

The Tenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition was held from May 23 to June 8, 1997 in Fort Worth, Texas. This event is one of the largest and prestigious events in the music world and the winner receives more than \$250,000 in prizes and honorariums that come with the two year concert engagements that are arranged by the Van Cliburn Foundation. This whole event can be summarized as the crowning of a young piano prince in his effort to become one of the “kings” in the music world. However, this is not such an easy duty. Although many young and hopeful pianists are crowned, only a few become real artists. Few become legendary kings or queens in their field of music. This is not because they are mediocre. All people develop at different pace and some reach their peak early in their performance life; others mature later. Looking at the culture of winery, one can realize how different wines taste and how they are aged. Some fulfill as table wines. Some are aged to produce more taste. Each serves a purpose. In many ways, pianists follow a similar pattern and reach maturity at a certain age. How and when they reach this peak is up to the individual pianist, and piano competitions are only a way of making known to the world a certain type of pianistic playing, and unfortunately, not the only or the true way of artistic performance. So, where does this competition stand? Which pianist was crowned as the “Winner of the Van Cliburn Competition”? After all, Van Cliburn himself became a legend when he won first prize at the First Tchaikovsky International Competition in Moscow in 1958. To wear his mantle as the first prize winner here is a very difficult task because of the aura of history and legend associated with the name itself.

The whole event is almost like a fairy tale with pianists dueling on stage, trying to outplay each other and vying to win the attention of the jury. And as in all fairy tales, there is a prologue that begins many months before the present competition opened. Auditions were held “live” in different countries. This was a change from previous years when the application process required video application. The reasons for this change were that the organizers believed that the whole personality can be felt only on live auditions. There are many fine points that can be seen and felt as pianist goes to stage. How he or she walks, how they bow, sit, and gestures and manners as they play. The traveling jury consisted of four of the present voting jury, including the present chairman of the jury, and one additional member. It is fair to say that about 30% of the present jury were on the pre-selecting jury. This is quite different from other competitions, for example, the Paloma O’Shea International Piano Competition where 80% of the voting jury are present for the pre-selection. This is a very important point as the aesthetic of any competition depends on the contestants and the jury. The caliber of the crowned prince will depend on the set of the pianists that were pre-selected. The rest of the 75% of jury have to live and judge by the choices that only a few of them made. Is this fair? In addition, it can be noted that no auditions were made in Japan. According to Richard Rodzinsky, the Executive Director of the Van Cliburn Competition, there are really no young, good pianists left in Japan; the good ones that are, they are studying either in Europe or United States. Unfortunately, this is not so.

As in the story of the Sleeping Beauty, the opening ceremony was marred by an uneasy event. The 1989 Gold Medalist, Alexei Sultanov had to say a few opening remarks about the competition. However, he was completely drunk and unstable in words and movements. All he could say was that there is a God, a Supreme Being-Cliburn, Horowitz and he (Sultanov). Of course this is a reference to the Holy Trinity in Christianity. Very strange remarks. Moreover, he added that all else is a “lie”. Dark words. Is this an omen of things to happening in piano competitions? Looking at Sultanov’s career, there are certain facts: after winning the Gold Medal at Cliburn Competition, he gave two years of concerts as part of his winnings. However, after he was signed by major management in United States, the number of his concerts

diminished drastically; in fact, they were at such a lull that he could count the number of his concerts per year well within his ten fingers. Because of this, he had no choice but to participate in some other major competition, and he went to Chopin Piano Competition Warsaw where he won 2nd place. It is rumored that now he is planning to participate in the next 1998 Tchaikowsky International Piano Competition. This is desperation. An outcry of a career that is going nowhere even after winning major competitions. Should a competition as part of its prizes offer counseling by psychiatrists? It might help. As a pianist becomes a part of major concert giving, it is not easy and truly, a counseling will help him cope with stress and emotional problems.

The Cliburn competition is divided into three stages. The first preliminary round consists of fifty minutes of solo piano music of free repertoire choice. The 2nd round consists of a 75 minute solo recital, and also a complete quintet to be played with Tokyo String Quartet. Also in this round, there is a required commissioned piece by William Bolcom. The final round consists of two concerti: one a chamber concerto; the second, a full orchestra concerto. The commissioned piece, Nine Bagatelles, were miniature pieces, some in parody style quoting Chopin Mazurka and even reference to Schoenberg, could be played with music.

This competition had an unusual attraction: a husband and wife competing together. This has not occurred that often in major competitions. They are Alex Slobodyanik and Katia Skanavi. He is the son of the famous pianist Alexander Slobodyanik and has won several piano competitions. His wife, Katia, is three years his senior, and is a laureate of several important competitions, including 3rd prize at Long-Thibaud International Competition in 1989. All local newspapers were focused on this duo. They had met at another competition, Chopin Competition. He did not make the cut and left for the airport but was late to catch his airplane flight. He returned, saw Katia, invited her for a drink, and fell in love. Afterwards, they married and now study with same teacher, the 36-year old Sergei Babayan at Cleveland Institute of Piano. Their intertwined musical fate lasted through the first stage. Everybody was happy for them that as the contestants drew lots, they drew consecutive numbers in the order of performance. These coincidences seem to follow them in their musical career. As a couple they attract a lot of attention. Their teacher, Babayan, had five students entered in this competition. This is a high distinction. "May be the world's best piano professor" the local newspaper wrote. Many felt that how come so many students of one teacher could be selected. The fact is that Cleveland Institute of Piano is very wealthy and has full scholarships available. Babayan "collects" very competent students who are already fully trained and so, immediately has a wonderful stable of pianists. He himself is a laureate of several competitions, including the 1st Ivo Pogorelich Competition which was held in Pasadena, California, in 1993. However, then, he was not happy with the judges' decision and left the competition in protest and didn't play in the closing ceremonies. Maybe he knows the way judges think? Everybody became interested. Katia and Alex became instant stars at this stage of the competition and everybody began to follow the competition. There was a human element involved. There was one Japanese, Susumu Aoyagi, now studying with Pascal Devoyon in Berlin.

Meanwhile, two interesting developments. Dame Moura Lympany from England could not come. She was replaced by a Frenchman, Marius Constant. One of the contestants was unable to come. A pianist from former Soviet Union, now Uzbekistan. No official reason was given. This was unfortunate for the young pianist as travel expenses for all contestants was paid by the organizing committee. Another contestant, Peter Miyamoto was found as a replacement. There had to be 35 contestants.

The opening day dawned. Ten o'clock morning. The twelve jury sit in the middle of the Ed Landreth Auditorium at Texas Christian University, located in Fort Worth, Texas. The chairman of the jury, John Giordano, goes on stage to introduce the members of jury: Marius Constant, from France, a composer whose fame extends also to TV theme song for the Twilight Zone which aired more than twenty years ago; Claude Frank, pupil of Artur Schnabel; Ian Hobson, so called "Mr. Godowsky" for his interpretations of the very difficult Godowsky transcriptions of Chopin etudes; Warren Jones, accompanist to singers such as Marilyn Horne; Jerome Lowenthal, whose extensive repertoire includes 59 concerti; Hiroko Nakamura, the brilliant pianist from Japan; Lev Naumov, former assistant to the legendary Heinrich Neuhaus; Menahem Pressler, an authoritative judge now on demand for many international competitions; then there were Cecil Ousset, Piero Rattalino, Dubravka Tomsic, and Alexis Weissenberg. All very distinguished jury. The competition has begun. All players are illustrious pianists with a technical apparatus that indeed, this competition was becoming the Olympics of Piano. Name after name were laureates of important international piano competitions.

The first to play was a young, handsome Italian pianist. He has already won 5th place in a prestigious piano competition in Pretoria, South Africa. There are three other contestants who were laureates at the same competition in 1996: 1st, 2nd, 3rd place winners. Like good wine, it must have been a good year. His polished playing and nice tone were adequate for classical music, Haydn and Beethoven; however, Liszt's Mephisto Waltz lacked the sinister fantasy. Someone whispered in my ear that he took some lessons from Cecil Ousset, a jury member. Looking at the list of teachers that he studied with, there is no mention of that. My informant must be mistaken, although Rossano has studied in Paris for 7 years. The audience was very enthusiastic and although only morning, gave him a rousing reception. Following him was Dmitri Teterin, another laureate from South Africa competition.

