

17. THE LIA OXINOIT NATIONAL YOUNG PIANISTS' COMPETITION: CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL PIANISTIC PERFORMANCE TRADITION

Inna Hatipova⁷⁵

Abstract: *This article focuses on the Lia Oxinoit National Young Pianists' Competition, held in the Republic of Moldova, whose first edition launched in 2023. The prominent personality of pianist and professor Lia Oxinoit, along with her impact on the art of piano performance in the Republic of Moldova, inspired the author—a former student of the professor—to initiate this project. The competition invites all students from artistic educational institutions across the country and aims to promote young talent, preserve national values by including works of Moldovan composers in the competition programs, and maintain and elevate the national pianistic performance tradition. The author details various organizational aspects, such as age categories, the number of participants, final results, and the repertoire. The high interest from teachers and pianists in the first edition highlights the importance of timely organization for this event and the need to continue the development of the initiated project.*

Key words: *Lia Oxinoit, national composers, performing art, piano pieces, young pianists' competition*

1. Introduction

Piano competitions represent a significant and inseparable component of artistic life, both globally and at national or local levels. "The very emergence of this artistic phenomenon is owed to pianist and composer Anton Rubinstein. The International Piano Competition he established in 1890, which bore his name, was held five consecutive times at five-year intervals. The sixth edition was interrupted by the outbreak of World War I in 1914,"⁷⁶ recounts M. Trushechkin, a professor at the Gnessin College of Music (translated by I. Hatipova). The revival of organizing international piano competitions was marked by the F. Chopin Competition in Warsaw, founded in 1927. Soon, this initiative was adopted by virtually all civilized countries of the world.

In 1933, the first F. Liszt competition took place in Budapest; in 1943, the first edition of the Long-Thibaud competition was held in Paris; in 1948, the F. Busoni competition occurred in Bolzano; in 1950, the Gian Battista Viotti piano competition took place in Vercelli. That same year, the J. S. Bach competition in Leipzig was held, followed by the Queen Elisabeth competition in Brussels in 1951, the R. Schumann competition in Zwickau in 1956, and the P. I. Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow in 1958, among others. It is challenging to present an exhaustive list, even of the most significant competitions. The Alink-Argerich Foundation, an international information center for musicians, lists over a thousand piano competitions. Over time, some competitions appeared while others disappeared, but the trend remained consistent and undeniable: competitions

⁷⁵ Professor PhD., Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts, Chişinău, Republic of Moldavia, email: hatipovainna@yahoo.com, ID ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2745-7978>

⁷⁶ Trushechkin, M., 2018, *Mezhdunarodnyj konkurs molodyh pianistov imeni S.V.Rahmaninova. Pervyj konkurs, 2018. Stat'ya o konkurse Trushechkina M.P.* [International Competition for Young Pianists Named After S.V. Rachmaninoff]

increasingly became integral to the global cultural scene. Winning a prestigious international competition opened the door for young performers to major concert stages and the elite circles of pianism.

2. Discussions

The significant growth of these events, particularly in the second half of the 20th century, can be attributed not only to the musical characteristics of the era but also to sociological factors, including the development of mass communication and, to some extent, the commercialization of culture. Today, a controversial opinion often arises in the musical world that the standards set by performance competitions in recent decades lead to the uniformity and depersonalization of interpretative styles. One thing is certain: competitions have long become a reality that significantly influences the directions of contemporary interpretative styles.

Regarding competitions for beginner pianists, these also play a crucial role in nurturing and developing interpretative skills from a young age. Such creative competitions foster discipline, stage resilience, technical mastery, artistry, individuality, and other qualities that shape and strengthen a musician's future. Participating in such events makes a child more disciplined, conscientious, and motivated to assume responsibility. Any instrumental performance competition for children provides an opportunity to perform before an audience and jury, learn new things during the process, achieve higher levels of mastery, and possibly gain a relevant opportunity for their artistic future. Of course, the latter is especially true for high-level competitions, a fact that is underlined by V. A. Ginsburgh and Jan C. van Ours⁷⁷.

As noted by N. Tsyganova, "Competition practice is characterized by a complex set of objectives. One of these is the development of students, where competition performance becomes the result of a certain stage of collaboration between student and teacher—a highly valuable indicator of its quality."⁷⁸ Participation in competitions always entails a demanding workload. Preparing for and participating in a competition compels both teacher and student to work more intensively and diligently, which inevitably improves the student's performance quality and sometimes even the teacher's skills.

