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# Along the Way of Three International Competitions: The Competitions of F. Chopin in Warsaw, M. Long-J. Thibaud in Paris and P. Tchaikovsky in Moscow

*Trys tarptautiniai konkursai: F. Chopino Varšuvoje, M. Long-J. Thibaud Paryžiuje ir P. Čaikovskio Maskvoje*

## Abstract

The current education system gives many pianists the opportunity to gain mastery of the instrument at an early age, to study in many countries and then to work with great teachers representing various piano traditions. Nevertheless, these benefits do not always create the necessary conditions for the emergence and formation of deep and powerful personalities. This assertion is reinforced by the fact that music critics often refer to the great artists of the old times through whom they establish the standard of piano performance. It seems that in our time quantity does not go along with quality and that the art of piano is invaded by a mass of impersonal artists; in other words, it seems as though all artists are very similar.

Nowadays, major international competitions have become the primary instance which can create a hierarchy among the soloists and pianists and can select the best among them. There are often debates about the results of these competitions, but the decisions are usually final. These events provide an opportunity for young talents to enter the circle of professionals or, conversely, keep them away from the international scene. But after winning a particular competition, are these pianists able to meet long-term demands of the public?

Three international piano competitions were chosen to attempt to answer this question: the Chopin Competition in Warsaw, the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition in Paris and the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow,<sup>1</sup> which are among the most prestigious in the world. This article concentrates on musical competitions in general, the reasons of the birth of these three competitions as well as their situation over a period of 1985–2010.

**Keywords:** piano, pianist, competition, F. Chopin Competition, M. Long-J. Thibaud Competition, P. Tchaikovsky Competition, interpretation.

## Anotacija

Šiuolaikinė mokslo sistema daugeliui pianistų sudaro galimybes įgyti meistriskumą įvairiose pasaulio valstybėse nuo jaunų dienų ir ilgainiui mokytis su iškiliais pedagogais, kurie savo ruožtu atstovauja įvairioms pianistinėms tradicijoms. Deja, šios privilegijos ne visada sukuria reikiamas sąlygas brandžios ir stiprios asmenybės formavimuisi. Ši teiginį dar labiau sustiprina tai, kad kritikai dažnai nurodo senųjų didžiųjų pianistų atlikimą kaip šių dienų standartą. Atrodytų, šiais laikais kiekybė neina koja kojon su kokybe, pianistinis menas yra užtvindytas artistų, neturinčių asmenybės. Kitaip tariant, rodytųsi, kad visi atlikėjai yra panašūs.

Šiandienos didieji tarptautiniai konkursai tapo pirmine instancija, kuri gali sukurti solistų ir pianistų hierarchiją ir išrinkti geriausius. Neretai diskusijų kyla dėl konkursų rezultatų, tačiau dažniausiai sprendimai nekeičiami. Šie renginiai suteikia galimybę jauniems talentams įsilieti į profesionalų būrį arba atvirkščiai – nustumia juos nuo tarptautinės scenos. Tačiau ar laimėję konkursus šie pianistai ilgainiui sugeba įgyvendinti publikos lūkesčius?

Bandydami atsakyti į šiuos klausimus, pasirinkome tris vienus didžiausių tarptautinių pianistų konkursų: F. Chopino Varšuvoje, M. Long-J. Thibaud Paryžiuje ir P. Čaikovskio Maskvoje. Straipsnyje aptariamos šių tarptautinių konkursų atsiradimo priežastys ir situacija 1985–2010 m.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** fortepijonas, pianistas, konkursas, F. Chopino konkursas, M. Long-J. Thibaud konkursas, P. Čaikovskio konkursas, interpretacija.

## Evolution of the piano competition: from its birth to the present

For centuries, human beings have been immersed in an atmosphere of competition and rivalry. The competition spirit between individuals has always been inseparable from the material side and has often resulted in a real force for progress. The different forms of the competition concept

are among the oldest of human activities. Thus in each participant was born the desire to excel or shine trying to be the best in his/her field in the eyes of the public.

In this case, it is very logical that over the years music has become an area where the spirit of competition is king, pushing its participants towards performance perfection. The musical competition finds its birth in Ancient Greece where the Olympic Games<sup>2</sup> then embraced sport events,

drama, poetry, and music. In the history of mankind later several examples of competition which became famous thanks to the names of their participants are known. In 1781, for example, Emperor Joseph<sup>3</sup> organized a competition between Clementi and Mozart where the two pianists had to improvise a series of variations on a given theme and then play a fugue. Mozart was the winner, and received 50 ducats as a sign of reward.

The organization of this type of unique musical duels was then in fashion as well as meetings between musicians playing different instruments where everyone had to interpret written works for the occasion. From the mid-nineteenth century, there was in Europe a “contest” organized in the form of festivals. For example, during *targi* market days in Kiev, it was possible to hear every night great artists such as Liszt, the Wieniawski brothers, and many others. While farmers were selling in the daytime all kinds of goods, vegetables and handicrafts, the bourgeoisie and aristocrats gathered in the evening to enjoy music and drama. All these “duels” or music festivals related to instrumentalists and singers were well documented<sup>4</sup> and gave birth to parallel work on music or later reflections on different aspects of interpretation. The artistic rivalry is a path where artists get together in search of beauty: and this was probably the reason for creating competitions (Dybowski, 2010, p. 14).

The Anton Rubinstein Music Competition was the first official and institutional piano competition. In 1886, Rubinstein,<sup>5</sup> the famous Russian pianist and composer, had the idea to organize a regular event where young artists would test their talent and artistic abilities. The source of this idea is not really known but Dybowski’s hypothesis sums up the desire to enrich the international acquaintance circle of young artists and teachers of the time. According to him, Rubinstein’s very close relation with some of his contemporaries and especially with Teodor Leszetycki,<sup>6</sup> led him to create a musical competition bearing his name in order to raise to an international level the value of the St. Petersburg Conservatory as well as the artistic life in Russia.

The first competition took place in St. Petersburg in 1890. It was to be held every five years and then every year in a different European capital. Two prizes were provided: a composition prize and a piano prize. Four other editions of this competition took place in Berlin in 1895, in Vienna in 1900, in Paris in 1905 and again in St. Petersburg in 1910. A total of eight candidates, among whom six pianists, participated in the first competition in 1890, 33 pianists from 41 participants in the second, 13 pianists from 20 participants in the third, 34 pianists from 43 candidates in the fourth, and 27 pianists from 32 in the fifth competition. Some of these candidates participated in these two categories.

The jury consisted of great musicians. Their presidents were – in the successive competition order – Anton Rubinstein, Danish Juli Johanesen, Russian August Bernhard

(originally from Germany), Hungarian Leopold Auer (of Russian nationality), and Alexander Glazunov. A large number of participants and winners of the competition were later members of the jury in various other competitions including the Chopin Competition in Warsaw: Henryk Mecler (in 1927), Marian Dabrowski (in 1937), Wilhelm Backhaus (in 1937), Alfred Höhn (in 1927, 1932 and 1937), Józef Śmidowicz (in 1927, 1932, 1937 and 1955), Emile Bosquet (in 1955), and Arthur Rubinstein (in 1960).

Despite the noble idea of Rubinstein which intended to establish a healthy competition between young musicians, in which any bias was to be banned, the first piano competition was already troubled by severe discussions about the first prize.<sup>7</sup> This aspect automatically leads to some reflections on the impartiality of a jury which in absolute terms was to lead the competition to optimal results. Apparently, the problems of bias or not argued preference were already present at the beginning of the first official competition. If we take into account the fact that competition results only depend on human judgment, it is logical that ambiguities were born during such events.

A period of a little more than a century separates the birth of the first Anton Rubinstein Competition from today’s music competitions. The multiplication factors of these competitions mainly concern the revelation of some models of interpretation, the popularization of masterpieces little known to the public, the wish to pay tribute to some big names of musicians and the discovery of true talents in order to accompany them in their careers. Unfortunately, some piano competitions have lost some of these aspects over the years and among the 750<sup>8</sup> competitions currently existing in the world, not all of them have the same level or the same reputation. Indeed, since 1985 their number has increased considerably and it has continued to grow until today – the year 2010 saw 330 international competitions.<sup>9</sup> We would like to repeat here Aldo Ciccolini’s thought:

*There are so many of them that they have become commonplace, which encourages the emergence of a class of young pianists who play beautifully but have nothing to say. ... Some juries reward well-oiled machines, athletes of the piano and leave outside the real musicians.*

*Because they are still existing...* (Ciccolini, 2004, p. 6)

We would like to note that the greatest competitions for instruments and voice, including 58 piano competitions (solo and duo)<sup>10</sup> are now members of the WFIMC (World Federation of International Music Competitions).<sup>11</sup> The credo of this institution is perfectly reflected in the thought of the President of the Federation, Mr. Glen Kwok:

*Only contests that comply with strict requirements and maintain a very high artistic level are accepted as members by the Federation* (Kwok, 2011, p. 5).

But despite the high level of these competitions, some are more reputable than others. Today, the main and most prestigious remain the Chopin Competition in Warsaw, the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels, the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, the Van Cliburn Competition in Fort Worth (US), the Santander Competition in Spain, the Leeds Competition in England and the Music Competition in Montreal (Canada). The Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition in Paris, who enjoyed a great reputation a few years ago, has recently lost its value and prestige unexpectedly.

Regarding the oldest European piano competitions still existing today, we list: the Chopin Competition in Warsaw (established in 1927),<sup>12</sup> the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels (founded in 1937 and originally known as the Ysaÿe Competition),<sup>13</sup> and the Geneva Competition (created in 1939).<sup>14</sup> Although the Walter W. Naumburg Competition in the United States was launched in 1925,<sup>15</sup> it is far from enjoying today the fame of the oldest piano competitions in the same way as the Chopin Competition.

### **Music competitions' impact on the life of a young pianist: advantages, risks, problems**

The concept of music competition exudes a favourable impression if we stick to the names of all the artists who have won major awards in the past. To name just a few, Martha Argerich, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Daniel Barenboim, Van Cliburn, Emil Gilels, Radu Lupu, Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, Murray Perahia, Maurizio Pollini, Mitsuko Uchida, Krystian Zimerman were some of these young sensitive musicians who survived the pressure of competitions, without fearing the risk of defeat.

