

# WFIMC now

Grand Dame of the Violin  
Farewell,  
Ida Haendel!

French Music Icon  
Claude Samuel

Rubinstein Competition  
Idith Zvi

Geza Anda Competition  
Ruth Bossart

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Christoph Poppen

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# Grand Dame of the Violin: Farewell, Ida Haendel!

**By Henrik Oerding**

translation by Florian Riem

Beauty was important for her. Even in her old age you could recognize the small lady from her colorful dresses, her huge mane of hair, her high-heeled shoes. Here, on the beach in Miami, she quickly engaged in a conversation with strangers: her approachable, easygoing manner made it easy for her. But of course Ida Haendel, the great violinist, was not just interested in outward beauty. Beauty in music was of greatest importance for her as well.

At age three, Ida Haendel played the violin, with four she already won competitions.



©ARD International Music Competition

Ida Haendel was born as Ida Hendel on 15 December 1928 in Chelm, a town in eastern Poland. Earlier birth dates like 1923 or 1924 are mentioned in certain documents as well- Ida explained this by saying her manager had to declare her age as 14 in 1937, in order for her to be old enough to perform in London. At that time she also changed her name to Haendel.

Her family was Jewish, a fact that Ida Haendel never wanted to emphasize. Haendel's father Nicolaus was a portrait painter who had wanted to be a violinist himself. He encouraged his daughter from a very early age, and thus a child prodigy could develop. At age three and a half she could play a song on the violin that her mother had just sung for her. "Everyone takes on a role, even before we are born" Haendel once said in a conversation for BR-Klassik. "I think it was my destiny to become a violinist. I began with three and a half, and I knew immediately that I would be a violinist".

In 1933, at age four, Haendel already won the gold medal of a competition and went to study with Mieczyslaw Michailowicz at the Chopin Conservatory in Warsaw. In 1935, she was the youngest ever participant to make it to the finals of the Wieniawski Competition and became seventh- Ginette Neveu, 16 at the time, and David Oistrach, 27 at the time, won the first two prizes. Haendel still clearly remembers the competition: "Back then, my father told me: 'Do you know who is in the jury? None of them can play as well as you, so don't be afraid!' And I remembered this all throughout my life.

## Unfulfilled Love

In the 1930s, her father brought the whole family to London, also to escape the looming war. Later, Ida Haendel became a British citizen. In London, she met two teachers who were to have a decisive influence on her musically: Hungarian violinist

Carl Flesch- “A true pedagogue. He knew what a student needed psychologically”, she said. And the Romanian violinist and composer George Enescu- “a real artist. Only results counted for him”.

Her first recording from the 1940s stayed with Haendel even into old age: on four legs. The record was released on Decca, and the label gave her a dog as a present. She called it *Decca*, and ever since, all her dogs have had this name. But other labels produced significant recordings as well, with conductors such as Rafael Kubelik, Zubin Mehta or Simon Rattle. For her, however, the greatest conductor was Sergiu Celibidache, with whom she was to have a long friendship. Most of her recordings were made together with him, even though he ultimately objected to recordings entirely. “It was a friendship, but sadly also an unfulfilled love” Ida Haendel said a few years ago. “He had everything. If he had loved me, we would have found a way”, she added.

## Warmhearted teacher, graceful artist

Ida Haendel never married. In the 1950s she moved to Montreal, Canada, and finally, in 1979, to Miami. “I am not very large, maybe that’s why I like it warm”, Haendel said in a TV-documentary. Often, she met her older sister Ala, with whom she spoke in Polish. In Miami, she spoke English, but she could also speak German fluently. Soon after the war, she performed already in Germany, even though it took until 1993 before she made her debut with the Berlin Philharmonic.

Whenever Haendel played, she played gracefully, clearly, instantaneously. She focused on the classical-romantic violin repertoire, on the concertos of Beethoven, Brahms or Sibelius. But contemporary works

were in her repertoire, too, such as Allan Pettersson’s 1977 violin concerto, dedicated to her. And she took care of the next generation: David Garrett was her student, she got to know him as a teenager. “From the first note on, he played as mature as an adult”, Haendel said. Garrett and all the many others who knew Ida Haendel describe her as warm hearted, friendly and affectionate.

2009, more than 80 years old, the violinist came from Miami to Munich to join the jury of the ARD Competition. When asked about her thoughts, she said: „I will keep going as long as I can... when the moment comes and I can’t anymore, the end will come. Immediately. Not a day more, not an hour longer!”

On 30 June 2020, Ida Haendel passed away at the age of 91.