Teterin presented an interesting program. Bach B minor Prelude and Fugue from the Well Tempered Clavier Book I, three sonatas by Scarlatti, and Sonata No. 6 by Prokofiev. Few pianists were playing Bach Preludes and Fugues. Scarlatti was impeccable, with such delicate touch so that the piano sounded mesmerizing. A Russian with more classical tastes. After his performance, I decided to approach him and ask him. As I speak Russian, Japanese, English, Italian, and French, I knew that one of these languages would be useful. We spoke in Russian in a quiet backyard of a big house surrounded by many tall trees, green with rustling leaves. What struck me was his charm and cultured manner of talking. What interested me was how he made his program. In second stage, he had scheduled 24 etudes by Chopin, not a easy task. What he said was that each stage needs planning, not just pieces that are easy or that are played often. Not to repeat pieces played by other contestants, such as Liszt's Sonata or Mussorgsky's Pictures. Something more unusual. "Not many play Chopin's 24 etudes in competition settings," Teterin mildly said. A very modest remark. In addition, Teterin said that "A program needs balance. Many judges want to hear different aspects of a competitor's playing, and so, one needs to play Bach." In this, Teterin differs from many other competitors who tried to show what they believe to be their best sides, even if the program is one sided. Teterin also differs from other competitors in that he believes that all competitions need hard work and that even a competition of such huge magnetite as Cliburn, is essentially the same in preparation as other competitions.

And so, already from the first day, I understood that there will be essentially two kinds of pianists: those who want to "sell" their best goods and so, make up the program with repertoire with which they are comfortable, and there are pianists who try to think what the judges are

going to think and what they would like to hear from the contestants. Then, there are those who feel that the scope of a competition changes their emotional empathy and preparation for the competition, and there are those who feel that each competition is a responsible work to be done.

Teterin continued, “going to competition, one must be ready for everything. You don’t know what time you will be playing, what kind of piano, and whether there is adequate time to try out these pianos; because of this, every competition requires a lot of work.” Further, he said that in jumping from Scarlatti to Prokofiev in his programming, there is no much difference than in playing the 3rd and then, the 4th movement of the Prokofiev’s Sonata No. 6. It is the task of the artist to be able to change his emotions and mood in a split second.

As I said “good-bye”, I continued to think about his last words and how quickly an artist must change his mood. Does that mean that playing mechanically is easier? To just concentrate on notes and execute them correctly without attaching any emotional content should be easier... Is that what music is all about? Or is there more? But then, I felt a strange sadness. Here is an artist who tries to change feelings about what he is doing and so that the audience also participates in his emotions and aesthetics. It is the duty of an artist. However, how can the jury, listening one contestant after another, almost from early morning to late evening, with some breaks, but still not adequate breaks, ...how can such jury listen and be able to change their moods and emotions in quick succession? Feelings become stupefied after a while. Even on a regular concert, the attention span wavers, but here, on a competition, when one competitor plays after another one in a seemingly never ending circle, what happens to the jury’s feeling? Is the judge able to change his emotional intake on such a lengthy period? Or ultimately, is he focusing on something else? I decided to approach Piero Rattalino, the renowned jury member from Italy. We spoke in Italian.

My first interest was about this Cliburn Competition. Is it in any way different from competitions in Europe?

Piero Rattalino: This one is different. First of all, the 35 pianists who participate here were chosen from outside auditions. Most of them are laureates of international competitions and all of them are professional pianists. Even in the Cleveland competition, the pre selection is done solely by the registration and not by live audition. *In the whole world, there can not be just 35 talented pianists in four years!* In competitions, there can be those who will develop in great pianists, those who are already professional pianists, those few who are artists. This competition decided to stress those who are already professional pianists. Many competitions in Europe give a chance and listen to pianists who are talented but have not developed into professional pianists. Those pianists are very interesting to listen to. Here, on the other hand, everybody plays well. Also, there is no preset repertoire, so as a result, the contestants do not have to play a Prelude and Fugue by Bach, or Classical sonata by Mozart, Haydn or Beethoven, or an etude by Chopin. Here, the contestants choose that what they want and so, play what they think they do the best.

Strange thoughts coursed through my mind. Here was a judge who sees a continuity in a competition as a single phenomenon. I asked myself if all those international contestants blend into creating a single entity: an American competition. Is that what America is? In addition, the *freedom* to choose programs. Again, is it because of the American tradition? And then, those haunting words: here, everybody plays well. Does that mean that to play well is boring? And yet, there is a certain pattern taking place that groups contestants as well as all other pianists into professional pianists in one group, and artists in another. I wanted to know more about Rattalino’s approach to listening. Many played very, very loud for long periods of time. Those pianists also wanted to impress the judges that they can also play very soft, and would stretch out

soft playing for many measures without any phrasing. Only soft detached notes. I asked Rattalino what he thought about that.

Rattalino: In certain pieces, for example, *Petrouchka* (by Stravinsky), there is a tendency to play extra loud most of the time. On the other hand, there are some who play very soft for no reason at all. There is a recording of Deszo Ranki playing *Petrouchka* whose piano playing is exactly Neo Classical. This is important because when *Petrouchka* was written as piano version, it was written in Stravinsky's Neo Classical Period, not in Russian period. So, he plays it very exactly and as a piano player, not so loud and without much pedal.

The question of America still troubled me. Maybe the American audience is also different.

AT: What do you think about the audience reaction? Do you mind the loud applauds distract you?

Rattalino: According to me, the public is too generous. They applaud everyone because this event for them is like Olympics. They participate with every contestant. They cheer everybody without any critique and in certain cases, applaud even better those who play louder.

At this stage, I felt that Piero Rattalino understood the differences between various countries and how they affected the musicians outlook and performance ability. It gave me a chance to ask him the question I wanted to ask him the most. What one must realize is that every summer, there is a program called The Cliburn Institute here at Texas Christian University whereby master classes are given by famous musicians. In years past, there were Lazar Berman, Jorge Bolet, John Browning, Leon Fleisher, Vlado Perlemuter, and many more. This institute's executive director, Dr. Tamas Ungar, himself a wonderful pianist, creates programs for aspiring pianists, teachers wanting to hear master classes, weekends seminars for amateurs, and even concerto competition whose winners play with a professional orchestra. During the time of Cliburn Competition, jury members are invited to give master classes. Rattalino in his master class mentioned a very strange remark: that Orientals have a difficult time to play Western music. I pursued this subject further.

Rattalino: There are two problems here: all great musicians say that it is necessary to listen to great singers. Now, great singing is based on respiration. If a pianist in his phrasing of musical ideas does not follow the phrasing of his natural respiration, the music becomes not expressive. Already Chopin was saying that it is important to listen to great Italian singers. And also, the pianist must physically sing the phrases. He must feel the respiration and breathing associated with musical phrasing. Another point is that all these young pianists do not consider the dramatic elements of music. They consider technical elements, musical elements, but not the dramatic elements. Then, the drama in music can develop into an image, a picture, a sculpture, a poem. And particularly for the Orientals, this aspect which is very difficult. However, this is a very important point. This is so because the Orientals cannot understand Western music through cultural avenues, but only through those elements that are common to all humanity. Ferruccio Busoni distinguished this in music: historical elements, cultural elements, and humanity elements. This is universal language for all people. Meanwhile, the fugue, the sonata, all are historical elements. So, to return to the problem, the pianists must feel breathing and respiration. Recently, I listened to the recording of Beethoven's sonata for violin and piano op. 30 no. 2 as played by Clara Haskil. The beginning is impossible to "conduct". This is so because her playing beats is based on natural breathing. And this is what is called playing in correct rhythm. And breathing is common to all nations. The young pianists nowadays tend to forget about this, and especially oriental pianists. They only think about technique and correct notes. Technique

can be compared to money. In life, money gives a chance to “have”, but it does not give understanding to the meaning of life. In music, technique gives a chance to do, but it does not give a chance to understanding music. And among these 35 contestants, I have to say that there are not many who really can understand music.

As Rattalino continued to talk, he also mentioned the difficulty that pianists have in choosing a piano to play. Often they choose a piano and forget to work with it. Instead, they work against it. For example, from the three pianos available this time, many were selecting the Hamburg Steinway which had less sound than the American Steinway but had other qualities that were very good. The contestant, instead of working with this piano, would on the contrary play even more strong, force his forte sound so that the quality of sound suffered.

