

Cleveland International Piano Competition: Round 2, Session 2, Sunday, July 18

by Mike Telin



It was a nice change of pace when **Zhi Chao Juli Jia** (29, China) opened her second round program with Rameau's *Les Tendres Plaintes*. Her lovely performance of the short work was light and full of sensitive ornamentation. The pianist brought clean scales and articulations along with dynamic contrasts and well-shaped phrases to Beethoven's *Sonata No. 18 in E-flat*, Op. 31, No. 3. The recurring theme in the scherzo was playful and the Menuetto graceful — the concluding Presto full of fire.

She concluded her program with a dramatic performance of Saint-Saëns *Etude en forme de valse*, Op. 52, No. 6.



Jiarui Cheng (22, China) opened his set with Haydn's *Sonata in F*, Hob. XVI: 23. Throughout, the pianist played with unblemished technique and shapely lines. The Adagio was worthy of a forlorn aria, while the Presto was full of life, dynamic contrasts, and color changes. He made the most of the work's throwaway ending.

Cheng filled out his program with a thrilling performance of Rachmaninoff's (Horowitz) *Sonata No. 2 in b-flat*, Op. 36. He contrasted a rich, chocolaty sound with beautiful twinkling passages in the first movement. His simple approach to the slow middle section was stunning. His third movement was highlighted by clean articulations, well-balanced chords, and a huge sound that was never muddy. A memorable performance indeed.



A jolly good performance of Mozart's *Sonata No. 18 in D*, K. 576 (The Hunt), kicked off **Yedam Kim's** (32, South Korea) second round set. She brought elegant flair and clean scale passages to the Allegro, while the Adagio was sensitive with subtle shifts in mood shifts. She made the technical passages in the Allegretto sounds easy.

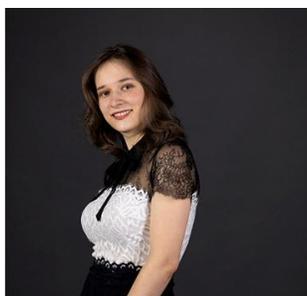
The pianist was undaunted by Chopin's *Etude in e*, Op. 25, No. 5. (Wrong Note), making sense out of the work's series of quick, dissonant passages and quirky rhythms.

The foreboding rumble of low notes that grew wonderfully into a waltz, set the tone for Kim's "orchestral" playing of Ravel's *La Valse*. With her clear sound and tasteful holdings of the ends of phrases before moving on, her performance was both intimate and bombastic.



Vitaly Starikov (25, Russia) brought pizzazz to his opening work, Beethoven's *Sonata No. 11 in B-flat*, Op. 22. The Allegro con brio was defined by a bright tempo and easy-flowing technical lines. His Adagio was nicely articulated, especially in the repeated low notes and attractively voiced inner lines. The opening theme of the Menuetto was dignified and the Rondo full of mood and color changes.

The pianist was quick out of the blocks at the beginning of Liszt's *Transcendental Etude*, S. 139, No. 8 ("Wilde Jagd"), taking listeners on a wild ride with the piece's numerous multi-octave jumps, until landing at the end of a storm of descending chords. This is a piece well suited to Starikov's musical temperament.



Beethoven also kicked off **Anastasiya Magamedova's** (23, United States/Tajikistan) second round, this time the *Sonata No. 7 in D*, Op. 10, No. 3. Setting a very fast tempo and producing a big sound, the pianist relished in the quirkiness of the opening Presto. Her phrases had direction and the articulations during the left hand crossings were crisp.

Her Largo e mesto was sad and pensive, just as the movement title suggests, but the sun came out during the Menuetto, where she made the most of its catchy tune. The short middle section was on fire in the best way possible, and she captured the improvisatory feeling of the concluding Rondo.

Magamedova concluded with Prokofiev's *Sonata No. 1 in f*, Op. 1, an early work in four sections. The pianist navigated the sonata's technical demands and sudden shifts in mood with aplomb.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com July 19, 2021.

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