At present, few musicians view competitions as a step in their evolution; instead they believe that competitions mark the beginning of their career and qualify them as a *necessary evil* (Pistone, 2007, p. 16). In general, piano competitions provide an opportunity for young musicians to make themselves known to the public, to be heard by concert organizers and music agencies. This method is accessible to everyone and requires a relatively low budget. In addition, the most prestigious competitions provide many opportunities for those who win and help them fight stage fright. Numerous concert engagements following later help winners to start a pianistic career. We also note that the candidates are required to prepare a sufficiently comprehensive program that develops their ability to concentrate and form the basis of a repertoire they can later offer concert organizers.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the money rewards are also important for young musicians who are aware of all the problems related to concert life. Nowadays, pianists are familiar with the competition benefits which they adapt to their needs. We refer here to four different "types" of pianists who attend the

major international competitions. The first type concerns the vast majority of artists who aim to win the first prize. While they generally "try out their program" in other less prestigious competitions, they compete at high-level competitions once their repertoire becomes fully developed. Pianists of the second type with a stronger character and capability to cope with stress more easily, travel across the world and "make a living" by selecting competitions that offer the most attractive financial rewards. Artists of the third type seek to win a prize in a country where they have not yet performed, thus expanding their list of preferred contacts, and becoming known around the world; in other words they choose competitions according to their career. The fourth type involves international competition winners who continue to attend other major competitions in order to earn a maximum of first prizes.

In spite of the positive aspects mentioned above, there are major constraints related to piano competitions; and their complexity is undeniable despite the familiar appearance of such events in the music world. Participation in a music competition has become so indispensable today for young musicians that they no longer seek to highlight the potential hazards that may occur during and after the event. The preparation for a competition is always very difficult and requires a good mental, emotional and physical shape. In addition, participants must be clever in the way they organise their daily work and should avoid practicing too much to manage their concentration and health. Besides, they can easily have tendinitis by practicing too much or, on the contrary, be in bad "pianistic" form during the competition if they do not balance their work properly. The same situation applies while they prepare their program between each stage of a competition.<sup>17</sup>

Another major risk is to damage one's repertoire by working too much, and only deep pianistic knowledge combined with intelligent abilities can help avoid it. But although musicians are generally aware of the fact that they should maintain an adequate physical and psychological balance during the course of a competition, only the most experienced candidates are able to stay in good condition. Factors such as stress, fatigue, or lack of concentration are often the causes of unequal benefits in different rounds during a competition.

Candidates who have enough stage experience at some international piano competitions know what strategies to adopt for their performances. It is about the choice of their program, and then the presentation of the works selected for each stage. A great tactic is to unveil one's piano playing skills gradually getting better from one stage to another. In summary, if the first stage is a concrete obstacle to overcome without too much effort, the second should lead to a richer performance variety. Then the third stage should allow the candidate to fully open up as a performer and convince the

jury with the strength of his/her personality. This step being the last one before the final stage, often allows the jury to make definite choices about the finalists after they have heard their interpretations in the final round.<sup>18</sup>

*The most important and at the same time the most difficult thing is to find one's own place.*<sup>19</sup>

These words correspond very well to the situation of a new winner. After winning a prestigious competition, winners must be aware of the situation in which they find themselves. This new title keeps them up and requires constant perfection of their performing skills despite the conditions they may encounter in their personal and professional lives. Society has now become so demanding that it would not forgive competition winners their weaknesses related to overwork or hard schedule. Every pianist who achieves success will inevitably face difficulties of intense travel, jet lag, and must learn to manage his physical and psychological condition in order to maintain a good health. Currently, a minority of finalists continue to show up on stage regularly. This is due to several factors related to social or personal reasons such as the character, the artistic level, the choice of an agent. The disappearance of very good candidates is often due to a poor technical or interpretative potential. Despite all the privileges a winner could boast (good agent, media support, reasonable schedule, etc.); he/she would not remain long on the market without a profound musical personality, a solid basis of piano mastery, a strong spirit and the opportunity to grow in his/her art. It is possible to juggle jobs and make a career for some time but later growing gaps inevitably lead to the end. Vladimir Mishchuk said that glory should be adequate to one's own possibilities.<sup>20</sup>

This evidence becomes obvious in the performances of the great masters of the past whose personalities and interpretation skills were as strong as mentioned above. Through this, they continue to move us whenever we hear them play. If we stick to their reputation in society and in the music world, they really occupy the place they deserved because in their time it was hardly possible to "cheat" in a career. The winners should also be vigilant and know precisely how to build their career knowing that music agents will not always listen to their artistic needs and will tend to favour the quantity of concerts and financial interests at the expense of career prospects. Finally, excessive exploitation will inevitably hurt the career of a pianist and the latter will no longer find time to nurture his artistic development, which will inevitably lead to the deterioration of his creative and pianistic shape.

Meanwhile, the media play an important role in the career of a musician. Today, society remains strongly influenced by the media and is more interested in an artist who is in the limelight. The issues of the different levels of

professional interpretations do not really arise, because the majority of amateur public remains fascinated by advertisement products that enjoy greater weight when you start talking about them. Regarding the candidates who fail, they should not interpret the jury's verdict as a negative definition of the choice of their profession. Indeed, the competition is only a step in the career of an artist and can by no means influence the development of his/her artistic career in the long run. It is more necessary than ever for artists participating in major international competitions to be aware of this situation and not let themselves be discouraged because of bad luck in a competition. Often unaware of this reality, they perceive failure as a tragedy that destabilizes them mentally and forces them to renounce their vocation. Participating in a competition can be completely detrimental to the future of a young pianist psychologically unprepared for this experience.

In some rare cases, we find pianists who succeed today in a career without necessarily going through a prestigious competition. Everyone eventually finds their own way to introduce their talent and attracts the attention of the music world's personalities.

The conclusion is obvious: although it looks relatively difficult to prepare for a prestigious competition, it appears to be even more difficult to remain on a high level in the music market after winning a prize, knowing that the title necessarily produces a number of adverse factors.

### **What is the future of music competitions?**

The number of critics of competitions has increased since 1970: in fact, since the late twentieth century more protests against their existence have appeared. In 1999, all their disadvantages were presented during the WFIMC members' annual meeting in Dublin.<sup>21</sup>

The impressive number of competitions in the world today creates an adverse effect that tends to level them. To get a prize in a competition is no longer considered today as a ticket to a great career. If thirty years ago, the "international laureate" title was sufficient in itself and automatically gave access to concert engagements in the world's most prestigious halls, today's saturated music market in Europe, Asia or the United States focuses primarily on the first prizes. Indeed, obtaining an award at a prestigious competition is only the beginning of a long artistic path, and today a minority of winners succeeds in a great international career.

The problem of stress, for example, is more than ever relevant since competitions are unable to guarantee a relaxed atmosphere. Despite notable values in their interpretations, very sensitive pianists are often excluded from competitions because of their fragile nervous system, which does not allow them to cope with the competition atmosphere. However, physical and mental strength does not always go along

with a musical talent. This helps us prove that unfortunately competitions tend to become an almost superhuman physical test, where the main focus is on the competitive spirit at the expense of the artistic achievement. This aspect seems to be positive for all musicians who are mentally strong but often lack a musical talent, and appears to be negative to those talented candidates who are sensitive and creative.

The negative influence of competitions also reflects on the education of young talents in academic institutions. Teachers often prepare talented musicians to win competitions. This approach generally plays a negative role in a pianist's artistic development and individuality, especially when the attention of the teacher remains focused on technical standards such as performing "cleanliness" necessary in a competition. Considering that every performance in a competition has to be "good musically but mainly solid technically"<sup>22</sup> this factor grows in a young musician's mind, changes his/her understanding of the concept of a competition and eventually ruins the artistic aspect. Over the last years of the twentieth century, "competitions obviously began to stand in the way of young pianists' artistic development, promoting standardized and uncreative playing".<sup>23</sup>

Through artistic agencies, today the music industry concentrates on the promotion of young pianists who are controversial in their attitude towards art and the public. Society is very often attracted to scandals and comes more willingly to a concert hall to listen to artists with an eccentric behaviour and performing approaches. In that sense, people of the "music business" influence competitions negatively by the amendment of assessment criteria – "show business" is valued above the piano art. As a result, this notion cautions professional artists towards musical competitions which serve more easily the music industry than music itself (Kozubek, 2001).

One of the main problems of competitions concerns the evaluation criteria. Many complicated questions related to the rating systems of the interpretation of the great masterpieces are constantly invading the minds of competitions' organizers. Most critics consider the fact that it is impossible to assess the art of music physically. This explains why the laureates of the second or third prizes make sometimes a better career than the winners of the competitions. Finally, some current issues concern the judgment itself. They concern the standardized personal tastes of the jury members and their influence on the final results, the margin of error due to the fact that judges are only human beings. The issue of bias also remains present in today's competitions, and some jury members may enhance the points of some candidates by sympathy or by reference to their nationality.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, it should be noted that there is yet an aspect that reduces the prestige of most competitions and shadows the essential intention. We refer here to private interests which often prevail in the major competitions and sometimes

eliminate very talented performers in first stages while others, much less interesting musically or in a pianistic context, win prizes through the patronage of the jury members. This is largely based on the statements of the great personalities of the music world (Kulneva, 2010).<sup>25</sup> All these aspects confirm the problematic situation of many competitions. There is a threat to the value of the rewards.

Since the turn of the century, the existence of the competition concept has become a major issue, where the presence of various factors could lead to stop this practice. After analyzing all the benefits mentioned in the previous pages, the WFIMC members' meeting in Dublin in 1999 drew conclusions that competitions are not mandatory, but they still remain very important. In spite of a very stressful aspect during competitions, artists are allowed to have a more creative freedom once they have won a title.

Numerous observers' remarks concerning competitions reinforce this statement and at the same time predict the inevitable existence of the musical competition concept (Sulek, 1995)<sup>26</sup> despite the scepticism of professionals and artists themselves. Proponents of competitions base their position on the fact that this institution is bound to be a form of selection and the first chance to a career. Musicians dedicated to music generally have the ambition to make an international career and dream of the world's major halls. This desire is unfortunately not feasible for everyone as a selection test is required. Competitions are, in this sense, the place of this first selection which allows defining in absolute terms a number of very good pianists. If one imagines that thousands of trained pianists around the world would no longer have any structure of selection, then the music market would be immediately destabilized and would be unable to present artists without recreating another agency of selection.

This idea of a new structure was reflected in the comments of the members of the WFIMC in Dublin, describing an improved competition formula and its various aspects, in order to recreate, in time, necessary conditions for the maximum artistic expression where music would reign over the sporting rivalry. Since that meeting, the WFIMC continues to seek for an optimal solution regarding the future of the competition, trying to eliminate the negative aspects and to solve everything in positive terms. This idea is also affirmed by several musical personalities who wish to limit the sporting spirit and to revive competitions rather as festivals devoted to composers, where a selected group of pianists would receive a list of concert engagements (Kominek, 1995).<sup>27</sup>

The other reason that gives competitions immortality is society and the media. The influence of competitions on the listener is quite visible. The public has always been attracted to competitions as well as to any form of sports in which society is immersed. Competition stages are open to the

public and their broadcast through the media (television, radio and the internet) attract people to this marathon, unconsciously perpetuate highlighting of the aesthetic concept and musical style of composers. This process is very clear and strongly linked with the greatest competitions, including the Chopin Competition, where the cult of the Polish master is fully reflected.