AT: Maestro, please can you say something about the relation between the events in a composer’s life and the music he is composing.

Rattalino: That is a very important matter. It also relates to the humanity element in music. For example, Chopin’s Ballade No. 1. This work was written at the time Poland was occupied by Russians. Poland had lost its independence. This belongs to the element of humanity and is very universal. Today, there is Zaire in Africa, or there is Bosnia. By seeing and knowing these present day tragedies on television, we can understand how Chopin felt at the time he composed the ballade. These events are universal and it is important to be aware of them and to study composer’s lives in order to better understand under what circumstances he composed his pieces. Then, these problems must become personalized. The pianist must relate these universal problems with events in his life and understand universal problems that exist in the world. But you see, these are artistic problems. Here, on the competition, we are dealing with professional pianists. Artistic level and professional level are different. Or let me say, pianists sometimes try to imitate how Rachmaninoff played. But this is impossible. One must remember his life. He was an exile from his country, lived in isolated life, how much he suffered from this and all these events left a deep mark on him. How can a young pianist imitate his playing not having passed through such hardships as him? His life is opposite of Schumann’s philosophy. Schumann believed that David won against the league of Philistines (as expressed in Carnival op. 9) but for Rachmaninoff, everything was negative. The Philistines won.

In conclusion, Rattalino said that a competition does not always attract the best talent and the best talent does not always win the competition. That is history.

History. As I left this Maestro, I felt that here was a man who had searched for meaning in life and how it relates to performance in music. And, he has found a key in history. How often people forget what is happening now in the world. Even this competition, it is only a part of a process of competitions. And as Rattalino said, there have been mistakes made in the past. And no competition can guarantee process without mistakes. Maybe the strength lies in being able to acknowledge wrongs and try to correct them in the future. Immediately, I thought of the double standard applied to this Cliburn Competition. Sometimes, the organizers refer to it as a Festival, at other times, as a Competition. This is because they know that in its past, the competition has not always produced world renown artists. Those that have won the gold medal here in Fort Worth, have not always made a world career. So, instead of putting all bets on a competition winner, they decided to use the word “Festival”. In this way, they are safe guarding their interests. If no real winner is produced, then the word “Festival” becomes appropriate in that they did invite 35 pianists and they all had a good time. On the other hand, if there is a sure winner, they can use the word “Competition” and show the world that Cliburn Competition has a world class winner. Is this courage or is this cowardice? Can these two approaches exist at the

same time? As these thoughts grew in my mind, an article in the New York Times appeared. Its headline was controversial: Pianists Battle for a Shot at Obscurity (New York Times, May 29 1997). The article concentrated on the fact that few winners from Cliburn Competition have made a big career. Instead, if someone wanted a career, it was better not to win the gold medal. Second prize winners often had a greater career.

Meanwhile, the competition continues. One after another, contestants play. Dantchenko, the youngest competitor, plays elegantly; Philippo Gamba who creates a wide range between forte and piano sound; Joel Hastings who electrified the audience with Liszt's Totentanz; Anton Mordassov, a young favorite who won 3rd prize in Tchaikovsky Competition in 1990 and fourth place in Montreal International Piano Competition in 1996. Now studying with Dr. Tamas Ungar in Forth Worth, he exhibited solidity and sensitivity in his playing. He made local history in that he was the first ever pianist to be selected from TCU. He and another competitor, Yi Wu were dressed in tuxedo for their appearance; several competitors with Japanese ancestry, Jon Nakamatsu, always controlled, moderate, yet musical; Peter Miyamoto, who was a last minute replacement and unfortunately was quite prepared, and Susumu Aoyagi, whose playing impressed previous Cliburn gold medalist but not the jury. I cannot forget Jiracek, a young German who refused to select his piano when he noticed that his country's flag was flown upside down. He immediately went backstage to complain and only resumed when the situation was corrected. And then there were the ladies: Naida Cole, beautifully dressed in flowing silk like material, or Katia Skanavi, whose stage presence exuded strong sexuality. And then, there were the modest female competitors: Ju-Ying Song, an intellectual with a degree in music and also in Microbiology; Olga Pushechnikova from Russia, whose Balakirev's Islamey was astounding; and Margarita Shevchenko whose playing has evolved from extreme masculinity to refined femininity. I asked Pushechnikova about her impressions of this competition. Still young, only 22 years old, she was full of hope for future. Her goal was to study hard. Still enrolled in Moscow Conservatory, her whole life is in practicing piano and also painting. Asking her how long she played Islamey, she said already six years. It was unnerving. The patience and determination needed to play a piece for six years is tremendous. This reminded me of Rattalino's comment that here, they are all professional pianists which means that constant repetition is both good and bad. Artistry does not revolve around repetition. Inspiration is momentary. Ecstasy is not every moment of life. Yet, in her playing, there were interesting points. I remember that after her performance, some judges secretly commented to me that Russian women pianists often try to imitate brute force. This meant that although technically very polished, she could not go on. Skanavi or Cole, who did not bang the piano had a better chance. At about this time, another interesting article appeared in the local newspaper. The writer questioned why there were so few women pianists in this competition. Five only out of 35 pianists. This also reflects American ideas of equality of sexes. But Art is not about equality of sexes. Art, I believe, is about expressing universal ideas and moving people's imagination. It is a person's search for meaning in creation because as we create an art experience, so we are trying to re-create the creation of universe. It is our unconscious search for meaning to creation. By asking why there are so few women represented in a competition, one falls into the trap that music is related to man or woman. I feel that in music, there are moments of masculinity or femininity, or Yin and Yang in Chinese philosophy. A pianist should be able to play both masculinely or femininely as the situation demands. A man can play as male or female; so, can a lady play in both modes. However, to divide the performance situation into quantity of sexes is wrong. That becomes a social issue and not an artistic issue. Art does not divide; art chooses

and much like the main character in Hermann Hesse's Nobel prize winning book, *The Glass Bead Game*, we are "called". There is a calling and we answer this call.

I wanted to approach Ju-Ying Song, the contestant with a degree in Microbiology. She struck me as very intellectual. She felt that she will go into combination of concert giving and teaching. She was planning to learn pieces written by women composers. I asked her whether this was a sex issue. "No, these pieces are underrepresented and that is why I want to learn and play them; not because they were specifically written by women composers," Song replied. "People have to be given a chance." As I continued to talk with her, I became aware that she speaks French fluently and knows several other languages very well. She seemed to know that each person has a certain limit and that we cannot become "world success" even if we are given a chance to do so. There are many factors. In my mind, I continued to think about that article that questioned the number of women contestants. If that is already happening in Art, cannot we say that how many gays or homosexuals are represented? How many composers were gay? Those are number and statistics and do not pertain directly to Artistic expressions.

At about this time, one gentleman arrived from Amsterdam. Tall and lean, sporting a light mustache, middle aged. Officials were always attentive to him. Upon inquiry, I learnt that he was Dr. Gustav Alink, a famous author who writes statistics about competitions. At this stage, he has written already more than four volumes dealing with history of competitions, names of contestants, jury names and prize winners. In the press room, there was a newspaper clipping about him. So, this person deals with numbers. He told me that he was a mathematician by training, his love of cataloguing data stems from early childhood. "People are fascinated by numbers." Is that the reason why newspapers are dividing contestants into men and women? Just for numbers sake? Numbers are also intangible, but can be felt indirectly through counting physical dividing of data. In that case, people's simplest and most direct contact with intangible evidence is through numbers. Perhaps that is why numbers are so fascinating. Another comment that he made that impressed me was that jury are most easily influenced by the organizer because their situation is so precarious. They are invited guests and somehow they do not want to offend their host.

