

# Views

All the latest news from the world of the piano

## AT LAST... A FRENCHMAN WINS Paris amateur piano competition

I always enjoy being on the press jury at the International Competition of Outstanding Piano Amateurs in Paris. The playing standard is generally high, and the finals venue, the Salle Gaveau, is a special place.

This year's competition, the 24th, saw five pianists make it to the finals on 24 February (all men – don't ask me why this is usually the case). Curiously, the five finalists all shared the quality of having an introverted style of playing. Even a lot of the repertoire performed, from Couperin's *Les barricades mystérieuses* to the first solemn movement of Schubert's Sonata in

A minor D784 (an odd choice for a finals performance), gave an air of calm seriousness. I found myself desperate for some powerful *fortissimos* and a strong personality or two.

However, the ultimate winner, Sylvain Carpentier, a French doctoral candidate at MIT and the Ecole Normale Supérieure Ulm, played Beethoven's Sonata opus 54, Chopin's *Fantasia* opus 49 and Rachmaninov's Prelude opus 39 no 9 with impeccably good taste. His playing was the most consistent throughout, and he thoroughly deserved the first prize. He also scooped up the press jury and the audience prizes. Psychologist Paolo Gilardi from Italy came second, the highlight of his programme being a luxurious account of Granados's *Valses poéticas*. Third place went to Jérémy Mätzener, a law student from Switzerland, who played the Liszt Sonata, quite a daring choice. He did well, but lacked the driving power needed for such a work. Portuguese pianist Nuno Maulide and Frenchman Samuel Bach were awarded joint fourth. Maulide's high point was a sparkling Scarlatti Sonata, while Bach's was the Couperin *Les barricades*.

Charismatic competition president Gérard Bekerman ran the event seamlessly, aided by a distinguished jury that included Eric Heidsieck, Michel Dalberto and Marc Laforet.

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