©ARD International Music Competition

*Ida Haendel in 2009, together with Ingolf Turban and Axel Linstaedt, then Artistic Director of the ARD intl. Music Competition.*



## Remembering Ida Haendel

©ARD International Music Competition

***Before the competition,** Ida was not well and it was not clear whether she would actually be able to travel. But when the day came, a colleague went to pick her up at the airport and was surprised to find a rather extraordinary (crazy is the wrong word), lively little lady with a huge wig, colorful dress and very high heels. The trip did not go without hiccups: when Ida walked out of customs, her baggage card had only a violin case on it- her suitcase had got lost somewhere along the way. She did not seem to care too much and stayed completely relaxed. Once, she even forgot about her violin, leaving her Stradivarius behind at an airport counter.*

*Arriving at the hotel after an exhausting 20-hour trip from Miami, and with no clothes to change into, her first words were: "And what will be the plan for tonight?"*

*At the reception that night, she seemed not to mind wearing her travel attire again, making jokes and talking to everyone in several different languages. She was not always of the same opinion as the jury at the time, but she openly talked about and appreciated everyone's comments. She never said anything negative about anyone, even if there were big differences among the jurors.*

*Extraordinary was when she lovingly talked about her "little daddy" in Polish- even though she had many friends, she had no family left and never got married. She never found "the right one", as she said once in a documentary, except maybe Sergiu Celibidache, if he would have only wanted it.*

Elisabeth Kozik  
Managing Director, ARD International Music Competition



## Passionate and Charismatic: Claude Samuel

**The great French journalist and music critic passed away on 14 June in Paris**

© Jean-Baptiste Millot

Journalist, media man, show producer, creator, and director of festivals and education centers, Claude Samuel has always encouraged young composers and interpreters, and supported the music of today.

Passionate about contemporary music, and eager to promote it to a larger audience, he created the Messian Competition in 1967, followed by the Rostropovich Cello Competition in 1977. Together with the Jean-Pierre Rampal, Maurice André, Martial Solal (Jazz) and Etienne Vatelot competitions, they were known as the City of Paris Competitions.

### Great Supporter of Competitions and of the WFIMC

His first experience with an international competition, Claude Samuel attended the Long-Thibaud competition in 1957: *"I remember*

*the Salle Gaveau boiling, ready to burst into flames for one or another candidate – at that year, it turned out to be Peter Frankl, who won the Grand Prix and pocketed 350.000 Francs. But the audience was also ready to boo the jury, had it not voted correctly".* That day, Claude Samuel also met Marguerite Long, who agreed to a series of interviews on Radio-France, later became his friend and gave him a first taste of an international competition.

Claude Samuel was not only a charismatic personality on the radio, but also a juror in numerous international competitions. He always believed that competitions were of great importance for the musical life around the world: *"even though we know that judgement is a very delicate matter, that some juror may not recognize an extraordinary artist, or, that a winner may never have a significant career,(...) I don't know of a greater*

emotion than watching young musicians playing as if they were playing for their lives and for their future. Youngsters who take all the risks, and who- at least some of them- do not even know what it means to be nervous!"

## Encyclopedia of music and the competition world: his blog

### *Le Regard de Claude Samuel*

With competitions being created in distant places all over the world, Claude Samuel always saw them as a means of understanding and connecting different people rather than just a part of growing globalization.

In his blog "Le Regard de Claude Samuel", he shared his thoughts on competitions again: "the candidates' strength after months of preparation, their stage fright (which some of them, especially the younger ones, can overcome so well), the different competing characters revealing themselves, the great variety of musical approaches, the ever-

present balance between virtuosity and musicality, the individual reading of the printed music.... in a competition, we find ourselves in the very heart of an incredible, enigmatic means of communication and an individual quest, of which the final ranking is far from revealing all the mysteries...". He always believed in competitions as "an essential part of a soloist's career, an achievement of great value, and a beautiful cause to fight for".

Claude Samuel was closely involved in the WFIMC and always fought for the federation. Not only he attended the General Assemblies but also reported with humor and kindness about his experiences; about the rigor, the seriousness and enthusiasm of his colleagues. In 2011, he wrote: *"in Warsaw (...) we asked ourselves and argued hard about the question of whether we should delete the references to "classical" music in our texts... and the debate, although greatly semantic, revealed quite a lot of language confusion. In the end, however, we decided (with a small majority) to embark upon the "modern" era."*

Sarah Bétrisey

WFIMC General Assembly in Washington, D.C. (2001)



WFIMC President **Didier Schnorhk** remembers Claude Samuel as a great friend:

*"For many years, Claude Samuel has been one of the great advocates of the WFIMC, bringing to the Federation his great sense of culture, his exceptional communication skills and his know-how as a media person. Relentlessly supporting creation of new music and taking on artistic challenges (he also established the Olivier Messiaen Composition Competition and the "Présences" Festival), he always kept fighting for greater acceptance of contemporary music in our Federation, and for the admission of Jazz in our competitions. Claude Samuel was a charming person, a bright mind, an aesthete: it was a privilege to talk to him, a delight to converse and debate with him about music, art or politics."*



©Guy Vivien

## WFIMC 2020 General Assembly 9 and 10 December

**Due to the ongoing travel restrictions, the 2020 Hamamatsu General Assembly will take place online!**

*More information and registration will be sent by e-mail*

- \* News from the Federation
- \* Reports from 2020
- \* Outlook for 2021
- \* WFIMC Dialogue
- # Hamamatsu Introduction
- # Japanese Food Special
- # and much more!

