

COMPETITIONS, AWARDS & SIGNINGS

PARIS

Outstanding amateurs

At the 24th International Competition for Outstanding Amateur Pianists, held in the last week of February in Paris, all five finalists were European and all three prizes – public, jury and press – went to Parisian Sylvain Carpentier (*pictured*), a young mathematician with a doctorate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In any competition the choice of repertoire, where it is a free choice, can be a crucial tactic towards victory – so too what you wear, and here the Italian Paolo Gilardi paraded forth at four in the afternoon in very professional natty tails, wiping the keyboard with a white hanky, all of which would have made Pollini seem down-and-out. The others wore open shirts. As for repertoire, Carpentier played Beethoven's Sonata Op 54, the Chopin Fantaisie and a Rachmaninov Etude.



The Liszt Sonata may make an obvious choice for overall showing off but it does require half an hour's steady devotion to detail, consistency and strategy, a tough ask for the amateur even at this level. Jeremy Mätzener, a Swiss law student, deserving better, took third prize with a finely calibrated, cleverly paced account.

Nuno Maulide, a chemist at the Max Planck Institute, who shared fourth place, kept the audience on side with performances of Scarlatti and Bach-Liszt that were slightly contrived and jinxed: when he bounced from the seat he had

in fact already played the note whose resonance we were to assume had come from this flourish (this is, of course, a variant on the what-to-wear tactic).

No such antics for Samuel Bach, however, who took a repertoire gamble and then some: the first movement of Schubert's unforgivingly aporetic A minor Sonata D784. The physical translucency of the writing gives us a lake's water in which we see all the more clearly within our own reflection. The brinkmanship of choosing this for a competition final was surpassed by the exceptional, almost ecstatic realisation of every glimmer of dread and resolve the music explores, at a mesmerising, gentle tempo, without breaking the water's surface. Bach achieved what I recall was once written of Clifford Curzon in D960, a 'tempo beyond tempo', and the performance took me back to Sviatoslav Richter in the late 1970s – missing only Richter's uncannily Russian bell lilt in the prime theme. It was reassuring that though Bach only shared fourth place, Gérard Bekerman, founder and president of the competition, awarded him the inaugural prize in memory of the Romanian-born Flora Stafford, who died this year in her 103rd year – a stalwart, legendary supporter of an event that can never have heard greater musical insight than this.

Jonathon Brown

Carpentier will give a recital on 19 June in the church of Saint-Germain-des-Près in Paris

US

USASU winners

American pianist Eric Zuber, a graduate of the Juilliard School, has won first prize at the annual Bösendorfer and Yamaha USASU International Piano Competition, hosted by the ASU School of Music in collaboration with the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, the Arizona Young Artist Committee, Bösendorfer, Yamaha and the Arizona Piano Gallery.

South Korean pianist Jaekyung Yoo, from the Royal Northern College of

Music in the UK, won second prize, and third prize went to American Lindsay Garritson, a graduate of Yale University.



The competition, which took place from 6 to 13 January in Tempe, Arizona, attracted 146 applications. Yoo said: 'This particular competition was special because the legendary pianist Martha Argerich [*pictured, with Yoo*] was on the jury, and what made it even more memorable was that she gave me compliments on my first round performance of Ravel's *Scarbo*. Argerich's recording of *Scarbo* has been my favourite since I was little, so I was incredibly happy to hear her comments.'

GERMANY

Daniil Trifonov signs to DG

Russian piano sensation Daniil Trifonov has announced a new recording partnership with the Deutsche Grammophon label. Described by the *Washington Post* as 'an heir to Liszt', the 22-year-old won the Grand Prix, First Prize and Gold Medal in the 14th International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow in 2011. Martha Argerich has commented that: 'He has everything – and more. What he does with his hands is technically incredible. It's also his touch – he has tenderness and also the demonic element. I never heard anything like that.'

Daniil Trifonov's debut album on Deutsche Grammophon is set for global release later this year