The preliminaries were coming to a close. The audience was enthusiastic and greeted each pianist with loud ovations and sent off the performer with even louder applauds. Sitting among the audience, one was very moved by their sincerity. They encouraged each player with such ovations that for certain, each contestant must have felt that he or she would pass into the semifinals. As each would finish, the hall would erupt into a energy of sound. It really seemed as if the audience began competing with itself...that each time, it would try to be even more enthusiastic and applaud even stronger. After Peter Miyamoto closed the preliminary round, it seemed as if the whole world was behind him. As the cheering subsided, and silence began to return, it became apparent that many will not make into the semifinals. Now, a certain realization began that choices were to be made and for better or worse, only twelve contestants would be chosen. It was already late, past ten-thirty, when the jury retired to cast their votes and choose those who will go on. Uneasiness, expectation, hope, there were many emotions. Meanwhile, those students enrolled in summer Cliburn Institute assembled to discuss their opinions who were better and who should go on. They were moderated by Dr. Tamas Ungar. It was interesting to note that he commented that certain pieces should not be scheduled as part of competition repertoire. For example, Liszt's Sonata, or Beethoven's op. 111 Sonata No. 32. The reason is that these pieces become so personal that in many ways, it is like communicating with God. Each of these works, become so personal to the player, that they evoke strong feelings as

to how they should be performed. Music becomes personal to such a level that one guards one's own feelings and does not want to allow other interpretations interfere with it. Here, some have played these pieces. What will happen to them. I spoke to Tamas Ungar in one of his spare moments.

TU: Christopher Shih, you know there is nothing to criticize there either. Beautiful sound, nothing exciting, nothing much felt either, I can imagine everyone places him second, then, with the cumulative vote, will become part of the twelve. It will happen because everyone will say; it didn't disturb, so I can place him within the twelve. However, I believe that a pianist must aim at lifting everyone above all this.

AT: I am interested in one point: that you have heard many of the contestants already. Can you tell me how they have changed?

TU: Some play better, some play worse. It is an interesting thing. Gamba being one of the pianists that I am disappointed in. I was looking forward to hearing him very much because he is an intelligent pianist, but I think he has totally misjudged the hall; somehow, misjudged the hall and the piano. It is not only a question of nerves...

AT: ...but I do not think that he has nerves...

TU: ...no, they don't. They have played these pieces for so long and so often, that it becomes a question of whether they themselves are convinced of what they are doing in the last moment before going on the stage. It is a mind game more than anything else is. It is up to the teacher to, even in the last moment, to make a piece fresh and to pest the student's imagination constantly. It is a hard job. That after five years of the same piece, the teacher still has to make the piece fresh as if it is new. Or to inspire the student to a higher level. I really feel that in this case, many of them feel that it is a big event and that is when a true artistry comes out. The truth does come out. This competition is truly a big thing, but I would imagine that to go and play Brahms Concerto No. 2 with New York Philharmonic is equally big pressure, if not more; or Carnegie Hall concert. We are talking about a lot of people saying that this is very pressurized, but there are many more thing waiting that will create even more pressure. It is an interesting thing that many of the students change teachers. Of the all, Shevchenko has changed the most number of teachers. And she is changing. At least from what I have heard yesterday, she is trying to show extreme femininity instead of masculinity that was present.

AT: about Olga...Ortiz couldn't stand her.

TU: yes. She has tremendous technique. I would have liked her to have her as a student for a year, but then, after that year, I think there will be a question, is there anything left? Because there are a lot of people who can do only that and nothing more. I am now totally convinced that teachers in Russia get students pretty much at this technical level at the conservatory so it is not a question of developing technique. The question is that what happened to this girl after eighteen and now. It is pretty sad.

AT: But at her present age, she could hear something.

TU: It is devastating to think that how many people misjudge the piano as a means of technical prowess. It is mind boggling what they do with the piano and how assuredly they do it...but actual essence of expressing something is lost.

AT: and also another point, is that when one is performing, he must not be angry with himself, and I felt that she was angry with herself while she was playing.

TU: yes...and I felt that I was forced by her playing to pushed be away and not drawn in. The judges will have no problem with about eight contestants, but the last four, they will have. The good ones usually go on. If she gets through, it will be a bad sign about the judging

standards. Any competition either stands or falls on certain concepts: the makeup that put up the selection for the competition. I question the students that were selected to participate. Maybe at the selection process, they did play their best, and so the traveling jury chose what they heard the best. But I question their performances now and that they are not qualified to be here. For example, the Greek... He had absolutely nothing to say. I cannot imagine what he could say.

AT: or the Russian's Polonaise op. 44. There was absolutely nothing...

TU: yes...where was the mazurka...nothing. Just bad manners.

Generally, the standard of this competition is very high. Actually, if on speaking on sheer technical prowess, as high as is possible. One can say that each music school has a lot of good students, but only a few very, very good ones. The same can be said of competitions. In the long run, there are very few artists but a log of first class pianists. Competitions die or live by its products. The two elements that are important are how the pianists are selected for participation and who is the jury. Those are the determining factors in the success of competition. It is the contestants and the jury that make a competition All the prizes, volunteer work are secondary. They only enhance the final product.

TU: This girl Olga, she had nothing, absolutely nothing to say. Any of my five students could say more than her.

Judges like assuredness. Someone that will not have a memory lapse. Alex Slobodyanik had a memory lapse in Schumann's Kinderszenen op. 15. His wife, Katia Skanavi didn't make mistakes.

Finally, the time for announcements came. All jury came out and sat in unified gesture. This must be to convince the audience that there is unity among the jury. That they made a sane and mutually agreeable judgment as to who will pass and who will not. Twelve names were announced: Danchenko, the youngest; Reichart, an Israeli; Nakamatsu, an American of Japanese descent; Jiraceck, the German; Gamba, the Italian with Brahmsian looks; four Russians; one from Uzbekistan, former Soviet Union; Alexander Madzar from Yugoslavia, and Naida Cole, the elegantly dressed Canadian girl. There were some disappointments. Noticeably, some crowd favorites were not there. What had happened? Only the evening before, as I spoke with one jury, he had said that for sure, Teterin would get through because he and several of his colleagues liked how he had played. His name was not among the twelve. The Swede who played op. 111, the piece that was decidedly so personal, didn't make it either. Skanavi made it into the semi finals. Her husband didn't. As the rush of excitement subsided, the twelve contestants began to prepare for this round, a recital of about 75 minutes and a chamber music recital with the Tokyo String Quartet. Rehearsal time was only 75 minutes, too, not quite enough since most quintets last about thirty minutes or so. It would be interesting to see such pianists as Jacov Kasman, who captivated the audience with Petrouchka, but received negative comments from some jury members for being so loud, how he should play the sensitive and important quintet by Brahms. Then, there was a happening. One of the twelve semifinalists contestants injured his hand. Like a murmuring wave, the news spread until everyone was encompassed. Stanislav Ioudenitch from Uzbekistan (former Soviet Union) accidentally burnt his hand. He got up early in the morning and not wanting to wake up his host family, decided to make tea himself. Still sleepy, he poured the hot, boiling water on his hand and suffered second degree burns. He could not continue. A sad experience. To come this far and injure himself. Looking at his biography, it lists that he studies in Cadenabbia, a master class setting for five invited pianists for one year in northern Italy near Lake Como. Upon further inquiry, I learnt that Leon Fleisher, Alexis Weissenberg, Karl Ulrich Schnabel as visiting teachers. These

teachers rotate and come for a certain period and then another teacher comes. However, Weissenberg, who was here as a jury member and so should not be voting for his student, was not listed as Ioudenitch's teacher. Newspapers followed Ioudenitch's misfortune. He has a wife and a child in Moscow and cannot visit them for lack of money. As in a fairy tale, a rich benefactor appeared and offered money for a trip for two to see either Disneyland or Disney world. Ioudenitch chose Naida Cole, another semifinalist and also studying at Cadennabia as his partner to see the entertainment center of the world. It was maybe an innocent gesture, but nevertheless, one that created a little bit of rumor. So, there were eleven contestants. Will there be an additional player, a replacement? Unfortunately, no. Strange because if this event is to be classed as a festival and the ideals are to give chance for young pianists, and at the preliminaries, effort was taken to replace one contestant who canceled, it would have been natural to add one other contestant so that there would be full twelve. But this didn't happen. The rehearsal and concerts began, I tried to find the quartet to interview them.

The Quartet consists of three Japanese and one Russian who used to play with the Borodin Quartet. Nice people, gentle and honest. It is interesting to note how different musicians are and how each music category affects personalities. Quartet people seemed more social and caring. They also demonstrate interactiveness more clearly. Although blending into one mind, each individual player still retains his personality, except that rough edges are softened.