International competitions are also part of city and region projects, aimed at expanding cultural offerings. These projects are closely linked to the economic growth of the involved territory. Worldwide, high-level cultural events are becoming increasingly popular; among them music competitions play a prominent role. In addition, competitions create a new tradition and add value to host regions, giving them international fame and new friendship. Indeed, today's competitions are deeply integrated into society through three different levels: cultural, sociological and economic. This situation continues to strengthen and enjoys a better support of the government authorities.

*Classical music is synonymous with quality, and the quality is, nowadays, the basis for the development of society... There is a thirst for culture, provided that the offer is of high quality.* (Olivieri, 2007)

Concerning the media, they automatically get the job representing the events of the competition as well as the careers and the private lives of winners or specific figures, disclosing some original stories, although common in the life of the musical competition. Thus, musical competitions integrate deeply into the culture of society and become its indivisible part; and they can hardly be removed from the current life without causing social consequences.

Analyzing the first competitions and the current situation of competitions, it is possible to note that some problems existed at the time of their birth. Some appeared with human evolution and others are likely to appear over time. Yet a competition has the right to exist despite these unresolved issues. The winners of a prestigious competition keep their titles forever despite the development of their career. It is interesting to make a parallel between musical competitions and the Olympic Games where no one is able to remove the title acquired or annul the results of the winner under the condition that the latter does not break the rules of the contest and is not disqualified by the Olympic committee. The competition is indeed the fastest path to career development, or on the contrary, can be the cause of its loss. However, winners who do not have enough culture, intelligence, and who are unable to perform at each concert at a demanded level will ruin their career sooner or later.

The rivalry between individuals has always existed and music is condemned to maintain the spirit of competition. And despite the many disadvantages of all competitions, they unfortunately remain the best structure of human

rivalry in the field of piano, welcoming in average 1,400 participants per year.<sup>28</sup>

The musicians seriously prepare for the competitions they choose and receive recognition for their interpretations when they become winners. In other words, the renewed recognition of different interpretations reflects the strengthening of trends and new directions of interpretation in the music world. The successful candidates then perform in many concert halls of the world and are present in the concert seasons' programming for some years. It is thus possible to see that the most prestigious competitions are partially forming artistic seasons and indirectly become the source of reflection of pianistic tendencies.

### The F. Chopin Competition in Warsaw

Each competition aims to make known some great talents and support artists who can become the hope of future generations. But although all international competitions maintain a form of competition between them, trying to reveal the "star" that will shine the brightest in the music world, the situation of the Chopin Competition is different. If we take into account its specificity, the difficulty of its repertoire, or yet the interval of five years between each edition, it differs from the rivalry between competitions and appears as the most important and the most prestigious in the world, devoting years so that remarkable talents would propel to an intensive concert career. The best evidence of this assertion is the confidence that carries major international piano festivals in this competition, inviting in advance its winners without knowing their names. A prize at the Chopin Competition in Warsaw is a "priority card" for concert organizers, and especially for the Ruhr Klavier-Festival (Germany),<sup>29</sup> the La Roque d'Anthéron Festival (France)<sup>30</sup> and others.

After having conducted historical research on political, economic, social and cultural levels in Poland at the beginning of the twentieth century and particularly around the year 1927,<sup>31</sup> we can say that the following ideas show evident reasons of establishing the Chopin Competition.

The regime of the Russian Empire, the country's independence and the coup<sup>32</sup> were among the most difficult political and economic steps in Poland during the first three decades of the twentieth century. All these great turbulences naturally reflected in the country's economical, cultural and social life. The main desire of Poland became to obtain the recognition and acceptance of its independence from other countries. This ambition naturally pushed its leadership towards education development and all cultural fields. They were more than ever aware of the fact that democratic countries should be cultivated and inhabited by creative people. In other words, the independence and the country's identity should be reflected directly through the education

of its society (school and higher education systems), the spectrum of the mass media (newspapers, radio) and culture (music, literature, etc.). This desire to be recognized and accepted grew stronger after the coup of 1926 because the country's new leaders were held accountable to other countries on their attitudes and intentions towards Poland. Thus, they were open and willing to accept new ideas in order to improve the image of their country.

Meanwhile, changes in all spheres of life in Poland pushed the world's cultural personalities into a creative hope and a need to train some new ideas. The human history has already proven that the representatives of art have always been ahead in their creations in comparison with the perception of society. Therefore, the idea of the birth of a great music competition in Poland was already formed and waited for the right moment to come. The appearance of the music competition was thus the logical result of the need for new forms of expression in society. In other words, it was time to enter a new stage of cultural evolution and lead independent society to the country's musical life. Stressing the importance of music in the formation of the nation, Didier Francfort indirectly confirms our thoughts:

*If we take a historical approach that considers the nation as a construction of nationalism – with, among others, Ernst Gellner, Eric John Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson – reflection bends and focuses on the importance of music as an expression not a nation composed but as part of a process of nation building or nationalization of the masses* (Francfort, 2004, p. 14–15).

Thus, it is possible to say that the birth of the Chopin Competition was linked to the political, economic and cultural situation of the time; it was also some kind of the aftermath of the Polish national development. This remark proves once again that important social events often arise when radical changes appear in a country.

On the other hand, the artistic idea of establishing this competition had its own reasons and motivations. The reasons that led to the creation of a competition dedicated only to the music of Chopin were primarily aesthetic, ethical and social. One of them was related to the poor perception of Chopin's art in general as well as the misapplication of his music's interpretation, not listed at the time in his mind or his writing. In the nineteenth century, Poland was not really a country, since the Poles had not yet formed an independent nation. To the world, Chopin was therefore one of the many European composers of his time and belonged to a European cosmopolitan tradition (Dybowski, 2010, p. 16). In addition, fashion wanted music to mainly depend on European aesthetics recognized everywhere; and it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that national schools were born with a desire to create Polish music by a conscious choice (Michel, 1995, p. 175). The

following section describes the usual approach of the public to the works of Chopin during the third decade of the nineteenth century:

*In search of ear-rending dissonances, torturous transitions, sharp modulations, repugnant contortions of melody and rhythm, Chopin is altogether indefatigable. ... But it is not really worth the trouble to hold such long philippics for the sake of the perverse Mazurkas of Herr Chopin. Had he submitted this music to a teacher, the latter, it is to be hoped, would have torn it up and thrown it at his feet – and this is what we symbolically wish to do.*<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately, this trend of thinking lasted long enough. During the first decades of the twentieth century, the situation was not much better in Poland and Chopin lost his identity in his own country. The proof of this confirmation can be read in the memoirs of the founder of the Chopin Competition, Jerzy Żurawlew:

*Times have changed and the cult of Chopin seems to be dying gradually. Worldly music has suddenly appeared on our stages. We begin to say that Chopin is not modern enough, and some went even further stating that he was no longer necessary in school programs.* (Żurawlew, 1995, p. 7)

So it was necessary to reinstate the name of Chopin trying to represent him in a new and modern form. The best solution to this national and international trend had to be the creation of a regular event where young musicians would interpret the music of the Polish composer according to his musical text. This idea was actually born around 1925 and its great inspiration goes to Aleksander Michałowski, Polish pianist, teacher and one of the greatest interpreters of Chopin's music. His student, Prof. Żurawlew, also a great pianist adopted this idea and then realized it. And while watching the young men of his time, the birth of this event as a competition appeared in his thoughts. He noticed that the youth was intensely interested in sporting competitions and this fact led him to create an event based on healthy rivalry and entirely devoted to the music of Chopin. Finally, the idea of the Chopin Competition was definitely formed.

The opening of the competition was held on January 23, 1927 at noon in the Big Hall of the Warsaw Philharmonic, which was at that time in the same place as today.<sup>34</sup> The birth of the Chopin Competition in Warsaw was an event marked with significant importance in several aspects – social, political and of course musical.

*This competition is one of the largest cultural festivals experienced today in Warsaw since the birth of our free homeland. ... The young performers – pianists of all European countries – will gather here to compete in an honourable spirit that focuses on the conservation of traditions of Chopin's music.* (Pierwszy wielki..., 1927, p. 13)

The presence of candidates from seven foreign countries (Austria, Belgium, Holland, Latvia, Switzerland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union) reflected an international concern about the competition from the beginning. The total number of 26 pianists who appeared at Warsaw<sup>35</sup> showed even more – the need for the existence of this event. We would like to remind here that the first edition of the Rubinstein Competition saw only six pianists.

As for the musical aspect, the essential idea of the competition – saving the interpretation traditions of Chopin's music for future generations according to the indications of the composer – was born at the same time as the competition itself and crossed almost the whole century. This tradition still exists and Warsaw made great efforts to protect it carefully (Kazimierz Kord in Hawryluk, 1995, p. 4). The jury of this edition counted twelve Polish members and was very accurate in its judgment favouring styles and interpretations that were the most faithful to the text of the composer. We also note that the organizers of the time had the feeling that Poland had to impose on the world the quintessential interpretation style of Chopin's music. The absence of foreign members was thus the logical result of this perception. The famous German pianist and legendary interpreter of Chopin's Etudes and the Barcarolle in F sharp major Op. 60, Alfred Höhn (1887–1945) did not join the board until the last day of the trials and thus represented the thirteenth member.

To be fair and accurate, it is necessary to note that the existence of negative opinions mainly concerned the final results, the verdict of the jury and the jury bias towards Polish candidates. Some reviews appeared in the press at the end of the First Edition saying that the jury members should have awarded the Second or Third Prize to Grigory Ginzburg instead of the Fourth<sup>36</sup> if the patriotic attitude had not covered their mind too narrowly (Jasiński, 2006).

In general, observers of this first Chopin Competition were amazed by the technical abilities of the young candidates as well as their interpretations of great maturity. They were also discussing the artistic and pianistic development of all these young musicians, expressing some concerns about their individuality:

*What will become of this hyper piano production? What form of final reaction will be adopted against the hegemony of the piano? ... The defect of these talents is in a lack of personality* (Jasiński, 2006).

The press also highlighted the presence of the Russian team well prepared and made up of future masters, especially Lev Oborin (Winner), and Grigory Ginzburg (Fourth Prize). Everyone then noticed the power, professionalism, musical perception of the highest quality and the ease of the Russian tradition.

