

# News

All the latest news from the world of the piano



## Fantastique finalists at Paris amateur competition

They're called amateurs, but the five so-called amateur pianists battling for first prize at this year's Concours des Grands Amateurs de Piano on 15 March at the Grand Amphitheatre of the University of Assas in Paris played at a nearly professional level. I have attended many of this competition's finals as a member of the press jury, and this was the highest standard yet.

The most outstanding finalists were Michael Slavin, an ophthalmologist from the USA, Eric Rouach, an estate agent from Israel, and Samuel Bach, a doctoral student in mathematics from France. Slavin entranced with an intimate but intelligent Ravel *Le tombeau de Couperin*, Rouach brought the house down with a driven and convincing Liszt Sonata and Bach brought gorgeous singing tone and inner calm to Schubert's Sonata D959.

Choosing the winners was not easy for those of us on the press jury nor could it have been for the main jury, which included Marc Laforet, Michel Dalberto, Reiko Nakaoki, Marc André and Bruno Rigutto. After a short deliberation, the jury awarded Slavin and Bach joint first prize, with Rouach given second prize. Third prize was another tie, going to the remaining two finalists: Oliver Korber, an investment banker from France, and Johannes Gaechter, a computer programmer from Germany. Rouach won the press jury prize, and he shared the audience prize with Bach.

The winners get to share the \$3,000 prize, plus each will perform with an orchestra this autumn. About 100 contestants from over 29 countries entered this year's competition, or rather an 'anti-competition', as the president Gérard Bekerman calls it. It was founded in 1989, and continues to be one of the most popular amateur piano competitions.

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