AT: Playing with so many different pianists who are not so artistic but are professional pianists, it must be difficult for you. Do you alter your styles...how do you manage?

TQ: There are two things involved: some pianists come with very strong ideas; the other group does not come with such strong ideas. That is one thing you have to see right away. And then the other element is flexibility. Some pianists have the flexibility to accommodate what we like to do and some pianists do not know how to change to accommodate. We have to see this right away and the funny thing is that we see right away.

Immediately I sense that contestants are being analyzed. To come and play is not a simple thing. Characters must blend and peaceful collaboration must appear. Chamber music is about collaboration. Those who are less experienced must understand their position and be able to accept ideas from those that are more experienced. In the world of piano competitions, chamber music playing is a nice idea; but how, does a concert pianist relate to playing with a small group? Piano playing is an isolated craft. I remember words of another reporter from BBC, Michael Church, who mentioned to me that pianists lives are fascinating because pianists like to take risks which also spill into normal life. Their daily behavior becomes altered by their profession. As he studied lives of great pianists, he found that many were gamblers, high risk takers, took up some hobbies that was dangerous. He also gave me a tip that one judge told him that the two girls were there in the semifinals because they were girls only. They judges didn't want all men in the semifinal round. Playing with chamber music group, a pianist has to alter his view of performance.

AT: Of course you can see it right away because you are such an experience group, but unfortunately, the pianists do not see that way.

TQ: Lucky pianists. When we start, we do not have to talk so much. We see right away. We know each other and each other's feeling, we know what each of us is thinking.

AT: When I was listening to some, I would say that there are some difficulties involved in the ensemble playing. I think that primarily it is the fault of the teachers and the schools where they

do not teach enough ensemble. In addition, the ways of listening to ensemble playing must be taught. .

TQ: We also do not have enough time. Only one hour and fifteen minutes. It is almost nothing. It is so limited; just to play is at least half an hour and we cannot talk any more serious things.

AT: The placement of piano. Would you say that is ideally placed?

TQ: No, it isn't. But because of the TV, they wanted it there because of the lighting. It should be a little bit closer to the audience. It is a dead spot where it is placed. But everything is dominated by the media. Anything kind of thing is dominated by the media. Not just music, sports too. Before we said anything, they decided everything. This day, everything is like that.

There is a tone of acceptance. Media is of utmost importance. Life in America is ruled by media. TV directors apparently know more how and where to place the piano than the actual quartet players who have to intermingle with the pianist. Eye contact which is so important becomes not so because the TV has to capture the pianist's expressions and not the quartet.

AT: Is it easier to play with certain type of piano?

TQ: Some pianos have a way of being loud without hitting so hard and when that happens, there is no focus of sound and so it is very difficult to play. We feel the difference very much.

AT: Don't you think that the lid should partly be closed for certain pianists in competition?

TQ: Yes! But the jury judge by that too. When the pianist is more sensitive. A good pianist should understand to balance with the strings.

AT: And that brings me to the Schumann quartet where the piano plays so much in the middle range of the keyboard and has so many chords and the strings, well, surround the piano. I notice that the pianist is often not aware that he is dominating.

TQ: It is up to the experienced pianist to understand it. This problem cannot be solved immediately. What is amazing is that all pianists are so different. They play the same piece but for me it becomes a different piece each time. We would have times when a guy would come up with these tiny scores and immediately start saying that I want this in measure so and so, and that in another measure. We would say...wait, let us first play and see and hear. That is not the way to make music.

AT: Russian pianist tend to play so loud nowadays. It is too forceful. Not only that, the Russian school has an idea that if one want to become a concert pianist, it is wrong to study with a pianist who does accompanying. I do not agree with this policy.

TQ: Yes, we think so too. It is like saying, don't study with a quartet player. I think that the Russian school has changed during the last twenty years. The old generation of pianist, Igumnov, Goldenweiser, Neuhaus, they did not play like that. The Borodin Quartet played with many of these old legendary musicians and never had encountered this modern problem of pianist forcing the piano. I think that the world is changing. It is becoming a macho thing to play loud and seems that they don't want to play sensitively. It is so far away from true music making.

This reminded me of the fact that music is a balance of forces. At the same time, it is a movement of sounds. It is up to the pianist to find the right blending of sounds and movement so that music becomes alive. In our lives, we do not go around shouting all the time, although there are such people. Playing loud all the time is similar to shouting continuously. In the end, speech becomes noise; music also loses its meaning.

AT: In addition, there is the problem that many play so softly that you can hardly hear them. This is wrong. To play pianissimo is one thing, but one must never lose musical shape or

phrasing. Linear direction should be present always. Pianists often make that mistake. Meanwhile, the quartet continued:

TQ: There is another interesting point. When we rehearse right now for hour and fifteen minutes, that is one thing, but when we go on to stage, that is another thing. The real genuine personality comes out. Some people become more aggressive, some more defensive, others more calculating, some for more feeling. I wish the jury could see that. Probably it is very difficult because they see only the result. We are the best judge because we see it; we see the progress. Whenever they give chamber music awards, it has never, never been our choice. We have been here four times, and not once has the jury chamber music award coincided with what we believe in. Never. I think that we must talk with the judges to make them aware of this problem.

As I write these words now, I know how prophetic those words that *whenever they give chamber music awards, it has never, never been our choice* were. Little did they suspect that again, those that would receive chamber music awards didn't coincide with their choice. Do the judges listen with equal emphasis on chamber music? If so, why do they not ask the quartet's opinions. I made a mental note to ask some jury member about the status of chamber music playing at competition level.

AT: But let us say that in Japan, there are also problems with chamber music.

TQ: Yes, the pianists concentrate so much on actual piano playing that they forget about the rest of the music. In Japan it is so seldom to hear a pianist say let us just read the Trout Quintet...in America, yes, I meet such people, but in Japan no. There is a big name in Japan now, young pianist who has won big prizes, but for chamber music playing, he has no understanding. Really strange. A total musician should be able to play music.

However, I thought, that in addition, a total musician should be able to listen to advise from others as well. Ideas are like seeds. They need correct atmosphere to ripen. As I bid them good-bye, I felt that my search for truth was not futile. Chamber music gives a chance for the personality to come out. These contestants were facing the mirror of truth as they played with the chamber group. Each of them showed their true personality. And then, I remembered Jacov Kasman who just played the Brahms Quintet op. 34. Many musicians in the audience remarked that it was a rape of piano. How sad. Even one student enrolled in the summer course said, "it was a 'Rachmaninoff' quintet, not Brahms"...of course, Rachmaninoff didn't compose a quintet, but that was how the student had felt. Rape of piano...that was happening more and more.

Another development. When the competition began, there was a notice in the press room that reporters could request contestants' performance on a cassette or DAT tape format free of charge. Many took advantage of this and asked for tapes to relisten the contestants. Cassette tape recording suffers in comparison to DAT format, and I asked for DAT tapes of a few contestants. There was no problem and I was surprised at the efficiency; within three hours, I would have the requested tape. One day, after I filled the request form, nothing was coming. Hours passed; day, second day passed. Suddenly, there is a notice on the board for me. Upon inquiry, Richard Rodzinsky, the Executive Director of the competition, decided that it was not possible anymore to give out freely the DAT format. He requested that I return the tapes. This was very strange as I knew that not all reporters who had requested the tapes and received them actually to a notice to return them. I was told that papers got lost and they didn't know all the names that had the DAT tapes. They remembered mine. At this stage, nobody was receiving anything. After a few days, suddenly another change in policy. If the reporter works for a broadcast station, then, he can keep his copy of DAT tapes. If a reporter worked for print

media, he had to return the DAT tape. I never heard of such a thing. And even then, to give a tape and then ask it back that they made a mistake in giving to you...this is not politeness. Here and there, I began to hear negative comments of press reporters being mistreated. And then another situation, as a reporter, I could take photo pictures from the balcony. On one day, while being in the orchestra level, I took a picture of a contestant bowing after he completely finished his performance. Immediately, I was spotted and taken to the press room where it almost came to a situation that they would have demanded my roll from the camera. Rereading guidelines in the press kit, it never stated that pictures could not be taken after performance even on the orchestra level. It only stated "during the performance". These small things were happening to everyone. Some people who worked in the office said that policies were being changed every few days and that they didn't know what to do anymore.