Several aspects of the Chopin Competition valued since its birth concern the structure of its organization, the number of stages, its program and its regulations. In contrast, its character has remained intact up till now and remains faithful to the unique repertoire of works by Chopin. Thus, despite some attempts to incorporate over time works by other composers, the initial idea has indeed survived. The alliance with works of other composers would have affected the identity of this competition and would have imposed too obvious similarity with other international competitions. Dedicated to the Polish composer, the Chopin Competition in Warsaw enjoys thus a unique strength and atmosphere. It gives the world an opportunity to discover the composer's mind by revealing sources of endless interpretations. For almost a month, participants share their visions of all possible forms of the piano repertoire by interpreting Etudes, developed forms as Ballades or Scherzos, dances like Polonaises, Waltzes, Mazurkas, miniatures as Nocturnes, Preludes, Impromptus and finally large forms as Sonatas and Concertos.

Requirements in this competition are so that participants must be prepared to face high level difficulties. First of all, candidates are requested to be well-trained artists and to have enough stage and public experience. Therefore, they must often win other competitions before taking part in the Chopin Competition. For example, Argerich and Garrick Ohlsson were both winners of the International F. Busoni Competition (respectively in 1957 and 1966) before triumphing in Warsaw a few years later in 1965 and 1970.

The last three decades have brought very little changes in the history of the competition. The most obvious being the new scoring system (since 2000), the incorporation of a preliminary round into the structure of the competition (since 2005), the extension of the program (two symphonic works in the fourth round in 1995 (Thirteenth Edition) and a greater variety of less known Chopin works in 2010 (Sixteenth Edition) including the Rondo à la Mazur in F major Op. 5 and the First Sonata in c minor Op. 4. Resisting the duration of the competition and varying the programs were the biggest challenges in 1995 (Thirteenth Edition) and 2010 (Sixteenth Edition).

Conversely, the appearance of the evaluation criteria of the interpretation of Chopin's music has undergone some changes. Today's candidates are used to playing Chopin's works with more freedom and the jury analyses and judges the most controversial interpretations.<sup>37</sup> In other words, a more individual deciphering of the composer's text has become acceptable in the ideology of the competition. Nevertheless, there is a limit to this freedom and it is prohibited to add notes or change the articulation. Yet, the interpretation freedom remains open to *rubato*, *intonation*, and the research of sound colours.

Regarding the frequency, the number of participants has increased with each new edition of the competition. If only 40 pianists displayed their talent in the Roma Musical Theatre concert hall in Warsaw in 1949 (Fourth Edition), 257 application forms were received in 1995 (Thirteenth Edition), 348 in 2000 (Fourteenth Edition), 325 in 2005 (Fifteenth Edition) and 346 in 2010 (Sixteenth Edition). The competition received 94 pianists from 25 countries in 2000, 80 pianists from 19 countries in 2005 and 81 pianists from 23 countries in 2010. Overall, the competition in 2000 saw an explosion in the number of participants as well as in the numbers of representatives of Asian countries. If in 2000 (Fourteenth Edition), the Competition First Prize went to China (Yundi Li) and in 2005 (Fifteenth Edition) five awards went to representatives of Asian countries, the 2010 year's edition (Sixteenth Competition) completely eliminated Asia in the final stage (4th stage) and no Japanese pianist was left in the third stage. This sudden change concerning the finalists' nationality closely reflects the pianistic trends and certainly characterizes the beginning of a new era of interpretations at the Chopin Competition.

It is interesting to note that the majority of winners and laureates of the Chopin Competition have built great careers. Thanks to their participation in the competition, a significant number of them currently occupy a prominent place in the music world. Over time, the reputation of this event has become deeply rooted in the conscience of society. The awards also varied with the years. A large number of non-regulatory awards gave valuable support for participants over the years and numerous partners were able to engage the winners and laureates in their music networks.

### **The M. Long-J. Thibaud Competition in Paris**

The Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition plays an important role in the music world's history. First of all, it is the first French music competition; then, its founders are renowned French artists – Marguerite Long, recognized as a great performer of the major works of French composers, including the Ravel's Piano Concerto in G major, and Jacques Thibaud, famous violinist and member of the great historical trio Casals-Cortot-Thibaud. The main aim of the creators of this competition was to guide young musicians on their way to their musical lives.

Since its birth, the competition has gone through almost a century and has had years of glory and others less successful. Today it belongs to the French and international musical history that reveals several musical, artistic and social aspects; and although it was unable to maintain its national identity spirit up to now (compared with the Chopin Competition), it is worth being considered as the greatest French competition and one of the most important in the world.

After having conducted historical research on political, economic, social and cultural aspects in France in 1930–1940 and 1940–1944, the following ideas show obvious reasons for the appearance of the Long-Thibaud Competition in 1943. Although the period of its birth is that of the Occupation years, the retrospective of the situation in France in the thirties highlights the connection between these two periods. The global economic crisis, the political uncertainty, as well as the deep depression of society (including artists) around the thirties led the country to the forthcoming dark atmosphere of 1940. Paradoxically, the human spirit and creativity of society began to recover in the most critical moment of the country's history – the cruel Nazi Occupation. Again, the culture was one of the most powerful means of expression of national identity. And although this process was perceptible in many ways, it remained associated with a strong will of society. Policy shared between the national occupants and the National Vichy Revolution in a way exalted French culture. The occupants tried to attract the sympathy of the French population and especially intellectuals. Thus, the French music programmes on Radio Paris, the free concert access to the Radio Orchestra at the Champs-Élysées Theatre, the seasons programs of the great musical institutions (opera, symphonic associations) formed by their French leaders and the possibility of organizing painting exhibitions of prisoners was to create an image of French welfare in France.

Wishing to help society regain the sense of life under the Occupation, the Vichy regime focused its attention on the importance of French culture, including the promotion of French music – creating, editing, recording, and promoting young French musicians (performers and composers) and the recording of their first album. Furthermore, the regime attempted to assign importance to French music in the symphonic repertoire associations under the law of 1897<sup>38</sup> which did not change during the Occupation years. All these advantages allowed focusing on French culture.

These examples show that culture served as a kind of asset achieving the political position of the occupants and the Vichy. Unwittingly, the one and the other exploited and activated culture by touching the conscience of society. Moreover, the fact of working positively and unconsciously on the minds of intellectuals pushed them towards creation to keep their personal identity awake. The best example was the increasing number of concerts by the symphony associations during the Occupation, which reached its peak in 1943.

The tightening of the internal policy after full occupancy of the country in 1942 amplified the opposition of the people to the regime and occupants. In addition, the German fiasco at Stalingrad – a major strategic turning point of the Second World War – influenced the Resistance; and it is certainly no coincidence that the Resistance

physically activated in 1943 (the phenomenon of the Maquis). Then, the activation of the forces of the political resistance (Gaullist) and those of society in 1943 pushed the country towards liberation. People began to find hope of how to fight the German army. The best evidence of this trend is given by a notable population growth from the year 1943, or by the removal of half adherents of the occupants during this year, recruited and included in the lists in 1942. Other evidences of cultural form associated with the events of 1943 are the activation of publications of *Editions de Minuit*, the creation of high value films by young directors, the creation of Francis Poulenc's cantata *Figure Humaine* and the birth of the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition.

It is now clear that the appearance of this competition in 1943 was not accidental; it was a logical result of the overall situation in France of that time. The creators of this event tried to strengthen the French identity through the promotion of young talents unconsciously. For their part, the Germans never had an interest in preventing the occurrence of this event because the creation of a new musical competition during the occupation had strengthened the positive aspect of the latter. Participants being only French artists, this aspect allowed the promotion of local culture. In other words, the portrait of the "good occupants" was highly desirable. To conclude this summary, we will specify that culture was something of a symbol of the French survival or more – that of resistance hidden in some respects.

Meanwhile, the artistic idea of the creation of the international competition in France was born in the mind of Long before the official date of the first edition. In 1938, the great pianist attended the Ysaÿe Competition in Brussels in which four of her students participated. Observation and experience during this event reinforced her idea to hold a competition in France and to meet the needs of young musicians of the time and help them take the first step in their career. Familiar with the difficulties of artists, Long paid a great importance to this kind of event organized in a high standard and in good condition. It was also necessary to find a point of support for this competition willing to achieve its two main ideas: helping young musicians and reflecting the identity of France.

The biggest nightmare of the Second World War strengthened further this desire and offered some solutions for the realization of these ideas. Given the artistic difficulties the young musicians were then facing – locked in their country without any opportunity to perform abroad, and suffering with people of France the humiliating situation that overwhelmed the country and its culture – Long was all the more determined to establish this competition during the war. Thibaud, who then fully shared the views of his colleague and close friend, decided to organize the First Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition in

November 1943. As the compensation offered could hardly solve the financial problems of young artists, Long and Thibaud were the first to create a musical event which could last for years and reduce a large amount of artistic problems faced by young musicians. We offer you a snippet of what Long said about this competition:

*... But our price is not to reward student work. We wanted to highlight young virtuosos who already have sufficient knowledge to be able to represent their generation in an authorized manner and designate future French forces of keyboard and bow ... Renouncing the price in cash (that no longer means much today), we were able to ensure both winners of this tournament the most important commitments, putting overnight in front of the public and making them jump over quickly through a difficult road which took a long time to go through for illustrious seniors...*  
(Long, 1943, pp. 1, 7)

Promoting and disseminating the repertoire of French music was another important task of the competition. This factor was closely linked with the Occupation and was carefully monitored by Long until her death. Indeed, she wanted to showcase permanently pride and identity of the country through French music that was amply presented during the competition. It is necessary to clarify that the expansion of the French music of the twentieth century around the world was both the passion and the great mission of the pianist who was to be the ambassador of this music, especially after the Second World War.

The First Edition took place at the Salle Gaveau on 15–18 November 1943<sup>39</sup> and exclusively French pianists participated – no foreign pianist was then allowed to take part in it. Each category – piano and violin – retained ten registered competitors<sup>40</sup> who had to perform in two stages, and whose imposed repertoire was more modest than it later became in the following editions. While Samson François came first in this competition, a special mention was awarded to Marie Thérèse Fourneau. Generally, and according to the observers of the Competition, the event was to share a lot of emotions and spread pianistic mastery of high level.