**WFIMC ONLINE**

# Two Weeks of Solitude

## German Conductor Christoph Poppen talks about his recent quarantine experience in Seoul, Korea



©Florian Riem

**What was the first thing you did after leaving your quarantine last Monday morning?**

A walk outside, in fresh air. Play on my violin, without mute. And then a visit to a huge breakfast buffet.

**Food was not good during quarantine?**

Well.... it was okay, but very monotonous. Very far from what we are used to eat everyday. But not bad for detox, I would say....

**What was the problem with the food?**

There were three meals per day, at 7:30, 11:45, and 16:50. Three times exactly the same meal, and always cold. You could not get any coffee, and certainly no alcohol either.

**But in general, you like Korean food?**

I love Korean food! but this was not Korean food, not typical- rather neutral fare.

**Couldn't you order delivery food?**

No- any kind of delivery was forbidden and would

have been sent back.

**Did you loose a lot of weight?**

Not as much as I was hoping for...

**How large was your room? Did you have any exercise?**

It was a regular 4-Star hotel room, but it had 3 beds in it, so I had very little space. I did some regular exercises every day, and it helped. But after 2 weeks it felt very strange to walk outside again- my legs had to readjust at first.

**What did you do during these two weeks to keep yourself busy? Were you not bored to death?**

Actually I was really busy. Lots of work, mountains of scores to study, violin practice (with mute), more books to read than I could finish, movies to watch, and heaps of e-mails which I should have already written a long time ago....

I had made a plan for every day and I was almost under time pressure to get everything things done.

### In your life, have you been in prison before?

No, only to play violin in prison concerts. In any case, quarantine is an interesting experience- you agree to total isolation, voluntarily... but quarantine is certainly better than any prison.

### Will you do quarantine again in the future?

Yes, I am afraid we will have to. International artists may have to live with quarantine for a while... I am planning to go to Hong Kong twice this fall, where there is a strict quarantine in place (albeit with a choice of hotel, so it might be a bit more comfortable). Then, since I have to take on my new job with the Israel Chamber Orchestra, I will go to Israel, where quarantine is required before and after the trip. So, in any case I will have quarantine on my agenda soon....

### And you will come back to Korea?

Yes, of course. But I hope that quarantine conditions will improve for artists. Before coming here, my hosts warned me about the quarantine and offered to cancel my entire tour if I wanted. But I really wanted to go and I am so happy that I am here -although it is such a difficult time with too many cancelled concerts...

*Interview: Florian Riem*

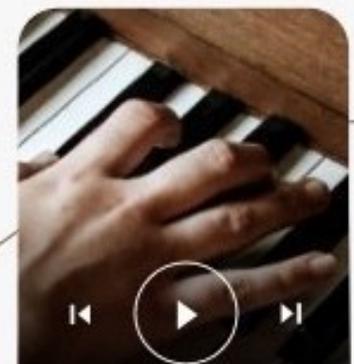


*Around the world, quarantine varies from country to country. While many countries keep it more on a voluntary basis, in Asia rules are often very strict. The Republic of Korea has a mandatory quarantine in place for all international arrivals, regardless of nationality. Residents may stay at their homes, but short-term visitors must remain at a government-assigned place and pay for it (around USD 100 per day). Everyone must install a special app to monitor health condition and location (via GPS).*

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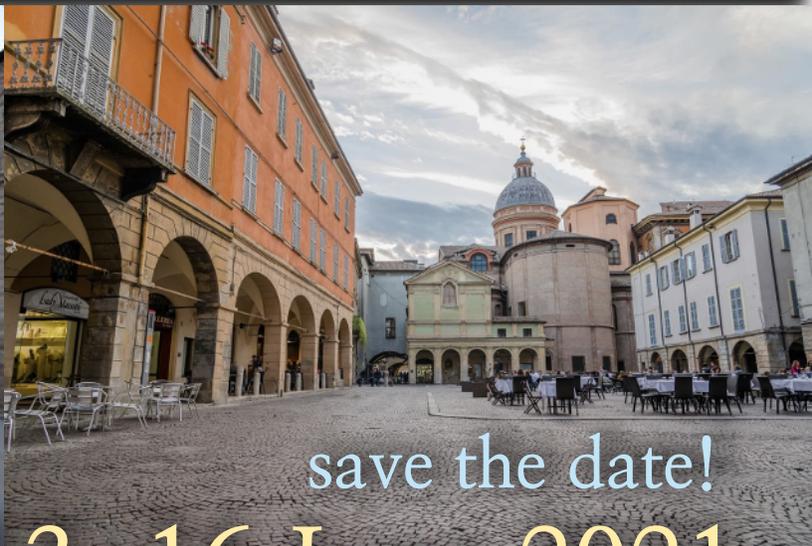
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# 2020 WFIMC Competition Schedule

