

The Minnesota International Piano –e-Competition offers a special opportunity for young pianists worldwide to participate in a competition of the highest artistic quality and integrity. Our artistic vision is to bring young artists, with the promise of lasting and important careers, to the public's attention.

Alexander Braginsky, Founder, President and Artistic Director

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E-Piano News

From the Artistic Director

With three competitions successfully completed, the world is learning more and more about the Minnesota International Piano-e-Competition. Here in the Twin Cities we are also accumulating a lot of experience. We often hear from the judges and competitors that our competition is well organized and run smoothly. It feels good, but there is always room to improve. In particular, we'll keep working on making our mission, our principles and our rules as clear as possible.

We think we have done a good job of it so far, and yet every competition brings back the same questions from our audiences, both real and "virtual". Why e-Competition? How does it work? Are these real pianos? Do the contestants play live? How is judging done? It is time I address these questions, and try my very best to give as clear an answer as possible.

In designing the concept of a new piano competition, I had certain goals in mind. One was to achieve the most possible fairness in the judging. Every conflict of interest I could think of was eliminated. Neither I, nor future artistic directors can vote with the jury. Even though I cannot vote, my students still may not enter the competition, nor can the students of other jury members going back five years, or a relative of a juror. Starting with the next competition, once an application has been submitted, no

applicant shall be permitted to attend masterclasses of the announced jury members. No system is foolproof, but one thing is certain: contestants at the Minnesota International Piano-e-Competition are judged on their merit, not on what school or country they come from, or who their teacher is.

Judging is made as simple as possible. There are no points to add or subtract. It is a simple "yes" or "no" decision at every round. In awarding the prizes, judges fill in the name of the finalists for each prize, one at the time. Judges make their decisions based on the total performance. All components matter equally – the Recital Round, the Schubert Round, the chamber music and the concerto components. All performances contribute to the total impression and play a part in the final decision. One has to hear all the performances by all the contestants to have an understanding as to why the final decisions come out the way they do.

My other goal was to apply the most advanced technology available to make the competition accessible by the widest possible audience. At the same time I was looking for ways to involve in the judging a star performer who could not find the time to come to the Twin Cities in person. All ideas inevitably led to the extensive use of the Internet – quite a new concept in piano competitions at the time. Hence the use of "e" in the

e-Competition name: to set it apart. Remember, we started in the year 2000!

Yes, Disklaviers used in the e-Competition are real pianos. Yamaha starts with the best possible CFIIIS Concert Grand, and then equips it with fiber optic technology to allow it to record the most minute gradations of a key or a pedal being pressed, in the form of MIDI data. The resulting MIDI files then can be played on another piano equipped with the same technology to produce a performance virtually indistinguishable from the original. Every year the International Jury had a chance to hear a Disklavier playback of the performance they had just judged, and they couldn't tell the difference.

What can Disklavier do? In the first e-Competition Yefim Bronfman was able to judge the final rounds, while on tour in Japan. The CFIIIS Disklavier Pro was placed in front of him in Hamamatsu, synchronized to a large video screen. The sound came from the piano in sync with the moving image of the per-

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From the Artistic Director (cont.)



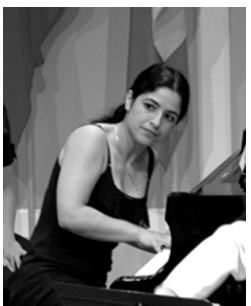
Edisher Savitski,
First Prize



Victoria and Einav



Mikhail Mordvinov,
Fourth Prize



Einav Yarden,
Fifth Prize

former. According to Bronfman "after adjusting to listening to the Disklavier piano, it has become a completely natural experience."

Starting with the second competition (2004), 60 selected contestants are invited to one of the five sites worldwide for the Disklavier/video recordings. Thus, instead of flying to St. Paul for the preliminary round, contestants are able to perform a 25 minute live audition on Disklavier while being videotaped, in a location closer to home. The first round judging in St. Paul brings the number of contestants down to 24, who are then invited to compete in Minnesota before the actual competition jury. Contestants who make it to this stage of the competition have all their expenses paid, including the trip to the preliminary recording site. There are big advan-

tages to such a setup. Every contestant is viewed by the same group of judges, is virtually performing on the same piano and in the same hall – all saving quite a bit of money in the process. And yes, all the contestants you hear at the actual competition play live and unedited throughout all rounds.

There are thousands of Disklaviers in the world today – and it is the best selling reproducing piano. Every owner can download a MIDI file from his or her own Disklavier. In the Competition we are using Yamaha Concert Grand Disklaviers because they are the only readily available pianos capable of highest quality reproduction of a performance.

Remember: MIDI files in and of them-

selves are just a bunch of ones and zeroes, nothing more. They only come to life when downloaded and played on a Disklavier Piano, preferably a "pro" model. Do not judge a performance or a piano sound quality by playing the associated MIDI files on your computer; these files are designed for use with a reproducing piano like the Disklavier.

We have redesigned our website to make it easy to navigate and to provide you with as much information as possible. Browse through; you may find more answers to your questions. If you still have some unanswered questions, contact us and we'll do our best to satisfy your curiosity. In the meantime, we'll get busy reedying ourselves for the 2008 e-Piano Junior.

