

## Cleveland International Piano Competition: Round 1, Sessions 5 & 6 (July 27)

by Mike Telin



On Wednesday, July 27, the final eleven contestants at the Cleveland International Piano Competition made their first impressions on the jury and audience in the Cleveland Museum of Art's Gartner Auditorium.

First up at the afternoon session was Jong Hai Park (25, South Korea) who chose to perform a single work, Brahms's *Sonata No. 3 in f*, Op. 5. Park's opening Allegro was powerful with

well-balanced chords, and he brought nicely-shaped, lyrical lines to the Andante. A spirited grandeur prevailed during the Scherzo, while the concluding Intermezzo was sprightly. Overall his performance was technically secure, although his interpretation tended to be overly-mannered.

Alexander Ullman (25, United Kingdom) presented a well constructed mini-recital program that began with an engaging performance of Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in C-sharp*, (WTC I, No. 3). His relaxed playing style served him well during his discerning account of Pierre Boulez's *Incises*. Ullman brought out Beethoven's playful side in the *Sonata No. 6 in F*, Op. 10, No. 2. The performance was highlighted by crisp articulations, well-shaped lines, clean technical passages, and contrasting dynamic levels. The set concluded with two works by Chopin — the *Etude in G-flat*, Op. 10, No. 5 ("Black Key") was graceful, while the *Ballade No. 4 in f*, Op. 52 was passionate, bringing out the work's wide range of emotions.

Jinhyung Park (20, South Korea) brought style and elegance to his program beginning with a beautiful performance of Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in C-sharp*, (WTC I: No. 3). Chopin's *Etude in a*, Op. 25, No. 11 ("Winter Wind") began with well-balanced chords before taking off like a whirlwind. Park relished in Czech pianist and composer Adam

Skoumal's *The Jongleur*, which was full of clean, fast articulations. A poised rendition of Chopin's *Nocturne in c*, Op. 48, No. 1, and a full-bodied, well-paced *Ballade No. 1 in g*, Op. 23 brought the set to a satisfying conclusion.

Daria Kameneva (29, Russia) began her set with a technically secure performance of Haydn's *Sonata in c*, Hob. XVI: 20, followed by a haunting interpretation of Arvo Pärt's intense *Für Alina*. Chopin's *Etude in F*, Op. 10, No. 8 sounded a little unbalanced between the right and left hands. Kameneva concluded with Tchaikovsky's *Dumka*, Op. 59, a dark-hued work that still allowed the pianist to show off her fast fingers. There were many lovely soft passages, though in the louder sections her tone often became harsh.

Maddalena Giacomuzzi (25, Italy) began with a stylish reading of Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in C-sharp*, (WTC II: No. 3), but overuse of the pedal in the fugue caused the contrapuntal lines to blur. With Chopin's "Winter Wind" Etude, her playing began to take on heft. She played some stunningly beautiful moments in the soft passages of her well-paced performance of Prokofiev's *Sonata No. 2 in d*, but a heavy left-hand crept into louder passages at the expense of balance. Flourishes of notes abound in Italian composer Silvia Colasanti's *Logica in Fiamme* (2008), and Giacomuzzi crafted an impressive, committed performance of a short work which fit her musical sensibilities beautifully.

Tomoki Sakata (22, Japan) began his classy performance with two Scarlatti sonatas, creating fine ornamentation in K. 99 and a clean, musical reading of K. 201 in spite of its fast pace. He achieved a full array of sounds and colors in Toru Takemitsu's *Les yeux clos* (1979), and a rich, vibrant tone in Brahms's *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, amid a full range of dynamics and mood shifts.

Karim Said (27, United Kingdom/Jordan) began the evening session with a rare, Renaissance keyboard work, William Byrd's *Fantasia in a* (Musica Britannica Vol. 27, No. 13). His shapely lines and judicious use of pedal resulted in an engrossing performance. Said played a stylish opening of Brahms's *Sonata No. 2 in f-sharp Minor*, Op. 2, with great dynamic contrasts, and the Andante was passionate, although he too often chose to go for the louder side of *forte* in the finale.

Oxana Shevchenko (27, Kazakhstan) brought the personalities of all four of her chosen composers to the stage. A no-nonsense player, she walked out, bowed to the audience, and put her hands on the keyboard. Her "Allemande" from Rameau's *Suite in e* was mesmerizing. She followed that with Australian composer Carl Vine's Bagatelle Nos. 2-3 from *Five Bagatelles* (1994). It was simply fun to listen to No. 2, while an impish playfulness abounded in No. 3. Following a terrific performance of Chopin's Etude, Op.

10, No. 3, Shevchenko ended with a splendid account of Beethoven's E-flat Sonata, Op. 27, No. 1, nicely pacing the opening, playing even technical passages in the second movement, and crafting an expressive Adagio before making a fine transition into the finale, which was brisk without ever sounding rushed.

Tomer Gewirtzman (26, Israel) gave a five-star performance, beginning with Haydn's *Sonata in C*, Hob. XVI: 48. Great mood shifts and color changes in the Andante led to a fast Rondo with clear articulations and dynamic control. The joyfulness of Haydn really came through. His performance of Couperin's "Passacaille" (*Pièces de Clavecin*, Ordre VIII) was full of nimble ornaments and a lovely sense of line, a pianist's approach to a harpsichord piece that worked. You could hear the lush singing of gondoliers in Gewirtzman's long musical lines in Chopin's *Barcarolle in F-sharp*, Op. 60, and he wonderfully controlled the many rolled chords in the *Etude in E-flat*, Op. 10, No. 11.

Emanuel Rimoldi (29, Italy) brought a romantic point of view to Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*. His muscular style served him better during the many mood changes and dynamic contrasts of the first movement of Prokofiev's *Sonata No. 4 in c*, Op. 29. His Andante assai was haunting, then he exploded into a physical performance of the finale that even included some foot stomping.

Reed Tetzloff (24, United States) chose two contrasting works in b-flat minor. His sensitive performance of Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in b-flat* (WTC I) was characterized by wonderful lines and rich tone. He began Chopin's *Sonata No. 2 in b-flat*, Op. 35 with full-bodied tone and fluid lines. The Scherzo was grand with a lovely middle section, and the funeral march marvelous. Tetzloff's confident playing of technical passages in the finale brought the work — and the evening — to a superb conclusion.

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