Here we find the current problems related to the evaluation of interpretation – the definition of superiority between virtuosity and poetry. It is clear that the possession of these two aspects of interpretation does not cause any debate. After more than sixty years, we find in the interpretation analysis of the most recent competitions the same dilemma which persists in the midst of musical competitions. Apparently, the only difference that distinguishes professionals during the First Long-Thibaud Competition of their contemporaries is related to the notion of the source of this dilemma. Observers of the First Competition noticed that the winner (François) and distinguished pianist (Fourneau) were not comparable because of their gender

difference. These two artists belonged to different physical groups – male and female.

The appearance of the Long-Thibaud Competition was major in many ways, and no one then doubted its importance in the music world. The ideological aspect of the First Edition nevertheless had considerable importance; and perhaps even more than its artistic one. Given the historical context of its development, the restoration of the country's identity through the competition had a very deep meaning as it "proved that the soul of the wounded nation was imperishable" (Minchin, 1959, p. 78–80). The first international edition of the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition thus unrolled in 1946. This year, the Piano category was held on 4–5 December 1946, always at the Salle Gaveau.

Between 1946 – the year of the recognition of this international event – and 1966, the death of Long, the competition could enjoy a universal impulse and no artist in the world doubted its prestige or fame. Long was the centre of the Parisian music and political world for many years, and benefited from the support and dedication of many people in order to realise her plans. The greatness of her personality as well as what she did for the competition was reflected later in the careers of young pianists who vowed her huge recognition. Besides, Long was very keen to get support from the state for the youth and the competition. Finally, the formal Marguerite Long Foundation was established by a decree signed by George Pompidou, Prime Minister, and Roger Frey, Minister of the Interior, on April 28, 1962, and this became the basis of the competition.

Unfortunately, the situation turned out to be quite different after the death of the pianist. Without the power of Long's passionate spirit, the competition suddenly fell in a state of artistic hibernation and faded into oblivion. This factor influenced little by little the international approach of the music world towards it. The financial situation of the competition was one of the major concerns of the successors of the Great Artist; and although many people of the time of Long continued their work as volunteers in the competition, their efforts did not always lead to excellent results. The early eighties finally brought new changes to the life of the competition on the administrative and artistic level. By 1981, full-time paid staff had been assigned by the state to administer the competition. Meanwhile, advertising was expanded, the composition of juries revised, programs renovated and operation of the competition more professionalized. In 2003, the two foundations (Marguerite Long and Jacques Thibaud) merged to become one entity: the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Foundation. This merger was succeeded later by reforms in governance of the competitions in 2007, the year of the separation of administrative and artistic divisions. In addition, taking into account the fact that in the Long-Thibaud Competition, the

artistic side was subjected to the influences of the state and patrons in the years that followed the death of its founders, the entire organization lacked the priority look at its artistic and professional aspects.<sup>41</sup>

The biennial formula that had been in force since 1949 was revised, and the competition in 1983 applied the next triennial formula editing piano first year, an edition of violin in the second year and a gala evening in the third year in which young winners would perform beside their senior colleagues. Between 2007 and 2009, the application of biennial formula reappeared again but it was quickly changed with the incorporation of a third discipline devoted to singing (from 2011). It also imposed a change to the original name of the competition as the name of Regine Crespin was added. Now it is called the Long-Thibaud-Crespin Competition.

In general, the regulation of the piano competition has always retained its original base in four stages despite some changes over time (the elimination round, the semi-final, final-recital and concerto stage). However, we have noticed some changes in the selection of candidates; since 2001, sending CDs has become mandatory. Since 1998, the competition has adopted the formula of "yes or no" based on the number of votes of the jury members.

It is in the program, however, that the greatest changes were noted. By imposing a vast repertoire, the competition rules allow the public to assess interpretations of the greatest masterpieces of musical literature while giving the opportunity to attend the stages in various forms. The music of French composers has always been the focus in the repertoire of this competition.

If we continue the analysis of the competition from a purely artistic point of view, we note that it was always a meeting place for different piano schools. Russian musicians (Soviet at that time), represented by Oborin in the jury, were present as early as 1953. Chinese pianists, meanwhile, have taken part in the competition since 1981 both as candidates and jury members. Finally in 1998, the registered candidates came from all five continents. Regarding the number of participants, it was growing during 1986–2004. Between 1986 and 1995 the average number of candidates registered for the competition was around 110, the years 2001–2004 saw this figure increase up to 165 candidates. The year 1998 broke all records with 207 candidates, while in 2007 only 165 were present. Here we must also note the growing presence of the representatives of Asian countries. Although approximately 35 countries are represented at the Concours Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud, representatives from the Far East countries have constituted almost 50 percent of the applications since 1995. Regarding Europe, it has always been represented by a large number of French and Russian candidates, with a slight predominance of the latter. The year 1998 saw 24 Russian and 22 French candidates

among the 105 European registered candidates. Since that year, until 2009 the Long-Thibaud Competition was won consecutively by an Asian representative.<sup>42</sup>

With regard to the financial rewards, the money did not cease to grow over the years. Among the many awards given to the winners, only the first prize kept its title – the First Grand Prix Marguerite Long. Other awards were founded by different donors depending on the edition as well as many unofficial awards varied from one edition to another.

After having precisely analyzed all the aspects of the Long-Thibaud Competition (historical, artistic, administrative, operating, social including medias) from the time of its birth until 2011, we notice that despite some periods of “ups and downs”, the policy of the competition established by two great French musicians was preserved throughout its entire existence: the promotion of young talents and the monitoring of their career, as well as the promotion of French and contemporary music. Therefore, we would like to believe in the rebirth of the competition that would keep the main postulates of Long and Thibaud while eliminating its current main difficulties.<sup>43</sup>

### The P. Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow

The history of the International Tchaikovsky Competition is closely related to social dramas and tragedies of the Russian state in the twentieth century. This story is one of the highest spiritual dramas of the recent years (Grum-Grzimailo, 1998, p. 6) and also reflects the course of the global musical life.

Despite scepticism of some Russian personalities,<sup>44</sup> the competition took root deeply from the start. This purely ideological product of the Soviet Union existed in the last century with moments of splendour and times of suffering. Paradoxically, the independence from the Communist Party and freedom of the country destroyed almost the entire competition. A dangerous line was approached when its future existence was questioned. The international prestige of the competition particularly suffered at the crossroads of centuries. Despite all this, it managed to get through this unfortunate limit thanks to the recovery of its creative powers and continues to stand today as one of the most important competitions in the music world.<sup>45</sup>

We note also that from the beginning of its existence, each participant got the chance to play for the finals with the best Russian orchestras, under the baton of great conductors such as Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Yevgeny Svetlanov, Alexander Dmitriev, Dmitri Kitaenko, Fuat Mansurov, Yuri Simonov. The historical place of the competition – the P. Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow – has remained the same since the time of its birth until now.

After having conducted historical research on political, economic, social and cultural aspects in the USSR during

the years 1954–1960, the following ideas show obvious reasons for the appearance of the Tchaikovsky Competition in 1958. This analysis reveals very clearly that the country at that time was completely totalitarian and its existence was determined by political ideology in the economy, culture and all areas of social life. This period of occurrence of the competition is very important because all the contradictions of the country's government and political battles are reflected here very clearly. The society and the creation of the artists of that time led to many contradictions. Meanwhile, the top level in all areas of art allowed discerning a great suffering of artists. At the same time, the psychological pressure of the communistic censorship ideology on representatives of the arts led artists from all fields to find space for the realization of their creation. It was a paradox but prohibition to practice religion officially indirectly forced the artists to create basing on the deeper meaning of life and the inner world of the individual. In the Soviet Union, artists generally obeyed the Party, but the spiritual and intellectual suffering and the desire of freedom in self-expression encouraged people to seek, to resist the system and to create. Education of the leaders of the Communist Party was hardly adequate to that of artists. So their desire to control everything and stifle art that did not conform forced the artists to look for very complicated shapes in order to hide the double meaning of their works. Here we find an additional explanation for the existence of the top professional quality in all areas of art.

If we divide all this thaw period, highlighting the years 1956 to 1959, we realize that the birth of the competition in 1958 belongs to a very logical extension of all political events. Other social and cultural events of this period are also the result of the same political course in the USSR. The year 1957 was among other things a year of great scientific explosion with the ambition of Khrushchev to rule the most developed country in the world with the launch of an artificial satellite, one with the concert tours of major foreign orchestras between 1956–1959 (London, Leipzig, Berlin, Prague, Boston, Philadelphia, New York), one with the coming of great artists such as Isaak Stern, Glenn Gould, Leonard Bernstein and American composers like Roy Harris, Peter Mennin, Roger Sessions, Ulysses Kay etc. The year 1957 also experienced the VI World Festival of Youth and Students, the test of the merger of the first leader of the country with intellectuals (Khrushchev's “garden party”).

As for the year 1958, it was mainly marked by important democratic visions of the country, especially in military policy (prohibiting the use of space for military purposes, the liquidation of military bases in foreign territories); and at cultural level: on one hand, the rehabilitation of composers such as Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Popov, Myaskovsky and on the other – publishing banned writers as Akhmatova. Finally, we find that the democratic explosion of the thaw

was particularly strong in those years. The attempt of the leaders to change the country by bringing democratic ideas allowed the birth of all these cultural events.

The analysis of the political history of the USSR since the beginning of the thaw helps us understand that the appearance of the Tchaikovsky Competition was a purely political result. After the attempted coup in June 1957, Khrushchev wanted more than ever to expose to the world his progressive ideas, basing its leadership position and strengthening his own political positions in the international arena through the many social and cultural activities. Preceded by the VI World Festival of Youth and Students, the Tchaikovsky Competition was the highlight of his international cultural strategy. The government gave an official order to establish this competition and decided about its organization. The appearance of the competition confirmed the open intentions of the country for cultural exchanges at international level, gave the opportunity to invite regularly (every four years) many foreign personalities of the musical elite and showed the foreign observers that Soviet Union had many cultural and social advantages. In other words, the Tchaikovsky Competition arose when the leaders of the Communist Party wished to break the totalitarian image of the country worldwide. The ideology and the strong control of the Party allowed the birth of the highest level competition and determined its organization as well as its funding fully supported by the government institutions.

The name of Tchaikovsky for this competition is logical as this composer enjoys a unique place in the Russian and international music history. Indeed, it is difficult to find another Russian composer who was able to pay attention to almost all musical genres.

The participants' meeting as well as the opening concert of the competition composed of works by Tchaikovsky took place in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory on the evening of March 18, 1958. Pianists played in the three stages between March 31 and April 13. Thirty-six pianists from 13 countries were present. Later, 21 pianists were admitted to the second round and nine to the final. The Soviet government created all necessary conditions to an advantageous embodiment of the competition. Candidates enjoyed the best conditions for their rehearsals, preparation, performance and rest.