| Original Date    | City             | Competition                                      | Status                                 | New date                 |
|------------------|------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| <b>MARCH</b>     |                  |  |  |                          |
| 3.21-4.2         | Barcelona        | Maria Canals Intl. Music Competition             | rescheduled                            | 3.31-3.25.2021           |
| 3.21-3.30        | Belgrade         | Intl. Jeunesses Musicales Competition            | rescheduled                            | 3.21-3.31.2021           |
| <b>APRIL</b>     |                  |  |  |                          |
| 4.3-4.9          | Andorra          | Concours Intl. de Saxophone                      | rescheduled                            | 3.26-4.3.2021            |
| 4.27-5.3         | Lyon             | Lyon Intl. Chamber Music Competition             | rescheduled                            | 4.19-4.25.2021           |
| 4.26-5.9         | Lichtenberg-Hof  | Intl. Violin Competition Henri Marteau           | rescheduled                            | 4.23-5.6.2023            |
| <b>MAY</b>       |                  |  |  |                          |
| 5.3-5.14         | Montreal         | Concours Musical Intl. de Montreal               | rescheduled                            | 5.24-6.3.2021            |
| 5.4-5.14         | Vienna           | Intl. Beethoven Piano Competition                | rescheduled                            | 4.19-4.28.2021           |
| 5.4.-5.30        | Brussels         | Concours Reine Elisabeth                         | rescheduled                            | 5.3-6.9.2021             |
| 5.15-5.22        | Osaka            | Osaka Intl. Chamber Music Competition            | rescheduled                            | 5.16-5.23.2021           |
| <b>JUNE</b>      |                  |  |  |                          |
| 6.2-6.10         | Norrköping       | Wilhelm Stenhammar Intl. Music Competition       | rescheduled                            | 6.10-6.18.2021           |
| 6.7-6.14         | Reggio Emilia    | Intl. String Quartet Competition Paolo Borciani  | rescheduled                            | 6.5-6.13.2021            |
| <b>JULY</b>      |                  |  |  |                          |
| 7.8-7.25         | Sydney           | Sydney Intl. Piano Competition                   | suspended                              | will take place in 2021  |
| 7.13-7.25        | Leipzig          | Intl. J.S. Bach Competition                      | rescheduled                            | 7.18-7.28.2021           |
| 7.30-8.9         | Cleveland        | Virtu(al)oso Piano Competition for Artist Relief | ONLINE                                 | (new format)             |
| <b>AUGUST</b>    |                  |  |  |                          |
| 8.4-8.25         | Shanghai         | Shanghai Isaac Stern Intl. Violin Competition    | rescheduled                            | 8.10-8.29.2021           |
| 8.6-8.11         | Bolzano          | Ferrucio Busoni Intl. Piano Competition          | new format/ new dates in November 2020 |                          |
| 8.8-8.16         | Jeju             | Jeju Intl. Brass and Percussion Competition      | partly online                          | Finals 11.5-11.9         |
| 8.30-9.20        | Bucharest        | George Enescu Intl. Competition                  | partly online                          | Finals in May 2021       |
| 8.31-9.18        | Munich           | ARD International Music Competition              | rescheduled                            | 8.29-9.16.2022           |
| <b>SEPTEMBER</b> |                  |  |  |                          |
| 9.1-9.12         | Glasgow          | Scottish International Piano Competition         | suspended                              | undecided                |
| 9.6-9.13         | Budapest         | Intl. Eva Marton Singing Competition             | rescheduled                            | 8.29-9.5.2021            |
| 9.8-9.13         | Dusseldorf       | Aeolus Intl. Competition for Wind Instruments    | rescheduled                            | 9.6.-9.11.2022           |
| 9.12-9.20        | Bergen           | Intl. Edvard Grieg Piano Competition             | rescheduled                            | 9.17.-9.25.2021          |
| 9.13-9.20        | Weikersheim      | DEBUT Classical Singing Competition              | as scheduled                           | confirmed                |
| 9.14-9.20        | Bratislava       | Intl. J.N. Hummel Piano Competition              | rescheduled                            | 9.6-9.12.2021            |
| 9.21-9.26        | Alessandria      | M. Pittaluga Intl. Guitar Competition            | rescheduled                            | 9.20-9.25.2021           |
| 9.21-9.26        | Alessandria      | M. Pittaluga Intl. Composition Comp.             | ONLINE                                 | new application deadline |
| 9.21-9.30        | Dortmund         | Intl. Schubert Competition Dortmund              | rescheduled                            | 9.24-10.3.2021           |
| 9.22-9.27        | Trondheim        | Trondheim Intl. Chamber Music Competition        | rescheduled                            | 9.20-9.26.2021           |
| 9.27-10.3        | Monza            | Rina Sala Gallo Intl. Piano Competition          | suspended                              | will take place in 2022  |
| 9.28-10.3        | Cologne          | Intl. Music Competition Cologne                  | rescheduled                            | 9.13-9.18.2021           |
| <b>OCTOBER</b>   |                  |  |  |                          |
| 10.2-10.23       | Warsaw           | Intl. Frederic Chopin Piano Competition          | rescheduled                            | 10.2-10.23.2021          |
| 10.6-10.19       | Montreal         | Canadian Intl. Organ Competition                 | rescheduled                            | 10.11-10.25.2021         |
| 10.9-10.17       | Vercelli         | Viotti Intl. Music Competition                   | undecided                              | dates not confirmed      |
| 10.11-10.21      | Kiev             | Intl. Competition Vladimir Horowitz              | as scheduled                           | postp. From April        |
| 10.12-10.15      | Trondheim        | Princess Astrid Intl. Music Competition          | suspended                              | will take place in 2021  |
| 10.23-11.5       | Geneva           | Concours de Genève                               | suspended                              | will take place in 2021  |
| 10.28-10.31      | Orleans          | Orleans Intl Piano Competition                   | as scheduled                           | postp. From April        |
| 10.31-11.8       | Hamamatsu        | Mt Fuji Opera Competition of Shizuoka            | suspended                              | undecided                |
| 10.31-11.8       | Tongyeong        | ISANGYUN Competition                             | rescheduled                            | 10.30-11.7.2021          |
| <b>NOVEMBER</b>  |                  |  |  |                          |
| 11.1-11.13       | Shenzhen         | China Shenzhen Intl. Piano Competition           | suspended                              | undecided                |
| 11.9-11.14       | Porcia           | International Competition Citta di Porcia        | as scheduled                           |                          |
| 11.13-11.22      | Eindhoven        | Tromp Intl. Percussion Competition               | as scheduled                           | confirmed                |
| 11.16-22         | Utrecht          | Intl. Franz Liszt Piano Competition              | as scheduled                           | postp. From March        |
| 11.22-12.2       | Helsinki         | Intl Jean Sibelius Competition                   | rescheduled                            | 5.18-5.29.2022           |
| 11.23-11.28      | Manchester       | RNCM Intl. Piano Competition                     | rescheduled                            | 11.29-12.4.2021          |
| 11.28-12.5       | 'S-Hertogenbosch | International Vocal Competition                  | suspended                              | Lied 2021/ Opera 2022    |
|                  | Chartres         | Intl. Organ Competition                          | suspended                              | will take place in 2021  |
| 11.7-11.13       | Vina del Mar     | Intl. Music Competition Dr. Luis Sigall          | rescheduled                            | 8.14.-8.21.2021          |
| <b>DECEMBER</b>  |                  |  |  |                          |
| 12.2-12.16       | Harbin           | Schoenfeld Intl. String Competition              | as scheduled                           | postp. from July         |

