

## *The First International Frédéric Chopin Competition on Period Instruments*



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Early last month (September 2<sup>nd</sup> to September 14<sup>th</sup>) the Frédéric Chopin Institute in Warsaw, Poland held the first international Chopin competition on period instruments. The phrase “period instruments” refers to a restored Pleyel, Erard, and Broadwood piano from Chopin’s time (around 1840) for the contestants to perform on. Our present manufacture of pianos create fairly sturdy instruments under a great amount of tension allowed for by the strength of the large cast iron plate. Historical instruments, such as the ones used for this competition, are far more delicate and require a different playing style, a lighter touch. Anything too harsh and the piano will not sound good and the action may break. Liszt, a pianist from the same time period, was known for his “strong” playing and had a few other pianos on reserve during his performances, just in case he used one up before the concert was finished. The winner of the competition, Tomasz Ritter of Poland, explains his experience with the Pleyel grand used for the event in this article from the New York Times:

<https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2018/09/21/world/europe/ap-eu-poland-chopin-contest-winner.html>



Out of 30 contestants, first place was Tomasz Ritter of Poland, Naruhiko Kawaguci of Japan and Aleksandar Swigut of Poland won second place, and Krzysztof Ksiazek of Poland won third place and the special prize of best performed Mazurkas. I strongly suggest going to the Frédéric Chopin Institute's website to watch some or all of the performances. Here is a link to the videos [http://iccpi.eu/en/iccpi/multimedia\\_videos](http://iccpi.eu/en/iccpi/multimedia_videos)

The next competition on period instruments is set for 2023. This gives us all a little time to plan a trip to Poland to see the competition live. I hope I'll be able to attend!

You cannot use force, so you cannot produce a strong fortissimo, it does not sound well, but their advantage is that in the pianissimo (soft sections) and in the dark (parts of the music), they are very interesting, they have a very wide gamut of colors.

-Tomasz Ritter

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