By Alexander Braginsky

Our Wonderful Experience of Being a Host Family

For many people in the Twin Cities, the Piano-e-Competition was a musical highlight of the summer. Hamline University and Orchestra Hall were the proving grounds for some of the most talented young pianists of our time in a spectacular two-week display of artistry, virtuosity and endurance. For 24 lucky families, the competition offered a special chance to interact with the contestants in a more intimate way – as host families.

What is it like to host a contestant? Usually, this involves little more than transportation from and to the airport and attending performances. This year, however, our family's contestant Victoria Korhinskaya made it all the way to the finals. It was during a nasty hot spell, and because Vika was five months pregnant, we invited her to leave the

dormitory and move into our spare bedroom for the last few days of the competition. Her husband arrived from Moscow to join her. I took them in for an ultrasound and saw pictures of their first child. They adopted my dog.

All of this occurred along with the constant pressure of practice and competition. We actually saw very little of Victoria because she practiced most of the time. In fact, she had very few needs: practice, eat and sleep (in that order!). By the time the finals came, I had the exhilarating experience of hearing her perform her concerto with the Minnesota Orchestra, after having heard her practice the same passages at my house that very morning.

All of the host families have similar

stories to tell. Some share languages and culture with their contestants; some simply have an interest in young people and piano performance in general. One thing that all host families have in common is a willingness to be drawn into the fascinating inner process of the competition and to be a dependable resource for the musicians who come here from all corners of the world to compete. A number of contestants from previous competitions have forged lasting friendships with their host families.

If you would like to volunteer as a host family for the next Piano-e-Competition, contact Barbara Benn at 952-943-1172 for more information.

*By Barbara Benn
Host Families Coordinator*

E-Piano Junior 2008: What's In Store

The e-Piano Junior Competition, designed for the young pianists ages 17 and under, will take place July 4-11, 2008. Many aspects of the competition will be similar to its "adult" version.

We are continuing our wonderful partnership with the Minnesota Orchestra, and once again the Finals and the Gala Concert will be part of Sommerfest and the Macy's Day of Music. The Minnesota Public Radio will stream all performances live over the Internet, and all solo performances again will be archived on our website.

The twenty-four young contestants will be invited to compete in Minnesota in July 2008. We modified the structure of the competition and the repertoire requirements to better suit the young musicians. The contestants will be asked to prepare three short solo recitals (ranging from 25 to 40 minutes) and a first movement of a concerto from a selected list. As one can imagine, the difficulty of the repertoire for this age group differs dramatically. We have instituted a number of required pieces, such as Schubert Moment Musical or Impromptu and Beethoven 32 Variations or Mendelssohn Variations Serieuses. In addition to the required pieces there will be many opportunities for contestants to choose their own repertoire that displays their imagination and individual strengths.

Throughout the history of the competition we have enjoyed an impressive increase in attendance. The attendance at the Sundin Hall has increased by more than 20% in 2006. There were more people at the Orchestra Hall for the two Finals Concerts this year than for the two Finals Concerts *and* the Gala Concert combined in 2004! This year's Winner's Recital at the Fitzgerald Theater and the Gala Concert at the Orchestra Hall brought full houses. We are going to continue bringing the competition to increasingly wider audiences. **The most exciting news is that all of the events of the e-Piano Junior Competition in 2008 will be open to the public and free of charge!** This is unprecedented in the world of international competitions!

The e-Piano Junior Competition is designed for the young musicians, and will bring the most promising fresh talents to the Twin Cities. In order to seize this remarkable opportunity, we are collaborating with the Minnesota Music Teachers Association to create an exciting array of events for the local aspiring pianists. E-Piano Junior Festival will happen concurrently with the competition and will consist of open masterclasses given by the members of the International Jury to the local young pianists, presentations and lectures by guest experts on a variety of topics, and performances by the Festival participants. We will

create an opportunity for the contestants and their parents to share their experiences and stories with the local young musicians who consider a career in performance. Most of all we want the public to get excited and inspired by the performances and experiences of the e-Piano Junior Competition and Festival. **Just like all the Competition performances, all of the events of the Festival will be open to the public and free to the participants as well as the observers.**

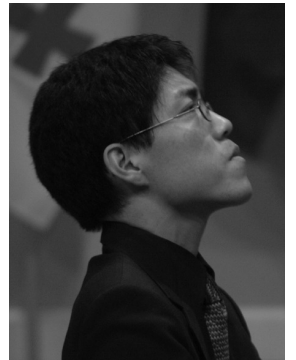
We are very grateful to you, our faithful audience, for supporting us in our endeavor. We believe in sharing the joy of music, and will strive to make the 2008 Competition a meaningful and memorable event for the young contestants and the audiences.

For more details and information on the schedule and the repertoire for the e-Piano Junior Competition please visit our website www.ecompetition.org. It will continue to be the main source of new information. Please feel free to contact us with questions and comments at piano@ecompetition.org or at 763-416-3256. We would be happy to hear from you.

By Stella Sick



Victoria Korchinskaya-Kogan,
Third Prize



Ryo Yanagitani,
Second Prize, Schubert Prize



Gregory DeTurck,
Sixth Prize



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E-Competition 2006 Revisited