For weblinks and updates, please check our website or sns channels. Information correct a of 31 August.



save the date!

13–16 June 2021  
Reggio Emilia, Italy



# WFIMC 2021 General Assembly

Hosted by the Premio Paolo Borciani International String Quartet Competition

Sunday, 13 June 2021  
Welcome Reception  
Premio Borciani Finals

Tuesday, 15 June 2021  
General Meetings  
Election  
Panel Discussions

Monday, 14 June  
General Meetings  
Panel Discussions

Wednesday, 16 June  
Excursion day

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# Love of Life

As she is leaving the Arthur Rubinstein Competition after two decades, Artistic Director **Idith Zvi** talks with Florian Riem about the legacy of this unique competition, the great master, and his love of life

**The *Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition* came into being in 1973, at the initiative of Jan Jacob Bistrizky, a close friend of Arthur Rubinstein, who was honored to give his name to the Competition.**

**Conceived in the spirit of this legendary pianist, the competition first took place in 1974 and is held every three years. Rubinstein himself attended the first two competitions, when the winners**

**were Emanuel Ax and Gerhard Oppitz, both renowned pianists today. The past 40+ years of its history have continuously produced pianists who went on to international acclaim: Kirill Gerstein, Igor Levit, Khatia Buniatishvili, Boris Giltburg, Seong-Jin Cho, Daniil Trifonov and others.**

**From 2003 to 2020, the Artistic Director of the Competition has been Israeli Pianist Idith Zvi.**

**Florian Riem:** *If I understand it correctly, you met Arthur Rubinstein twice- in Israel during your time as a radio producer, and later on when you studied in New York. What comes to mind first when you think about Rubinstein?*

**Idith Zvi:** I met Rubinstein first in New York (between 1968-20) and afterwards in Israel, as the producer and broadcaster of the IPO concerts, including Rubinstein's.

An immediate thought that occurs when I think about him: *Love, Love, Love:*

Love of music; of women; of food; cigars; nature; airplanes, trains and cars; friendships with important artists around the world, love of himself, *Love of Life!* Rubinstein was an idol to every music lover in Israel in my youth. It is hard now, after so many years, to identify real memories, and fake-memories that come out of his legendary life and of the gossips around them.



©Rubinstein Competition

Having said the above, I will try to share some impressions, hoping they are true...

*At Rubinstein's masterclass in New York, while I was studying at the Mannes College of Music (1968-1970):* Rubinstein instructed a young student: "Young man, you must have a big love affair!!! Go ahead... it is about time."

This sentence remained very strong in my memory... and up to recently, I was sure that the young student was Murray Perahia (We studied in Mannes at the same time). But years later, I shared this memory with Murray, and- to my distress- he told me that he never played for Rubinstein....Fake memory??? In any case, it describes Rubinstein's personality very well.

*In Tel Aviv- Israel:*

As a radio producer I was in charge of recordings and live-broadcasts of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, including Rubinstein's performances. Meeting with him then and listening to his playing strengthened my impression from New York: He loved life, and music was part of the deal.....

