in yourself and discover your musical personality.