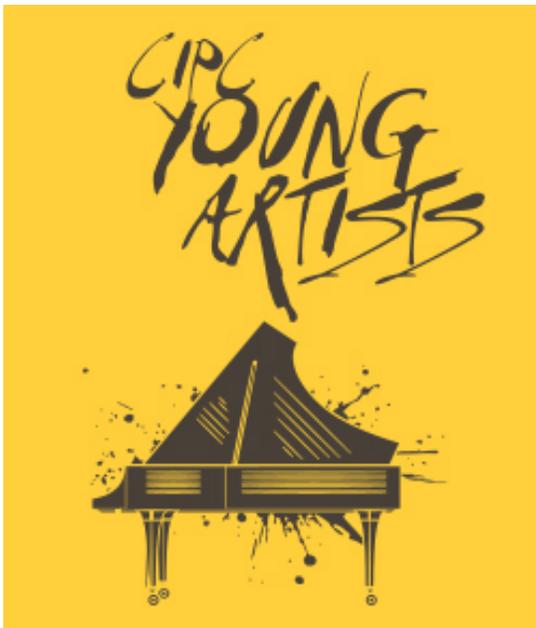


CIPC Young Artists Competition begins on May 12 at Baldwin Wallace

by Mike Telin



On Tuesday, May 12, at 7:00 pm in Baldwin Wallace University's Gamble Auditorium, 25 young pianists representing eight countries will compete for top prizes at the Cleveland International Piano Competition's [Young Artists Competition](#). Launched by the CIPC in 2003 as a one-day competition for Ohio piano students, the program has been reorganized this year to follow the multi-round format of the Senior version of CIPC. Click [here](#) to view the competition's ten-day schedule.

Why take the Young Artist Competition to this next level? "When I came on board at CIPC and saw the level of playing by the young pianists, it took me by surprise," CIPC president and chief executive officer Pierre van der Westhuizen said during a telephone conversation. "That was when I decided to go from local to national. When it became national, again the level of playing took me by surprise. So we thought, why not make the opportunity international and provide the same set of circumstances as our senior competition, but for younger kids."

Another reason for Westhuizen's decision is that when young players reach the age of 18 and begin to apply for the bigger international competitions, many lack the experience of competing at an international level. "There are not a lot of international competitions specifically designed for younger players, so I thought this would give them another opportunity to get that international competition experience under their belts before they start to apply for the bigger adult contests."

Was Westhuizen pleased with the pool of applicants? "Extremely pleased," he answered quickly. "The level of playing was really fantastic. We had over 160 applicants and I can honestly say that the selection jury had a very difficult time making their decisions."



Is designing a competition that targets young players different from that of the senior competition? “The main difference is that with the young artist competition it’s all about nurturing talent and developing that talent,” he said. “Whereas with the senior competition you’re looking for that emerging artist who is on the cusp of a major career, and giving them that final push toward it. That is really the distinct difference.

“When you’re designing a junior competition it is important to make it the best possible opportunity for the contestants — you have to accommodate where they are in their lives and in their artistic development. I was a piano professor for a long time before I came to this job, so I have a very keen

sense of the artistic development of children through conservatory age students and into adulthood. With that in my mind, I didn’t see a twelve-year-old competing against an eighteen-year-old. There are a lot of factors that go into why I feel that way, but it is why I decided to go with the twelve to fifteen-year-old category and a sixteen to eighteen-year-old category.”

Westhuizen pointed out that the [repertoire requirements](#) are different for the two divisions, adding that the competition is interested in hearing very specific etudes and sonatas.

The list of concertos is also much smaller than in the adult competition, and contestants are only required to perform one movement. “I feel that while they certainly are capable of performing a full concerto, because they will only have one rehearsal and a dress rehearsal with the orchestra, I think that performing one movement will give them the opportunity to perform at their best,” Westhuizen said. “Some of the contestants have already played full concertos with major orchestras, but because some of them have not had the same exposure, it was really about creating a level playing field for everybody.

“The concertos have a youthful element to them, there’re no Brahms concertos or Tchaikovsky No. 1. Again you want to meet them where they are in their artistic development. It can be very damaging for a young player to try to prepare Prokofiev No. 2 and have a terrible experience. I don’t want to do anything that promotes bad habits or puts them at risk of having a bad experience.”

Contestants in each age group will perform three solo rounds and one final round with orchestra. All candidates will perform two rounds before the first [jury](#) vote. (click [here](#) to view the performance order) Six candidates from each age group will advance to the semi-final round, and three candidates from each age group will advance to the final

concerto round with the Canton Symphony under the direction of Gerhardt Zimmermann on Thursday, May 21 in Gartner Auditorium at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Cash [Prizes](#) will be given to the first, second and third-place winners in the senior division, who will receive \$25,000, \$10,000, and \$5,000 respectively. The first prize winner will also receive a debut recital at The Frick Collection in New York to be held on August 13, 2015. Additionally, the winner will receive a special invitation from the International Franz Liszt Competition in the Netherlands to perform at Amsterdam's famous Grachtenfestival this summer. Concurrently, the winner will participate in the Competition's Master Class Academy in Utrecht and Amsterdam.

The first, second and third-place winners in the junior division will receive cash prizes of \$10,000, \$5,000, and \$2,500 respectively. Other cash prizes include the Audience Prize (\$1,500), the Bach Prize (\$500) and the Mozart Prize (\$500).

An Institute will be held concurrently with the competition, during which time the contestants will receive master classes and coaching from members of the jury and guest lecturers. The institute also will feature guest artist recitals.

Westhuizen said that the idea behind the guest artist recitals is to showcase young musicians who have made their mark on the international concert scene through competitions. "All four performers have had great success at competitions, and those competitions have played a very positive role in helping them to succeed."

[Vassily Primakov](#) (Tuesday, May 12) was a finalist at CIPC and has done well at many competitions world-wide. He will play a 45-minute program as part of the opening ceremony during which the contestants and the jury will be introduced. A reception will follow.



[Mariam Batsashvili](#) (Saturday, May 16) was the first woman to win the Franz Liszt competition, which helped to launch her career.



[Sean Chen](#) (Sunday, May 17) was a semi-finalist at CIPC and has had great success at the Van Cliburn and the American Pianists Association competitions.



[Alexander Schimpf](#) (Wednesday, May 20) was the Mixon First Prize winner at CIPC in 2011. His program will include Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" which he will discuss with pianist Zsolt Bognár.



As part of the Institute, all of the jurors and some guest artists will be leading [master classes](#). “Some of the classes are for contestants who do not advance to the semi-finals. The rest of the institute participants are local area piano students,” Westhuizen said, adding, “we had an on-line audition process for local players who submitted YouTube clips. So it’s very exciting. Everything is going to be about having an educational experience for the audience and for the contestants.”

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