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As the day for semifinals came to a close, I was surprised by another interesting happening. The lady from New York, a PR promoter of the competition and other major music talents, announced that let us all place bets on who will be the finalists. As there were going to be six finalists, each reporter was to place six dollars for his list and the reporter who guessed all six finalists would get the whole cash. I do not know whether this is usual or not, but I was surprised. Most placed their bets but only one guessed all six and collected the cash. Even here, the risk taking of pianists affects those around them.

Generally, the level of playing became not as good as on first level. There were more missed notes and more inaccuracies. Danchenko who was so prolific in the preliminaries, seemed less stable. He made more mistakes. Lev Vinocour made a unusual expressions that

bordered on parody in Schumann's Symphonic Etudes op. 13. However, his Strauss-Godowsky arrangement was Die Fledermaus was in right style. Victor Chestopal, whose stupendous octaves in preliminary round's Liszt Etude, "Mazeppa", continued to display wonders of technical achievement, especially in Balakirev's Islamey and Liszt Sonata; Alexander Madzar was refined and without any controversy.

The announcements were about to be made. The anticipation was there but not as great as in the first cut. Out of eleven, six would be chosen and three would receive placements. All eleven were dressed in evening attire and posed for the audience. Van Cliburn was on stage; Richard Rodzinsky, the Executive Director, was poised. The jury were once again seated. And so, the six remaining became: Aviram Reichart from Israel; Jon Nakamatsu from United States; Filippo Gamba from Italy; Katia Skanavi from Russia; Jan Gottlieb Jiracek from Germany; Jakov Kasman from Russia. Again, Ungar's words that some pieces become personal seemed prophetic. Although Chestopal played the Liszt Sonata brilliantly, he did not pass. For some announcements, the crowd seemed to be more enthusiastic, but nevertheless, all were adored with cheers. So, finally, the stage was set for the finals where the young prince would be crowned to become the king.

Each finalist was going to play two concerti, one chamber, one regular. Unlike past years, they do not play them one after another. A contestant plays first chamber concerto, then another contestant his chamber concerto; after a big intermission, the first contestant returns to play his second concerto, after which the second pianists again returns to play his second concerto.

Meanwhile, master classes continue at the summer Cliburn Institute. Dr. Tamas Ungar gives teaching devotionally. He mentions that there are three most difficult things to end in the world: a war, a love affair, and a trill. He stress the importance of good endings in trills. Again, he stresses the importance that the piano playing must invite the listener instead of shoving it into the throat of the listener; he adds that there are many ways of playing as well as many ways of listening. Shoving is forcing and forcing is rape. Lev Naumov, one of the judges, gives an inspired master class where he stresses imagination as means of achieving color. That with anything we play, we have to imagine. Notes must say something. In the world Naumov has created, he is the master of magic. Notes played create storms and ocean waves rise above the vessel trying to sink it. A Rachmaninoff Etude-Tableau (op. 33 No. 9) becomes ocean of waves, rising and rising with sirens sounding distress. As listeners to his master class, we were taken to worlds so far away, and yet, the key so near, just music. Alexis Weissenberg talked before each piece and prepared the audience for it. He was almost a fatherly figure announcing each piece and we had to undertake the journey to understand it ourselves. Claude Frank was warm and full of gentleness. He saw the goodness in each player even though the piece could be far from perfect. In doing so, he was able to make the students understand that love is needed to study music. Anger cannot achieve accomplishment.

Parties were organized. Wonderful evenings in vast settings. Texas is a huge state. Historically, Texas used to be an independent republic for about nine years until about 1845. Even after joining the United States, Texas retained and is the only state allowed to fly its state flag on the same level height as the flag of United States. Moreover, if they ever wish so, they can divide their state into three smaller states without consent from United States Federal Government. People were already ready. The finals began.

Only six finalists and two types of pianos, both Steinways, a popular instrument here. The reason for this is also that before the competition, the Steinway people check the host

family's piano, and they exchanged pianos with their Steinways. Of course, a contestant practicing on the Steinway would prefer a Steinway on stage. Yamaha unfortunately could not do this. In addition, although the policy was that piano manufacturers could not encourage the contestants into selecting their brand, still, Steinway did this on one or two occasions without any retribution. In this instance, one contestant, still in semi finals, could not make up his mind as to choosing Yamaha or Steinway and as he looked towards the seated officials from Yamaha and Steinway, the Steinway person shouted out to pick out the Steinway. If people from Yamaha had done this, there would have been serious repercussions. In fact, at the last competition, there were more piano brands; this time less. There was even no Kawai. Rumors were that they were punished for approaching a contestant encouraging him to pick their piano. I am sorry for Kawai. Then, I learnt of piano sabotages. How technicians from rival brands have sabotaged pianos at European competitions. As a result, some competition Steinways are double locked so that they are impossible to be opened. So, even at this level, human nature for business is apparent. There are big stakes to be played and people sometimes take risks. Indeed piano world is fascinating. It has drama and intrigue; loftiness and vile. There is much in it.

Finals. Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, Saint-Saens, Rachmaninoff, Shostakovich and Brahms. Jiracek from Germany played well. He played Beethoven's 3rd piano concerto and Liszt No. 1. It was interesting to hear a comment from a Russian professor who was visiting the competition. His story was quite amazing. In 1958, when he was only young man in Moscow Conservatory, the door suddenly opens and some guide lets a tall American in and asks whether this American can practice the piano. He and two others, gave up that room; but before they did so, they did hear this young American and were amazed how well he played. That American was Van Cliburn preparing for his competition. Now, almost 40 years after, this Russian, Raffia Kuliyeu, now dean of music department in Baku, Azerbaijan, wrote to Cliburn asking whether they could send him a letter of invitation. Van Cliburn remembered him, and as a result, he was here, listening to the competitors. There are always human stories. As Jiracek finished playing, this Russian professor expressed the thought that the German played the finale of Beethoven like a Mozart concerto and totally unlike Beethoven. Many make this mistake. Kasman had difficulty with orchestra who didn't quite like his free approach to rhythm. Many players were unhappy with the rehearsal and it looked for certain that the orchestra and the soloist will have hard time coordinating. And it did happen in Rachmaninoff's 3rd Piano Concerto, but they did catch up. Katia Skanavi looked angry as she played and her music lost elegance and refinement. Nakamatsu tried to play all notes and ultimately, had the most correct number of notes. Reichart was very plain. Gamba, on the other hand, had such a bad memory lapse in Brahms' 2nd Piano Concerto that he for certain excluded himself from the top three places.

It is not easy to play two concerti, especially if they are divided. Although physically more tiring, it is mentally easier to play two concerti straight through because of adrenaline. It takes so much more energy to restart after a lapse. And as announcements were being readied, I recalled the words of Dmitri Teterin, "that although they are trying to make this a Festival, still the preliminary round is a competition and though hard I try to forget that this fact, I cannot because I know that not all will make to the next stage." So, this is a competition in the end. All the effort to make it a festival is only the outer clothes, for our sensation. For the participants, for those who really want to make a career, this is a competition and the results are going to be known soon.

As one day passed, I had last chance to interview several people. Also, during the last days of the competition, I interviewed several contestants who did not make it. Albert Tiu, a

gold medallist in Unisa Transnet Int'l Piano Competition in 1996 expressed these thoughts at a lake side party in breezy evening setting.

AT: How different is this competition from the one let us say in South Africa?

Tiu: it is hard to define what each competition is looking for only because only because one does not know what the jury is looking for...it is very hard to predict. The standard here is much higher than any of the other competitions I have been to. Everyone has such high standards that I have heard that I honestly thought it would be difficult for me to go to the next round.

AT: however, one must not forget that this first stage is actually more like a second stage because of life auditions that occurred first. The prelims are like all over the world, and this is the second stage

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Tiu: although not all jury members were for the first stage auditions. A lot of competitions have a stage where you send in video or audio and one gets eliminated that way, but I consider it a big achievement that I got invited here, because I understand that at the auditions, the standard was already very high

AT: how did you prepare for this competition?