High level performances were noticed from the very beginning of the competition's appearance and the competitive spirit was felt constantly. Technical and sporting prowess quickly left the room for deep and sensitive interpretations. Van Cliburn (First Prize) was a real discovery for the competition and quickly became the hero of Soviet music lovers. The Soviet school was represented by nine Russian pianists, among whom three of them – Lev Vlasenko (Second Prize), Naum Shtarkman (Third Prize) and Eduard Miansarov (Fourth Prize) – were admitted to the final

round. The Second Prize was also awarded to Chinese pianist Liu Shih-Kun, considered one of the greatest talents of the competition, the only to compete along with Shtarkman in the interpretation of Tchaikovsky's Sonata in G Major Op. 37. Here, we clearly distinguish some coalition of three piano schools from the second stage: the French school of Long (represented by Roger Boutry), the Moscow Russian school of Konstantin Igumnov (represented by Shtarkman and Vlasenko) and finally the American school of Rosina Levina (represented by Cliburn and Daniel Pollack). We have to note that Levina was of Russian origins. Therefore, the American piano school was founded by a representative of the Russian school. This aspect was very important for the country's leaders at the time as it coincided well with the ideology of the Communist Party.

Despite all the contradictions of the time, the first edition was one of the best and one of the most remarkable from the pianistic point of view. Composed of world-renowned musicians, the jury of 18 members (seven Soviet and eleven foreign members) awarded very adequate prizes according to pianistic qualities of each musician, despite the illusions of the politicians who had expected the Soviet performers to win. The evaluation level was high enough as the First Prize was awarded to the American pianist who at that time was completely unknown in the music world and belonged to the "camp of enemies". The First Competition was therefore the first attempt to musical democracy in the Soviet Union at a time when public opinion was taken into consideration. Indeed, the emotional reactions of the audience did not allow the jury to disregard their opinion when the Party pushed constantly the jury to make necessary forgeries to obtain the desired results (Grum-Grzimailo, 1998, p. 12). Soviet and foreign professional musicians showed obvious excitement after the First Competition. They were convinced in its high piano level as well as in its precision of organization and course (G. G., 1958, p. 2). They were also convinced that since then it has occupied an important place among the other oldest international competitions.

It is important to notice that the Department of Culture of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union worked out a general analysis of the participation of Soviet musicians in the international competitions. The paper pointed out among others poor results of the Soviet participants in the competitions of 1958, essentially making reference to the Tchaikovsky Competition. According to this, these results were due to a preparation that excluded a "careful and thorough analysis of the competition conditions" (*Идеологические комиссии ЦК КПСС*, 1998, p. 190). The paper also dealt with the issue of the repertoire. According to the Committee, it contained large gaps in the way that it didn't represent enough Russian classical music, leaving out the best works of Soviet composers. Therefore, leaders who had drawn their conclusions decided to change the

preparation system of the Soviet artists in order to avoid standardization of interpretation at the time of the competition.

This document marked the beginning of the government's interest in the course of all further Tchaikovsky Competitions. On the other hand, it forced the professional musicians to analyze the results of each coming competition and prepare a proper pianistic educational strategy in order to win the first prizes.

Analyzing competition history, we can make a statement that the fall of the Soviet Empire in the nineties directly touched the welfare of the competition. The competition found itself in a position to cut both ways. The joy of freedom and that of the press without censorship stood on the other side of the destructive winds of the free market. By 1990 (the Ninth Edition), observers resented some kind of signs of the historical exhaustion, which was reflected in the organization of the competition. This Ninth Edition marked a turning point in the entire history of the competition so that the public and the professionals began to speak openly about necessary and more compact reforms – among others regulation reforms – and the need for pre-selection requiring from candidates to send their sound recordings.

The Eleventh Competition (in 1998) almost didn't happen. Indeed, its plight was reflected in the fact that in 1996, the competition has been excluded from the WFIMC for not paying membership fees since 1993 and refusing to participate in the activities of this organization. On the eve of the twenty-first century and during this difficult period of the competition, some reformers proposed to change the name of this musical event, choosing a name of a more recent and contemporary composer such as Shostakovich or Schnittke. Their arguments were based on the idea that the emotional music of Tchaikovsky could not reflect the needs of a contemporary society while music facing the new century would answer all the questions of the moment.

In general, very few changes were noticed in the structure and the rules of the competition. Concerning the repertoire, the specificity of the competition was always Russian classical and contemporary music which was represented alongside with worldwide music pieces. Young musicians interpreted works by Scriabin, Balakirev, Glazunov, Taneyev, Rachmaninov, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Shostakovich alongside with concertos, sonatas, variations and other works by Tchaikovsky, which occupied a special place in this competition.

As regards the number of the participants, it increased over the years. The First Edition in 1958 saw 36 pianists from 13 countries; the Ninth Competition in 1990 gathered a total of 119 pianists from 23 countries. From the Eleventh Competition (1998), the number of Asian participants increased, featuring 40 pianists, including 24 Japanese performers. This edition allowed the participation

of 94 candidates in total and saw an obvious decrease of European representatives – only 12 candidates. This figure declined further at the Thirteenth Competition (2007) with only seven European candidates out of 46 participants in the first stage. The money rewards increased with the years and special prizes were added over each new edition.

The musical history of the Tchaikovsky Competition reflects today the development of musical ideas and directions of styles of interpretations of the twentieth century. Here we find the process of reconciliation of national piano schools which gave way to an intense dialogue on musical cultures. Yevgeny Malinin, a Russian pianist and teacher, has associated this dialogue with mutual enrichment where “the competition reflected demonstration of its own musical ideas and its own ways towards solving musical tasks” (Grum-Grzimailo, 1998, p. 5).

### **Summary and comparison of the birth and the general course of the three analyzed international competitions**

Thus, we see that all three competitions were born during periods of major historical events, which clearly indicates a direct link between their birth and the policies of their respective countries. But in spite of several different aspects, all the leaders of these countries at that time were interested in their way by the appearance of these cultural events because they allowed them to ensure a positive political attitude towards the world. Thus, the three competitions obtained government support.

It is also important to note that these three competitions have a common feature that could be identified as the desire to declare to the world a certain national existence. Nevertheless, the creation of the artistic idea of each competition is different. The initiators of the Polish and French competitions were artists; the sole initiator of the competition in the USSR was the government. Whereas the realization of Polish and French competitions indicated a cultural expression of the nation, the organization of the event in the USSR was the result of the Soviet ideology that was to confirm the priority of the communist system over that of the capitalist.

The direct participation of the Party in organizing the Tchaikovsky Competition also determined the organization conditions. The government took over full financial responsibility for the competition and created superior conditions. The ideology of the Party was the cause of such a commitment to this event. Moreover, while the Polish government gave its support to the organizers of the Chopin Competition and bestowed a partial financial help as well as an official diplomatic assistance without any worry about the final outcome, the French leaders of the time only gave their consent to the realization of the

Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition without any official help. The French event was then totally private and sustained only by close friends of the founders; or by organizations – the Salle Gaveau, the recording company Pathé-Marconi, which made their decisions independently from the French leaders of that time.

The dominating participation of the Communist Party in the creation of Tchaikovsky Competition also determined the participation of the best Soviet pianists and therefore raised the general piano level of the competition very high. The ideology of the Soviet government constantly pushed the organizers and the artists of the competition to a mandatory superiority over other international competitions. Neither France nor Poland experienced such ideological pressure.

We can see that these three competitions were events in the life of their societies. If the appearance of the Chopin and the Tchaikovsky Competitions was an open declaration of public emotion and national identity of their country, this aspect was presented in a smaller size, more hidden and concentrated towards the artistic interest during the First Long-Thibaud Competition because of the status quo of France at that time.

The analysis of the course of these three competitions during the last thirty years also reveals that everyone has common and different aspects. As regards the organizers, the Chopin Competition and the Long-Thibaud Competition have existed under the organization of relatively compliant institutions. Initially, the Chopin Competition in Warsaw was mainly organized by the Frederic Chopin Music School, later on by the Chopin Society in Warsaw which was incorporated into the Chopin Institute in 2001. For its part, the Long-Thibaud Competition was run by its respective founders. In 1962, their foundations merged and established the structure of stable and unchanging management until 2007. Conversely, the Tchaikovsky Competition was a purely political product and fully supervised by the Soviet government. After losing its permanent initiator, it has been set up by different organizers since 1990.

We have compared the financial aspect of each competition and justified its influence on their well-being and their artistic aspects. Thus, we found that the maximum financial support from the government has always ensured a high level of maintenance and development of the competition on condition that professionals of the music world formulated and determined the artistic aspects related to its course. So, in the ideal situation, financing becomes a vehicle for the realization of all artistic tasks related to the competition. It is always the case at the Chopin Competition; it was the case at the Tchaikovsky Competition until 1990 and it was the case at the Long-Thibaud Competition during the time of its founders between 1957 and 1966 and during the later period of 1991–2007.

Regarding the artistic level, the Chopin and the Tchaikovsky Competitions managed to maintain certain etiquette of “hard competition”. Generally, the winners of other international competitions participated later on in one of these two competitions as these required higher pianistic level of their participants. In comparison, the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition is open to young musicians who do not yet have the experience of major competitions. The essential idea of the latter is still focused on promoting young musicians, which attracts quite young participants (19 year-olds on average) and without much stage experience.

We note that the Tchaikovsky Competition has always perpetuated the communist ideology which created in its time some scientific apparatus for obtaining the best results of the Russian piano team. The reports of the greatest Soviet teachers and musicologists written during and after each competition constantly helped preparing methodologies and strategies for each future edition in a governmental level. Therefore, this fact was the guarantor of the level of the Soviet team that imposed to this event a general high piano level. Moreover, the Soviets always organized selection tests before every international competition to form the Soviet Union team with the strongest pianists and the government was observing closely whether there were good conditions for preparation of these teams. This tradition was interrupted with the fall of the USSR in 1990. It is important to remember, however, that until the change of the political system, the country’s government was constantly making pressure on the jury of the Tchaikovsky Competition to strengthen its ideological picture.

The Department of Polish Culture also had interest in the organization of the Chopin Competition. From its Fourth Edition (1949), it financed the preparation of the team of pianists who would enter the competition. And although the government did not make pressure on the jury in its deliberations as it was the case in the USSR, it remained interested in the fact that the level and prestige of the competition would remain high, and that pianists could be worthy of their great composer. It should be emphasized that, unlike the organizers of the Tchaikovsky Competition, the Chopin Society has maintained the tradition of selecting future competition participants by giving them grants of the Society. The tradition of a professional analysis during and after each edition of the competition written by famous personalities of the music world was also retained. We note once again that, being led by the Chopin Society and the Chopin Institute, the competition was managed by representatives of the professional music scene who ensured the dominance of artistic priorities.

