

The 23rd International Chopin Piano Competition in ASIA
Message from Polish Jury Members
Solo Artist Category

●Jury member A

Congratulations for all Finalist of the 23rd International Chopin Piano Competition in Asia!

The Category “Solo Artist” is especially demanding, as the listener is expecting from the participants the maturity and the strong personality, who delivers highly artistic interpretation of the Chopin masterpieces. My impression is that technical aspect of the presentations is domineering over the artistic one. I would advice you to develop deeper understanding of the universal music language. The pianist is not only the “keyboard player”, but the singer, the conductor, the composer, the actor, the dancer, the story-teller in one person. Be more aware of your artistic tasks as the human-beings and interpreters.

I wish you a lot of success and all the best for your piano career!

●Jury member B

Dear Participants,

I’m truly impressed by your devotion to music. I can feel that music is a very important part of your life.

Sometimes we all think a lot about what is most important in our everyday work. Sometimes we consider the amount of time spent at the piano the most important factor. Some other time we think, that practicing in many different technical ways will improve quickly our performance. There are also days we think, that competing is our goal. All of this is true and all of this can help, but for sure most important and most exciting is playing the music just because we love it!

I hope, that every time in future, when you sit at the piano and play music, you will look for it’s healing beauty and feel it’s power.

●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.