Tiu; well, I was thinking of a repertoire to cover different grounds and to make an interesting program, and also music that I enjoy playing. The bagatelles I enjoy always and at the same time they are tricky...have been playing them for some time and still haven't unlocked all the secrets. That is what makes music exciting. In terms of preparing actually for this competition, I did another competition just before coming here, the Naumburg competition. I was in the finals. First prize is like a big push; it gives momentum but not necessarily the career.

I was speaking to Vachnadze who was speaking about his teacher Toradze who won first prize but afterwards, not a single orchestra invited him back. So, that shows that is not always a guarantee of anything...it is a good start but not a guarantee.

AT; have you heard others? More than half I would say represent the opposite style from yours in that they are used to playing fortississimo!

Tiu: in that case, I do not understand what they are looking for. I have heard some very sensitive playing but at the same time, I have heard quite a number of poundings. Also, there were a number of rhythmic distortions.

AT: I know what you must be thinking, that when the jury accepts that kind of playing and ignores adherence to score, those pianists who follow the score carefully begin to question themselves. Don't be discouraged.

TIU: I began to think...is this a pounding competition?

AT: Tell me something about the Rachmaninoff sonata

TIU: Well, after listening yesterday and knowing that that competitor was selected to the semifinals, I began to question whether I am playing the sonata decently. It is very hard for the audience to understand it. It took me a long, very long time to learn just the notes, and then the notes. It does not have really singable melodies that we associate with Rachmaninoff and the structure itself is complicated. I had to play it again and again. I have already performed it ten times and each time discover new things.

AT: If looking backward you could change something in your approach, what would you change?

TIU: that is what my wife and I talked this morning. Maybe my program was a little on the serious side, maybe if I had shown a little more bravura...; maybe it was the way I played it.

AT: Do competitions interfere with your concerts or learning new pieces?

TIU: Yes...I do not have many concerts yet, so it doesn't interfere too much, but learning new pieces, definitely yes. It is very tricky. With competitions you feel that you have to play something that you know very well, and so you keep on playing on the same old pieces. After a while, they become stagnant. It is very difficult to balance...what pieces to keep and what new to learn. Actually, I am looking forward to the time that I cannot compete anymore because then I can devote my time to learning new repertoire that I want to study.

AT: That is why Lia Levinson, student of Alexander Goldenweiser and advisor to many pianists including Lazar Berman, would always advise to playing only a few old pieces, but learning mostly new compositions for competitions because there would be more adrenaline and excitement in actual preparing and playing at the competition.

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TIU: Yes. And the piano repertoire is so big that we must take advantage and learn new pieces.

Then, I spoke briefly with Dmitri Vorobiev who was so musical in his interpretations of Scriabin. He said that for him, his musical hero is Samuel Feinberg, a great Russian pianist who passed away decades ago. He felt that artistry requires not just playing of notes. There should be a musical phrasing, architectural planning, and inspiration to complete a work.

At the same time, I managed to see Christina Ortiz who was here as a guest. I talked with her at length.

AT: I know that you have been a contestant here as well as a judge. This time, you are here as an observer. Please can you tell the Japanese readers how the competition has changed since.

CO: The level is very, very high. It is much more high than in my time as a contestant. I have been trying to think how the competition has changed since I have been a jury here in 1989. At that time, the level of extreme loud playing was unbelievable. Maybe about 80% of players pounding the piano and I could hardly want to be in the room with such players. And this time, although there are still here people here coming out more and more blasting out the piano off the face of the earth with such loud playing, there is a tendency for people to explore the other side, which for me is equally bad. It is such extreme soft playing the sound lacks any quality. That kind of playing is effective once in a while, but when it goes on for ever and ever, it becomes a very sad experience. It is very difficult to listen to such playing. There is so much more to music. Scriabin and Shostakovich all sound the same way. It is unbelievable. Such music numbs out.

AT: Yes. Listening yesterday to the Alex Slobodyanik, I had a vision that if after finishing his Kinderszenen, nobody clapped because everybody fell asleep...

CO: or his wife, Katia Skanavi who played immediately after. She played the Sonnetto Petrarca so slow...that is someone trying to really impress to by "different." It is such a pity. In reality, there should be so many different touches, different for French music or Romantic music, perle, and all these pianists are not aware of that and they do everything the same anything that comes their way. It is very sad.

AT: It is more sad that these are the future pianists who will become teachers.

CO: Exactly, and they all seem to be in the same reign. It is fashionable. I suppose that they heard that the jury can't stand it so loud, so they go for the other side. But obviously, they have to finish with a fireworks and they can't control. bang in order to wake up the jury.

Another thing I find unsettling about the competition which allows you the freedom of choice for repertoire is that nobody can prevent the pianist in playing just one type of repertoire. Let us say that someone plays only Russian music and no Beethoven. He can get away this and the jury will not know how he can play Classical music. And who is there remaining to find out whether the contestant is an all-around player. I think that it is very important to show in the preliminaries that you can play from Bach to Albeniz. It does not have to be long. Just four or minutes for each style. If they could start with Bach, then Mozart and Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, and all other major composers, it would be a very good preliminary round. And then, the next stage could be of free choice repertoire. But with freedom of choice, they might not even quote Mozart and he is such an important composer. Bach, Beethoven, Mozart are like the Bible to the soul. You just have to play them.

AT: And Mozart is the easiest composer to tell what kind of pianist you are.

CO: Exactly. It is the easiest to tell because it is the hardest to play. And also, many play Mozart in such a restraint way. And that is also not right. There is so much drama in Mozart's music. And so, I think it is wrong to set a competition with free repertoire choice because the winners are the musicians of the future and should be able to do a wide range of music well.

AT: Can you tell your thoughts to the American public's reaction following a pianist's performance?

CO: The worst is not just the buzz and the hype of the competition. The audience's reaction, standing ovations, shouting bravos, tumultuous clapping, all this numbs the jury because they don't want to be at odds with the public. They can't judge after a while because they go crazy. The audience thinks that anything that goes the fastest is the best, and their exulted reactions does affect the jury. This is so typical of America. And I must say that that is why I don't have a career in America. It is impossible. I am not that kind of a pianist who goes for playing fast and loud. And frankly, I don't care that I didn't make my career here because I could not ever go for that kind of playing. And as of standing ovations all over this competition, it is too much. It is ridiculous. Nothing matter much any more. I think that nobody should be allowed to clap. Come on, are the contestants all geniuses?

AT: The local newspapers place Danchenko at this stage is the first prize winner while another newspaper, the German Jiracek. What do you think?

CO: I do not understand how some of these people could even be allowed to play here. How could they pass the pre selection? I think that something strange is going on. Don't you think so?

And this business about the public going berserk in its applauding, I think it should be stopped. The jury might not have the courage to do the things they really believe in.

Ortiz expressed that she like to talk to me and encouraged me to ask her more questions. In our conversations, she mentioned that she believed that 50 minutes was too much for preliminaries and that the repertoire should include Bach and other great composers, even if for five minutes to show the capacity of the contestant to carry on the tradition of piano playing. People do not need 50 to say something about themselves. It can be done in less time. She continued to say that it is horrible when someone starts the Diabelli variations or op. 111 (by Beethoven) and the jury can do nothing to stop a bad performance. She thought that jury can

stop a contestant in the preliminary round. It is only a test. The clapping does not help. It also has an opposite effect that it numbs the jury. They feel disgusted. We reminisced on how Slobodyanik had the music stand up and without the score. She commented that he should have had the music in front of him. As for Aoyagi's Gaspard de la Nuit, she said that Scarbo and Ondine were tame, but that this characterized Japanese playing. She said that she preferred this kind of playing to some rough loud pounding. We continued.

AT: What do you think about judges having scores in front of them?

CO: I do not personally need score at this stage. Just to listen and either enjoy it or not is sufficient. But for example, although Aoyagi's performance was under characterized, that kind of playing can be corrected.

AT: I also believe that overplaying the pieces has a very negative effect.

CO: Yes, and they clean the pieces so much and music does not come from the heart anymore.

CO: Yes, and they clean the pieces so much and music does not come from the heart anymore.

AT: There should be an element of improvisation left for the stage performance.