**FR:** *"On stage," Rubinstein told in an interview with Harold C. Shonberg in 1964, "I will take a chance. There has to be an element of daring in great music-making. These younger ones, they are too cautious. They take the music out of their pockets instead out of their hearts. And they know little about pedaling or tone production." Rubinstein's remark about "playing from the heart" was characteristic. He always played from the heart. Music was nothing if not an emotional expression.*

*(How) do you keep the spirit of Rubinstein's joie de vivre alive at your competition?*

**IZ:** Competitions are very difficult: Covering a big repertoire in a short time; Competing against your friends and colleagues who are all excellent; Playing for first class jury members; and- playing for audiences who came to listen to the competitors' playing, no less than to be overwhelmed with adrenalin caused by the race.

We did our best to create an atmosphere of a music festival, help the competitors forget they are in a competition, make them feel they are in an international, happy competition, in beautiful concert halls, pleasant hotels; make them enjoy the beach of Tel Aviv; organize host families that make their stay easier and cozy, show them beautiful venues in Israel and make friends with them.

I don't think that there are competitors who left our competition without a sense of good experience. Love of Music, Love of Life, just like Rubinstein was.

**FR:** *The competition history reads like a music history book- just in the very first competition jury in 1974 you had such illustrious names as Michelangeli, Gagnebin, Istomin, and Rubinstein himself. You joined the competition in 2000 as Deputy, and in 2003 as Artistic Director, but do you have memories from these early years as well?*

**IZ:** Oh yes, even though the memories are already quite blurred.

I met neither Michelangeli nor Istomin at the competition, (though I did meet them in different circumstances), but I do remember the atmosphere that Rubinstein created:

It was a real happening. The concert halls were packed. It was *the* talk among people in the streets; Journalists had daily column in all newspapers; A few TV documentaries were dedicated to the Rubinstein Competition and all radio stations were hysterically anxious to broadcast the competition.

There was a whirlpool of music excitement and I joined it enthusiastically, and turned one of the competitions into a daily live-broadcast festival.

**FR:** *Rather little is known about Jan Jacob Bistrizky, who actually would have been 100 this year. Who was he, and what kind of person was he? How did you get to know him and how did you become his successor?*

**IZ:** This is rather a difficult question: How did we meet? I can't remember. Everybody involved in Music in Israel knew him and he knew every musician here.

I think I met him at the 1st competition in 1974, discussing together possibilities of broadcasting the event in the Classica channel of the National Israeli Radio Station.

Bistrizky was not an easy man! Very stubborn, very decisive, uncompromising and self-assured. However- can any director of such a complicated organization event be easy to deal with?



*Bistrizky with Rubinstein in the Seventies*

He was quite a proud Polish man, who immigrated to Israel and was invited to head the Israel Festival. Here he talked Rubinstein into giving his name and blessing to a new competition after his name. It was an adventure that Rubinstein refused to believe in, but when he saw how capable Bistrizky was, who created a perfectly organized competition with first rate jury members and wonderful competitors, he admitted that his competition had become tremendously successful thanks to Bistrizky.

When Bistrizky grew older, he needed an assistant. Even though I never dreamed of the position, I gave a "yes" to the competition's Board of Directors, who had a long term plan for me to replace Bistrizky when he eventually retired.



*Idith Zvi with Alfred Brendel (Bolzano, 2015)*

**FR:** *The Rubinstein Competition and the Rubinstein International Music Society is very well anchored both in Israeli society and abroad. There are various prizes offered by people affiliated with the competition, including yourself. What made you create the Idith Zvi Junior Jury Encouragement grant?*

**IZ:** My encouragement grant was in memory of my mother- Bella Zvi, who escaped world war two, came to Israel and was my first piano teacher. She was an educator and excellent musician. I adopted the idea of Junior Jury after witnessing its educational impact it had in the Unisa Competition, in South Africa, It was more than natural for me to affiliate my grant to the Junior Jury (young musicians who experience judging for the first time), and to support them supporting their winner.

**FR:** *One person closely related to the Rubinstein*

*Competition is pianist Arie Vardi. He first joined the jury in 1977 and, with few exceptions, was present at all editions until today. He also offers grants every year. What role does he play today, and how has he shaped the competition over the years?*

**IZ:** I'd rather not relate to this question, out of respect to Prof. Vardi, who served as music advisor and chair of the Jury for so many years. I feel I am not entitled to speak about him. He deserves an article by himself...

**FR:** *Your competition medals were designed by Pablo Picasso- Obviously, Rubinstein and Picasso were friends, but I am curious whether there is a story behind these medals?*

**IZ:** As far as I know, the story was that the gold medals, designed by Picasso, were meant to financially support the competition. Rubinstein tried to help Bistrizky in creating a private foundation that will cover the budget of the competition without the help of the government.