As for the Long-Thibaud Competition, the French government did not take care of its level and did not organize any preparation for the French piano team. If, at the time

of Long, monitoring the artistic aspects of the competition and monitoring the development of French pianists were her responsibility, after her death there was no replacement for her professional consistency. Her preparedness plan for her students and future French and foreign applicants to the competition should be considered as an exceptional example. Indeed, master classes organized on Molitor Street in Paris and the debuts of the future competition candidates with the Orchestre de Paris always contributed to their thorough preparation at the highest level. Thus, with the death of the Great Pianist, the Long-Thibaud Competition was gradually losing its status of French identity and representation of its culture in relation to other European cultures, which was not the case of the Chopin Competition and partly the Tchaikovsky Competition. The rebirth of the Long-Thibaud Competition around the nineties and during the early editions of the twenty-first century revealed again the main postulates of its founders and attracted the interest of the state as an organization for the dissemination of French culture. However, it is sad to notice that no professional analysis system was created during and after this competition.

We will continue this comparison by highlighting the visible increase in the frequency of candidates in the three competitions at the crossroads of centuries, with an explosion of the number of participants in 1998 at the Tchaikovsky Competition and the Long-Thibaud, and in 2000 at the Chopin Competition. These editions of the Chopin and Tchaikovsky competitions also coincide with the beginning of a massive presence of candidates from the Far Eastern countries. This process was revealed earlier at the Long-Thibaud Competition in 1995. We see again that despite the specific differences in each competition, all three of them underwent an increase of candidates almost simultaneously. This observation proves that musical competitions are closely linked to global processes and indirectly reflect the social, economic, political aspects of their country and the whole world.

In conclusion about the general state of each competition, we note that the period of the real difficulties at the Tchaikovsky Competition began around the nineties and especially from its Tenth Edition in 1994 when the first prize was not awarded. During the same years, a crisis, less visible, however, was felt at the Chopin Competition where the first prize was not awarded in 1990 (Twelfth Edition) or in 1995 (Thirteenth Edition). In 2000 (Fourteenth Edition), it was mandatory to award the first prize in order to safeguard the prestige of the competition, as it was the case at the Tchaikovsky Competition in 1998 (the Eleventh Edition). As for the Long-Thibaud Competition, which had remained in limbo for several years and had received a boost from the nineties, its level began to fall again in the last years of the first decade of this century.

Taking into account the fact that pianistic interpretation was the aim of our research, we would like to conclude this article with some remarks about it. We note that the evolution of pianistic tendencies was already noticed at the First Chopin Competition. The question about what would dominate later on – technical perfection or artist individuality – was already present in 1927. A century later, the trends seem very obvious: the domination of pianistic technique predicted in the beginning of the twentieth century became a trend during the last decades, and total piano control – including all aspects of the pianistic art – regained its dominance at the end of the first decade of this century. However, can it be said that artistic individuality now appears in the foreground and leads to a perfect control of piano technique or is it only the reproduction of the performances of famous old masters precisely presented by young candidates? This question will probably find its answer in twenty years and will be unveiled throughout the performances of winners of the most distinct contemporary piano competitions.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> The Long-Thibaud Competition is a competition for piano and violin; in 2011, it changed its formula and included voice: it is now called the Long-Thibaud-Crespin Competition. The Tchaikovsky Competition is a competition for piano, violin, cello and voice.
- <sup>2</sup> The first ancient Olympic Games were held in 776 BC and the last ones in 393 AD.
- <sup>3</sup> The full title of the Emperor Joseph II (1741–1790) is Kaiser des Heiligen Römischen Reiches Deutscher Nation [Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire], a descendant of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty.
- <sup>4</sup> We refer here to the work of Stanisław Dybowski (Dybowski, 2010).
- <sup>5</sup> Anton Rubinstein (1829–1912) established the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1886.
- <sup>6</sup> Great musician and Polish pedagogue Theodor Leschetizky (Teodor Leszetycki, 1830–1915) was a close friend of Anton Rubinstein, who entrusted him the job of director of the piano department at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. His students progressed very quickly and this aspect probably influenced the decision of Rubinstein to create a musical competition.
- <sup>7</sup> Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924) and Nikolai Dubasov were thus considered equal. Yet, despite the excellent performance of Busoni who received honours, the prize was awarded to the Russian pianist. Rubinstein took advantage of his privileged position as president and ruled in favour of the Russian candidate. It was important that the highest award of the First Edition would go to a representative of the country. Busoni also took part in the competition in the category “Composition”.
- <sup>8</sup> This information dates from 2011 and comes from Gustav Alink, creator of the Alink-Argerich Foundation and specialist of Piano Competitions. This number embraces national and international competitions. For more information, see: <http://www.alink-argerich.org/>.
- <sup>9</sup> The year 1965 saw 30 piano competitions. This number increased to 110 in 1990 and to 330 in 2010. Obviously, the number of competitions has trebled over the past twenty years.

- <sup>10</sup> This number of competitions was in 2011. Some competitions also feature stages of chamber music with piano.
- <sup>11</sup> The WFIMC is the organisation that gives competitions their legitimacy on the international music scene. The music competition, placed under the aegis of the WFIMC integrates a multi-network (world cultural and economic networks). In 2011, 129 FIMC members were present on all six continents. See the following site for more information about the WFIMC: <http://www.wfimc.org/Webnodes/en/Web/Public/Home>
- <sup>12</sup> The Chopin Competition in Warsaw has been a member of the WFIMC since 1957.
- <sup>13</sup> The Ysaye Competition was interrupted by the Second World War. It reappeared as the Queen Elisabeth Competition in 1951 with a violin edition. Today, performance sessions take place every three years, while the composition competition is organized before each instrumental session. The winning works of the composition competition are imposed during the piano and the violin sessions. This competition has been a member of the WFIMC since 1957.
- <sup>14</sup> The Geneva Competition is opened today in several instrumental disciplines. The piano competition is held every two years, always during the fall, and in parallel with other instruments such as the flute or the clarinet. Alternately to the piano competition, there is also a voice competition in conjunction with percussion and string quartet. The composition competition is held in the spring of the same year of the voice competition. The Geneva Competition has been a member of the WFIMC since 1957.
- <sup>15</sup> This competition has existed for a long time through auditions. The piano and violin vied together to obtain the right for a recital at Town Hall in New York. It was considered as a patronage for young talents of the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation, and not as a regulated competition between musicians playing the same instrument. This competition does not belong to the WFIMC.
- <sup>16</sup> In major piano competitions, the total duration of the works to be played is equivalent to two full recital programs to which are generally added two concertos.
- <sup>17</sup> During the 16th Chopin Competition (2010), pianist Yury Shadrin (Russia) had to leave the competition after the second stage because of tendinitis due to very intense practicing hours. His frustration was all the greater as observers predicted him many chances to get to the final.
- <sup>18</sup> The example of Lukas Geniušas perfectly illustrates this finding and highlights the importance of piano strategy during a competition. During the Chopin Competition in 2010, he played very well the required works of the first stage. He showed then that he knew how to manage professionally all the various forms of the second stage thanks to his musical knowledge and personality. During the third stage, he suddenly conquered the audience and the jury by giving a striking and convincing interpretation of the Sonata in B flat minor Op. 35 and 10 Studies of Op. 25 (Geniušas did not play Studies No. 7 and No. 11 Op. 25 because he had already played them during the first stage).
- <sup>19</sup> Vladimir Mishchuk in: Kulneva, 1992.
- <sup>20</sup> Vladimir Mishchuk: *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> The theme of the meeting was entitled “The presence and the role of international competitions in the music world of the twenty-first century”.
- <sup>22</sup> Author’s interview with pianist, professor and director of the St. Petersburg Conservatory (2011) Oleg Malov (1947), St. Petersburg, August 20, 2011.
- <sup>23</sup> Author’s interview with Stanislaw Dybowski in Warsaw, October 5, 2007.
- <sup>24</sup> This information comes from Prof. Dybowski. Given the ethics of competition, it can not be officially unveiled.
- <sup>25</sup> Interview of Marina Brokanowa with Vladimir Viardot: Марина Броканова. Истинные таланты раздражают серую массу. In *Piano Forum*. Москва, 2010, No. 1, p. 3–7.
- <sup>26</sup> Interview of Andrzej Sulek with Gustav Alink: Andrzej Sulek. Konkurs dla kogo? In *Studio Konkurs*. Warsaw, 1995, No. 14, p. 4.
- <sup>27</sup> Interview of Mieczysław Kominek with Andrzej Jasiński: Mieczysław Kominek. Trzeba przyjąć każdy werdykt. In *Studio Konkurs*. Warsaw, 1995, No. 3, p. 5; also: Kozubek, 2001.
- <sup>28</sup> See the link: <http://www.alink-argerich.org/>.
- <sup>29</sup> Interview of Marina Brokanowa with Franc Xavier Onezorg: Марина Броканова. Я знаю об артистах больше чем их impresario. In *Piano Forum*. Москва, 2010, No. 3, p. 11–14.
- <sup>30</sup> See the booklets of La Roque d’Anthéron Festival (2006 and 2011). The winners of the Chopin Competition – Rafał Blechacz (2005) and Juliana Avdeeva (2010) – performed at the La Roque d’Anthéron Festival in 2006 and 2011.
- <sup>31</sup> All the research work related to Poland, France and the URSS is presented in the thesis: Indrė Eugenija Želvytė Giusiano. *Les tendances pianistiques des années 1985-2010 à travers trois concours internationaux: Chopin de Varsovie, Long-Thibaud de Paris et Tchaikovski de Moscou*, dir. Danièle Pistone, supported at Sorbonne Paris IV, January 23, 2014.
- <sup>32</sup> In May 1926, there was a coup in Poland. This gave the start to a new stage in the country’s history and marked the beginning of “sanitation”. The instigator of the bloody coup was Josef Pilsudski who formally rejected his authority to the President and the new President Ignacy Mościcki was elected by the parliament.
- <sup>33</sup> Rellstab, L. In *Iris*. Berlin: July 5, 1833 (in Dybowski, 2010, p. 17).
- <sup>34</sup> Philharmonic in Warsaw was opened under the initiative of Emil Młynarski and Aleksander Rejchman at Jasna Street 5, in 1901.
- <sup>35</sup> The First Edition saw 34 application forms.
- <sup>36</sup> The second and third prizes were awarded respectively to Polish pianists Stanislaw Szpinalski and Róża Etkin.
- <sup>37</sup> Interview of Mieczysław Kominek with Andrzej Jasiński: Mieczysław Kominek. Trzeba przyjąć każdy werdykt. In *Studio Konkurs*. Warszawa, 1995, No. 3, p. 5.
- <sup>38</sup> The 1897 law insisted on programming “new works” (not performed in Paris) of French composers – alive or dead for less than ten years, and for a total duration of at least three hours (Laederich, 2001, p. 228).
- <sup>39</sup> The public Violin Competition took place on Monday 15 and Tuesday 16, November at 13:30. The public Piano Competition took place on Wednesday 17 and Thursday 18, November at 13:30. All stages took place at the Salle Gaveau.
- <sup>40</sup> We believe that the final number of pianists was eight. This assumption appears plausible after reading the article of Emile Vuillermoz (Vuillermoz, 1943), in which he talks about the participation of seven girls and one boy in the competition. Another article by Georges Boskoff (Boskoff, 1943) also analyzes the performances of six girls and one boy, which reinforces the assumption about the absence of ten pianists at the Competition.
- <sup>41</sup> We allow ourselves such a statement after going through precise researches about the operating, financial and artistic levels of the Long-Thibaud Competition from the time of its appearance until the year 2010. The evidence of this statement can be found in the thesis of Želvytė Giusiano (Reference No. 31).
- <sup>42</sup> Among the countries in the spotlight, we list South Korea in 2001 (Dong-Hyek Lim), China in 2004 (Siheng Song) and Japan in 2007 (Hibiki Tamura). In 2009, the First Prize was not awarded but three Asian pianists out of five were in the final – one Chinese and two Japanese. This factor clearly confirms the occupancy of the music market by musicians of these countries.