CO: Exactly. I never know what I will do. I do not know what kind of hall it will be, the piano, or the orchestra; there are so many variables that I do not know what I should be preparing for. I think that 80% should be left for the moment of performance. Technically, everything is prepared before, and the rest comes on stage. When conductors ask me about tempi, I tell them I have no idea. Rehearsals for me are just a guide on how you will approach. When you hit a chord, you do not know how it will sound. After you have struck it, then, you know and have to feel how to make the next note or notes coherent. What is phrasing? It is connecting.

AT: Knowing music is like a elastic plastic. There is movement and one molds the sounds. To be able to move in one direction, in another, that is music.

CO: Exactly. I have been working on Clara Schumann's works. I was reading how she was composing. You cannot be tied down to a tempo. You have to play it very freely. With Robert Schumann's music, it should be the same: tender, poetic, passionate, warmth. You only have to read letters between Robert and Clara to understand this.

Then, we spoke about technique and how pianists tend to play double thirds in non legato fashion. She agreed and said that that was wrong. Correct playing was often legato double thirds and that this kind was much more difficult. We assume the notes are being played correctly because there are double thirds, but unless they are really legato, it is cheating. Ortiz also expressed that French music and a Mozart sonata should be obligatory in playing in competitions. I mentioned that the adagio, slow movements should be obligatory. Christina Ortiz agreed, saying that forget the fast movements. The slow movements will show true musicianship. Another statement she made was that Bach was a passionate man and his music is full of passion and drama. She wished that people would think of Prokofiev as more classical, but Bach more free. She remembered how Casals would implore the musicians to play Bach with more passion. As we closed our conversation, I realized that this grand event in Texas was after all a competition. Guests came here to hear how tradition would be preserved and felt passionately about who would be chosen.

The winners were going to be announced. A huge hall holding about 3,000 people. Many dignitaries attended this final day. Many men wore dinner jackets and the ladies evening dresses. My neighbor is an editor of a local business newspaper and so, points out to me various luminaries, including present and past presidents of Tandy (computer) corporation; politicians, religious leaders, and many others. He comments that the net worth of this audience according to his calculation is 5 billion dollars! Not 5 million, but 5 billion.

I am quite astounded. As for my money research, I found out during these last days, that the each jury was paid \$12,500. This is pretty good considering that competitions such as Rubinstein Competition in Israel do not pay a single dollar. A jury member should consider it an honor that he or she was invited. I also found out that although the sum of \$12,500 is high, each jury has to pay for his own transportation and hotel accommodation. The Worthington Hotel ran about \$95 per night. Considering that the competition ran almost three weeks, it amounts almost \$2,000 for the stay. As these thought coursed through my mind, the stage was set for the final announcement.

Jiracek, Skanavi and Gamba didn't receive the top three honors. Third place winner was Reichart from Israel. Second place was Jacov Kasman from Russia, and the first place winner was Jon Nakamatsu. Many were surprised at this development but this is competition and surprises are inevitable. There were smaller prizes awarded and Naida Cole received special prize for best performance of chamber music and for best performance of the commissioned work. A reporter from Taiwan commented that how strange it is that chamber music and commissioned work made up so much of the semifinals, and Cole having received prizes for best performances, did not make it to the finals. Yes, indeed it looks strange. Does it mean that all these prizes are more of a conciliatory nature? As I spoke with several judges, it became apparent that not everything was smooth. "What is happening is a tragedy," one judge commented. This member of the jury explained that because every one has a favorite, they vote for him. But as a result, this contestant receives very few aggregate votes. On the other hand, those contestants that are chosen just to fill up the space, they receive the most number of aggregate votes. Then, another judge remarked that he was surprised that the public attended these concerts so well. Upon being asked "why", he answered because they all play so badly. But then, Jerome Lowenthal and Cecil Ousset were defensive of the competition. In fact, when I had scheduled an appointment with Cecil Ousset at two o'clock and waited for almost an hour, and she still didn't show up, I left a message saying that I will contact her again. On the next day, she accused me and refused to believe me that the interview was scheduled for two o'clock but instead was saying it was to be at 11 o'clock. Even checking with the press office, they still had written documentation that it was 2 o'clock, she didn't want to reschedule. She was adamant in her conviction even if she had made a mistake. But that is also indicative of her approach to the whole competition because she was in the original persecuting committee and she stated in a newspaper article that there were no mistakes made at that point. Lowenthal also defended his decisions and flatly refused to discuss anything about the competition. It is strange that he had approached me on the previous evening asking to set up interview for the following day, and he did not want to talk anything about this event that just finished. What did he want?

I also found out that it was not a easy and unanimous decision. The judges had to vote four times to reach a 50% majority and it was getting so late, that many decided that they do not care any more. These judges considered that there were no artists and no clear winners, and that ultimately, there is no difference in who is being crowned as "king". They wanted to finish and get back to their rooms. It is a short lived reign, after.

Also, I found out an interesting fact about the winner, Jon Nakamatsu. He and his teacher, Marina Derryberry live in California and she belongs to Music Teacher Association of California. Many years ago, he won a competition sponsored by M.T.A.C. The prize money was supposed to be given to him, but the teacher, Ms. Derryberry intervned and said that the check should be written in her name. This created confusion as usually, winners received the check. In turn, she showed a written contract between her and Jon Nakamatsu stating that all his

winning prize money *for all his life* will be handed to her and will become her property. M.T.A.C. then gave the check to her in her name. So, this is apparently the reason that she was also present for all competition. She has a lifelong interest in his winning. As the contract is for his entire life, the cash from the Cliburn Competition will be hers.

In conversations with different musicians I found out many other pertinent and impertinent details. That Sviatoslav Richter had to curtail his concertizing not because of his heart condition, but because he had broken his leg. It is healing slowly and is troubling him. Or that Marta Argerich had recently a serious operation in Los Angeles and is now recuperating. One contestant mentioned of Pogorelich and Karajan. When Ivo Pogorelich went to rehearse Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Karajan, Pogorelich stopped at about the 3rd page, closed the lid of the piano, and loudly proclaimed, "Maestro is not ready for this concerto," and abruptly left the stage. Herbert von Karajan was furious. This made headline news in Germany. What all this is indicative is that musicians reach their peaks and slowly are being replaced by younger generation. This is always happening. Wagner in his opera *Gottedamerung* expressed a similar idea, that gods of one epoch have reached twilight and newer, younger gods appear. This happens in all myths and one day, these myths also reach their end. Competitions are the grounds where new generation of "gods" appear and try to become themselves the ruling pantheon. And in fact, looking at the biographies of all the contestants, they have won so many prizes at so many different competitions, that they are indeed the present pantheon of rising new gods. However, it takes more than just playing to earn a status of immortality. But slowly, the older generation is disappearing into the twilight, and so, willing or not, worthy or not, the young pantheon takes its place. As Marina Cassagrande, the director of Cassagrande Competition in Italy, remarked that although they are a small competition, they are happy with their results. As I think about it, they are happy because after their competition, the winner still can go onto other bigger competitions. It is a wonderful opportunity and also the winner can use his prize as a means of introducing himself to managers and impresarios. However, in the case of Cliburn Competition, there is no where to go. The pianist-winner has reached the end of the competition road, and that is where the fault lies and why so many gold medallists fall into obscurity. How can there be ticker parades in the home town of the winner after he comes home? How can New York City, the city itself, welcome the winner when he gives debut concert at Carnegie Hall? Of course, parade through 5th Avenue with all lining up is impossible. Can there be TV commercials associated? If it were the winner from an Olympic event, he or she would be giving endorsements on television. As the answer is "no" to all these questions, it becomes apparent that the winner is doomed to obscurity and that is also why the silver medallist has a chance at making a career because there is still space for him.

The ancient Greeks had "deus ex machina". This was a device in classical Greek drama whereby a god was lowered onto the stage by a physical instrument to resolve a hopeless situation. In present day situation, the competition itself is that device, but instead of offering the Art world a definite resolution, all it offers is Fortuna, the goddess of fortune in Roman mythology. It can be good fortune, it can be bad fortune, but one thing for certain, it was never a stable fortune. And so, as these young winners begin their new phase of their career, at least for some of them, the competition life has closed. But even that is not for certain, as evidenced by Alexei Sultanov's participation in Chopin competition even after winning the Cliburn. All that is certain is that great art will remain and that most pianists, much like shooting stars in the middle of the night, appear, and then disappear into the dark recesses of nothingness.