Unfortunately, this never happened and without the support of the government and Tel Aviv municipality the competition would not have existed.





with Jessye Norman (2015)

**FR:** *You have been with the WFIMC for a long time and are a dear friend and colleague to many. Are there any special memories or thoughts you would like to share with us?*

**IZ:** Oh yes: my first visit to the General Assembly was in Geneva, when I was still Deputy Director. It was a fascinating experience, which created a long-lasting friendship with people from all over the world. It was a fascinating brainstorming that helped my imagination to develop new ideas that served our competition. I learnt so much from other federation members and this got me to the ambition of hosting the federation in Israel in 2013.

And this was a real adventure, not easy but very satisfactory. About 70 members came to Israel and I believe- all of them were extremely pleased with their visit.

**FR:** *Back to yourself- you were active in so many fields- as pianist, radio producer, competition manager, festival founder, teacher... what are your plans now that you have retired from the competition?*

**IZ:** I am smiling at your question. Ever since I was very young, I kept asking myself what do I want to do when I become an adult. I still ask this question, and am still looking for new adventures, new

experiences and new possibilities.

I will continue teaching performance classes and chamber music at the Buchman-Mehta School of music, Tel Aviv University; will continue giving performance opportunities to young musicians in my lovely home, (I can have ca. 100 people- in normal non-corona times), I probably will return to playing the piano more consistently- something I did not do for quite a while, and – the best activity I dream about – I will spend much more time with my family.

One thing I know I don't want to do any more: Taking upon myself any directing position.

I established a chamber music festival in which I played and was its artistic director;

I was the General Director of the Israel Chamber Orchestra for five years; was artistic director of "Mozart Picnic" events at the Israel Festival in Jerusalem, and now I closed my service at the Rubinstein Society and Competition.

I want to enjoy the freedom and direct my curiosity to other things without the responsibility and burden of directorship.



## One great family

### Ruth Bossart talks about her years at the Géza Anda Competition

**Florian Riem:** *How did you get to the Géza Anda Competition? Géza Anda passed away 1976, three years before the first competition; did you know him personally, or did you see one of his concerts?*

**Ruth Bossart:** It was really a great coincidence related to my work in the administration of the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra. From 1977 to 1991, the orchestra had a mandate to organize the competition, and I was the lucky one who could take over this project from 1980, as part of my job. From 1991, the secretariat was reorganized, concert management was added, and the competition became independent from the orchestra.

No, I never met Géza Anda, neither in person nor as an artist on the podium. But throughout the years, he was still present in the house of his widow,

Hortense Anda- Bührle, who established our foundation. Her houses were full of music, and Géza Anda laureates always found open doors when they needed to stay overnight, and perfectly tuned Steinways when they needed to practice.

As a gracious and generous host, she always took care of Géza Anda's companions, former students and friends. Their stories made me very familiar with Géza Anda.

**FR:** *How has the competition changed during the last few years- under new leadership? And, what kind of person was Hortense Anda-Bührle? Can you still feel her "personal touch" today?*

**RB:** After Mrs. Anda's passing in May 2014, the board of the foundation was taken over by her longtime friend, Dr. Margrit Hahnloser, so her personal touch was still very much present. She was a strong, consequent and authentic woman and patron with a strong charisma. After the death of her husband, she had completely devoted herself to the support and promotion of young talent on the piano. Our laureates were all considered part of the large Anda Family.

**FR:** *Were there highlights or episodes from your time with the competition you would like to share?*

**RB:** There are countless stories, especially in connection with lucky coincidences that happened to "our" winners. Great successes and performances of our laureates in large concert halls with famous orchestras and conductors. Decades of friendship between laureates and our Zurich host families, which on their part contributed a lot for the young pianists. Every year, Géza Anda's birthdays were celebrated with house concerts-splendid evenings and receptions, which somehow seemed like from another time.

**FR:** *One thing setting your competition apart is the huge number of concerts, and the management you offer to your laureates after winning a prize. How much were you involved in the planning of these concerts and in the contact to the musicians?*

**RB:** The arrangement of winner’s concerts was a major task, especially during the years when there was no competition. Personally, I spend lots of time and most weekends every year to visit concerts, to travel and escort the pianists to their concerts, at the same time establishing a great many friendly connections to concert promoters.

**FR:** *What are your plans for the next few years? Will you stay with the competition one way or the other? Will you visit the 2021 competition?*

**RB:** I have not made any specific plans yet; I’d rather do like theologist Brigitte Becker, who recently passed away- she said: “tear up your plans, stick to miracles!” From 40 years of work, I have a great network of relationships, so I am sure I will be asked for advice for one or the other project. The 2021 Géza Anda Competition is a different thing though- if you ask me today, I won’t be following it closely- there would be too many emotions involved.