- <sup>43</sup> Since 2008, we have been observing a decline of the national and international prestige of this competition. This process was thoroughly analyzed during the research work related to the thesis of Želvytė Giusiano (Reference No. 31). The actual situation of the competition became very unstable.
- <sup>44</sup> These personalities defended their position through the idea that true talents always found their way and that it was not possible to assess the art by points.
- <sup>45</sup> The latest edition of the Tchaikovsky Competition in 2011 is the evidence of this finding thanks to high-level technical and musical performances. Many talented pianists were heard already in the first stage.

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## Santrauka

Šimtmečiais žmonės buvo panirę į konkurencijos ir varžymosi atmosferą, konkurencijos dvasia visada buvo neatskiriama nuo materialaus gyvenimo ir dažnai veikė žmonijos pažangą. Seniausi konkursai su menų varžytuvėmis buvo Graikijos olimpinės žaidynės. Ilgainiui įvairios muzikinių varžybų formos išsirutuliojo į oficialų tarptautinį Antono Rubinsteino pianistų konkursą 1886 m. Rubinsteinas siekė sukurti sveiką jaunųjų muzikų konkurenciją, kad jauni menininkai galėtų išbandyti savo talentą ir galimybes, tačiau jau pirmame oficialiame konkurse išryškėjo įvairių, tarp jų ir šališkumo, problemų.

Šiais laikais tik dalis muzikantų konkursą sieja su artistine savo karjera. Daugumai jų konkursai tėra profesinės karjeros pradžios būtinybė, galimybė būti išgirstiems publikos, koncertų organizatorių ar vadybininkų. Tačiau konkursuose slypi nemažai sunkumų ir problemų, kurias ne visi jauni pianistai įveikia, – tai ypatingos fizinės ir psichologinės energijos reikalaujantis pasirengimas, atsakingas programos parinkimas, konkurse patiriama įtampa, nuovargis, koncentracijos stoka. Tik nedaugelis laureatų geba tęsti muzikinę karjerą laimėję konkursą, nes susiduriama su dideliais reikalavimais, visuomenė ir toliau tikisi neprikiaštingo atlikimo. Realūs atlikėjo profesinės karjeros garantai yra: brandi asmenybė, puikus pianistinis meistriškumas, dideli artistiniai gebėjimai ir nuolatinis tobulėjimas pianistiniame mene. Akivaizdu, kad sunku ne tik pasirengti ir laimėti konkursą, bet ir nugalėjus išsilaikyti muzikiniame pasaulyje. Be to, išanalizavus šiuolaikinius konkursus, pastebima ir tokių negatyvių veiksnių kaip konkursinė įtampa, neleidžianti

jautriems, muzikaliems pianistams patekti į konkurso finalą; į techninį lygį nukreiptas pasirengimas, taip blokuojant visavertę artistinę atlikėjo raidą; reklaminės-informacinės pramonės dėmesys kontroversiškiems interpretacijoms ir jų atlikėjams, į šalį nustumiantis domėjimasi pačia muzika; sunkiai apibrėžiami dalyvių pasirodymų vertinimo kriterijai, leidžiantys komisijos nariams laisvai vadovautis savo išmone, taip sumenkinant apdovanojimo vertę.

Kaip žinome, muzikiniuose konkursuose išryškėja kai kurie interpretaciniai modeliai, konkursai populiarina visuomenei mažai žinomus muzikos kūrinius, pagerbia žinomų muzikantų vardus ir, be abejonės, suranda tikruosius talentus, padeda jiems karjeros kelyje. Tačiau laikui bėgant daugelis konkursų prarado kai kuriuos šiuos aspektus, ne visi iš 750 pasaulyje egzistuojančių konkursų pasižymi aukštu lygiu ar reputacija. 2010 m. vyko 330 tarptautinių konkursų, kurių didžiausi instrumentiniai ir vokaliniai priklauso WFIMC – Pasaulinei tarptautinių muzikos konkursų federacijai. Prestižiškiausi pianistų konkursai šiandien – tai F. Chopino Varšuvoje, Karalienės Elžbietos Briuselyje, P. Čaikovskio Maskvoje, Van Cliburno JAV, Santanderio Ispanijoje, Lidso Anglijoje ir Monrealio muzikinis konkursas Kanadoje. Ilgai vienos svarbiausių pianistų varžytuvių – M. Long-J. Thibaud konkursas Paryžiuje – netikėtai prarado savo vertę.

Deja, didžiulis konkursų skaičius sukelia jų niveliaciją. Perpildyta muzikinė rinka Europoje, Azijoje ar JAV daugiausia koncentruojasi tik į pirmų premijų laimėtojus. 1999 m. WFIMC asamblėjoje Dubline buvo nustatyta, kad konkursai nėra privalomi. Tačiau iki šiol jie yra svarbūs, nes jų atsakius muzikinė rinka būtų destabilizuota, be tokios atrankos sunku reprezentuoti konkrečius atlikėjus. Konkursų nemirtingumą palaiko visuomenė ir informaciniai šaltiniai, o stambiausių konkursų laimėtojai iš dalies užpildo koncertų sezonus ir netiesiogiai tampa pianistinių tendencijų atspindžiu. Tačiau daugelis muzikinio pasaulio atstovų vis dažniau kalba apie naują konkursų struktūrą, kuri būtų panaši į muzikinius festivalius ir padėtų išvengti konkursuose dominuojančios nesveikos sportinės konkurencijos.

Šio straipsnio tyrimui pasirinkti pianistų konkursai – F. Chopino Varšuvoje, M. Long-J. Thibaud Paryžiuje ir P. Čaikovskio Maskvoje. Šiuos konkursus vienija tai, kad jų įkūrimas ir tolimesnė raida neatskiriama nuo šalies ekonominio, politinio, socialinio ir kultūrinio konteksto, tiesioginės įtakos turėjo konkretus istorinis įvykis: konkursui Varšuvoje impulsą davė 1926 m. perversmas jaunoje nepriklausomoje Lenkijos valstybėje, Prancūzijoje – pasipriešinimo okupantams sustiprėjimas 1943 m., Sovietų Sąjungoje – didžiausias politinis „atšilimas“ 1958 m. Tuo metu visų valstybių lyderiai norėjo sustiprinti savo valdymo pozityvų įvaizdį. F. Chopino ir M. Long-J. Thibaud konkursų iniciatoriais buvo atlikėjai, P. Čaikovskio konkurso – Komunistų

partija. Nacionalinis aspektas visiems trimis konkursams taip pat buvo aktualus.

P. Čaikovskio konkurso eigą ir vystymąsi lėmė partija, finansavusi jo organizavimą, aukščiausio lygio sovietų pianistinės komandos pristatymą, iškiliausių žiuri narių dalyvavimą, dalyviams garantavusi geriausias grojimo ir gyvenimo sąlygas. Po konkurso buvo inicijuojama profesionali rezultatų analizė ir metodiškas pasirengimas kitiems konkursams. Tačiau valdžia, deja, tiesiogiai kišosi į žiuri darbą. Ši ideologija buvo tęsiama iki 1990 m., 9-ojo konkurso, o vėliau, praradęs šeiminingą, konkursas patyrė organizacinę ir finansinę krizę, ir tai atsiliepė pasauliniam jo įvaizdžiui.

F. Chopino konkurso gyvavimą ypač nuo 1949 m. veikė Lenkijos kultūros ministerija, kuri buvo suinteresuota, kad konkursas garsintų Chopino vardą, o Chopino draugijos remiami lenkų pianistai garbingai atstovautų savo šaliai ir kompozitoriui. M. Long-J. Thibaud konkursas po jo įkūrėjos Marguerite Long mirties susidūrė su finansiniais sunkumais ir valstybės palaikymo stoka, prarado Prancūzijos identiteto

atspindėjimo statusą. XX a. paskutiniame dešimtmetyje konkurso situacija pagerėjo, XXI a. pradžioje atkurtas renginio prestižas. Tačiau pastaraisiais metais konkurso lygis vėl stipriai pablogėjo.

Atliktas mokslinis tyrimas leidžia konstatuoti, kad valstybės finansinė pagalba gali garantuoti aukštą konkursų lygį, jei muzikos pasaulio profesionalai apibrėžia aiškius artistinius aspektus, susijusius su konkurso eiga. Pianistiniu ir organizaciniu požiūriu geriausia situacija pasižymi F. Chopino konkursas; 2011 m. iš naujo po ilgos krizės sužibo 14-asis P. Čaikovskio konkursas, o M. Long-J. Thibaud konkurso ateitis yra neaiški. Išanalizavus šių konkursų 1985–2010 m. dalyvių pasiskirstymą pagal valstybes, visuose trijuose konkursuose 1998–2000 m. matyti kandidatų pagausėjimas, išaugęs Tolimųjų Rytų valstybių atstovų skaičius. Tai rodo, kad muzikiniai konkursai yra glaudžiai susiję su globaliais procesais, netiesiogiai atspindi ir valstybės, ir viso pasaulio socialinius, ekonominius ir politinius aspektus.