*Right: Ruth Bossart with Annelies Kaufmann, at the Bordeaux General Assembly 2005*



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**Patrick Grahl**

1st Prize, J.S. Bach Competition 2016

**An Espresso with...**  
**Yuwon Kim**

Winner, 2018 Princess Astrid International Music Competition



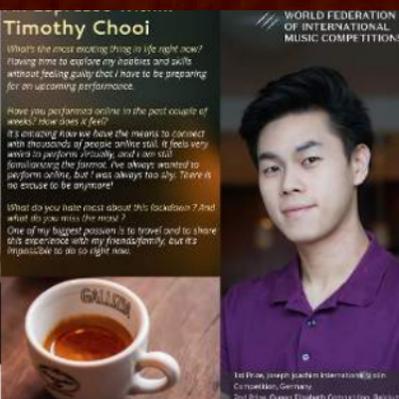
**An Espresso with...**  
**Tomoki Sakata**

Finalist, Van Cliburn Int'l. Piano Competition, Fort Worth 1st Prize, Franz Liszt Int'l. Piano Competition, Budapest



**Timothy Chooi**

1st Prize, Queen Elizabeth Competition, Belgium



**An Espresso with... Can Çakmur**

1st Prize, Harmonia Int'l. Piano Competition, 1st Prize, Scottish Int'l. Piano Competition



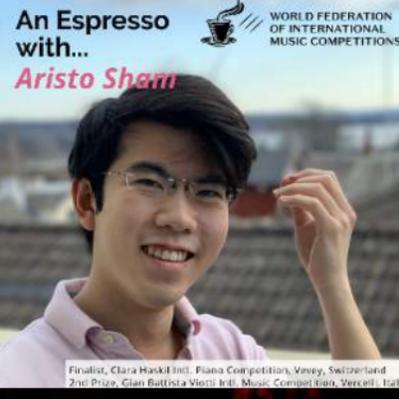
**An Espresso with... Dina Ivanova**

2nd Prize, Int'l. Franz Liszt Piano Competition, Utrecht, Netherlands Laureate, Padernewitz Int'l. Piano Competition, Bydgoszcz, Poland 2nd Prize, Weimar Int'l. Music Competition, Weimar, Germany



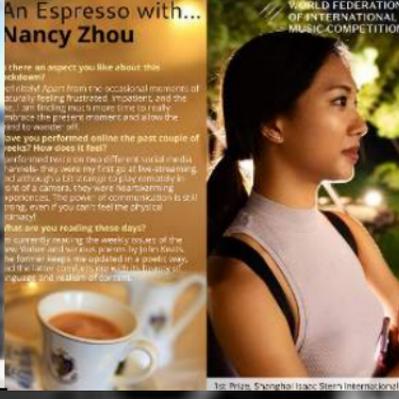
**An Espresso with... Aristo Sham**

Finalist, Clara Haskil Int'l. Piano Competition, Vevey, Switzerland 2nd Prize, Clara Buttista Vento Int'l. Music Competition, Yverdon, Italy



**An Espresso with... Nancy Zhou**

1st Prize, Chopin (Jascha Heifetz) International Competition, Germany



**An Espresso with... Jesse Flowers**

2nd Prize, Michele Pittagaga Int'l. Guitar Competition, Alessandria, Italy



**An Espresso with... Daumants Liepiņš**

1st Prize, Vitor Casas International Piano Competition, Barcelona, Spain 2nd Prize, George Enescu International Competition, Bucharest, Romania 2nd Prize, WCM James Mctiernan International Piano Competition, Manchester, UK



**An Espresso with... Mayumi Kanagawa**

1st prize, Princess Astrid Int'l. Music Competition, Trondheim, Norway 2nd and best concerto prize, Concours Long-Thibaud-Crespin, Paris, France 4th prize, Int'l. Tchaikovsky Competition, Moscow, Russia



**An Espresso with... Juan Pérez Floristán**

1st Prize, Paloma O'Shea Santander International Piano Competition, Spain



**An Espresso with... Irina Kulikova**

1st Prize, Michele Pittagaga Int'l. Guitar Competition, Alessandria, Italy



**An Espresso with... Nigel Armstrong**

4th Prize, Int'l. Tchaikovsky Competition



**An Espresso with... Alexander Ullman**

1st Prize, Paloma O'Shea Santander International Piano Competition, Spain



**An Espresso with... Mariam Batsashvili**

1st Prize, Int'l. Franz Liszt Piano Competition, 1st Prize, Netherlands Int'l. Music Competition, Weimar, Germany



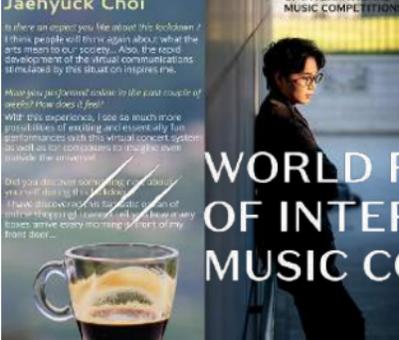
**An Espresso with... Minsoo Hong**

Winner, Paloma O'Shea Santander Int'l. Piano Competition



**An Espresso with... Jaehyuck Choi**

1st Prize, Int'l. Tchaikovsky Competition



**An Espresso with... Rovshan Mamedkuliev**

1st Prize, Paloma O'Shea Santander International Piano Competition, Spain



**An Espresso with... Dmytro Choni**

1st Prize, Paloma O'Shea Santander International Piano Competition, Spain



**An Espresso with... Dmytro Choni**

1st Prize, Paloma O'Shea Santander International Piano Competition, Spain



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