According to Moldovan pianist and educator E. Gupalova, "In Moldova, the organization of music performance competitions began in 1963 with the First Republican Competition of Young Performers, followed by the Zonal Competition in 1966, both held in the capital of the Moldavian SSR, Chişinău."⁷⁹ These early events were intended for students, but children's competitions only emerged in the early 1990s, after the dissolution of the USSR. It was then that the so-called national competitions were first established. In 1993, the Young Pianists' Competition was held for the first time in an independent Moldova.

A year later, in 1994, the Eugen Coca National Competition for Young

⁷⁷ Ginsburgh, V., Ours, J., 2003, *Expert Opinion and Compensation: Evidence from a Musical Competition*, in *American Economic Review*, 93, p. 289–296

⁷⁸ Tsyganova, N., 2023, *Uchastie v muzykal'nyh konkursah kak sredstvo razvitiya tvorcheskogo potentsiala mladshogo shkol'nika*, p.17

⁷⁹ Gupalova, E., 2009, *Process formirovaniya otechestvennogo pianisticheskogo repertuara v Respublike Moldova vo vtoroj polovine XX veka (40 – 60-e gg.)* p. 156

Performers (now the Eugen Coca International Competition for Young Performers) was founded, which celebrated its 30th edition in 2024. Subsequently, other significant and enduring competitions appeared in the country's musical-academic world, such as the A. Lucinschi National Competition for Young Performers, which reached its 16th edition in 2023, the Ignacy Paderewski Pianists' Competition, which held its 13th edition in November this year, and the Zlata Tcaci International Competition for Young Performers. The latter ceased its activities indefinitely after its 20th edition in 2019.

In 2023, a new competition for young pianists from the Republic of Moldova was established. The first edition of the Lia Oxinoit National Young Pianists' Competition, held on December 23 at the C. Porumbescu Republican Music Lyceum in Chişinău, stood out as a remarkable initiative in Moldova's cultural and artistic landscape. The event, conceived and organized by Inna Hatipova, a disciple of Professor Lia Oxinoit and the author of this article, aimed to keep alive the memory of the remarkable pianist and teacher while providing a platform for young pianists to shine.

Born in 1921, Lia Oxinoit began studying piano under the guidance of her mother, pianist Anna Oxinoit. Her piano teachers included Lidia Volskaia (Chişinău), Aurelia Cionca-Pipo (Bucharest), and Alexandr Sokovnin, head of the Special Piano Department at the State Conservatory of Chişinău. From 1944 to 1949, Lia Oxinoit pursued her higher education under Sokovnin and became his first graduate.

In 1948, Lia Oxinoit began her teaching career as a piano instructor at the E. Coca Special High Boarding School of Music (now the C. Porumbescu Republican Music Lyceum), where she worked until 2002. She became head of the Piano Section of the institution in 1989. As a teacher, Lia Oxinoit trained a generation of concert pianists, pedagogues, and concertmasters who continue to promote her professional principles. Among her notable students are Raisa Bârliba, Angela Beleaeva, Aurelia Bufteac-Simion, Ludmila Ferroni, Inna Hatipova, Larisa Jar, Margareta Lucaţcaia, Angela Neaga, Natalia Ostaşco, Iulia Rivilis, Larisa Sadovniceaia, Irina Stolear, and Tatiana and Vitalii Şalin. Many of her students now reside and work successfully abroad, including Angela Neaga, Larisa Sadovniceaia, Larisa Soboleva, Maria Sumareva (USA), Alexei Gulenco (Canada), Victoria Spinei (Romania), Tatiana Ştiuca, Elena Macagon (France), Irina and Svetlana Ianceva (Bulgaria), and Irina Bivol (Germany).

3. Results

The Lia Oxinoit National Young Pianists' Competition is open to all students enrolled in artistic education institutions in Moldova. Its goal is to promote young talent in the country while preserving national values by including the legacy of local composers in the competition repertoire, thereby maintaining and enhancing the level of piano performance tradition.

The competition was structured into six categories, ranging from beginner students to those enrolled in higher education artistic institutions. This structure ensured fair evaluation by grouping participants according to years of study rather than age. The categories were divided as follows: Category A – students in their first

or second year of study; Category B – students in their third or fourth year; Category C – students in their fifth to seventh year; Category D – eighth and ninth-grade students; Category E – tenth to twelfth-grade students or first to fourth-year college students; and Category F – first- and second-year students of higher education institutions.

The competition program required participants to perform two pieces: one of their choice and one from the national composers' repertoire. Performance durations varied by category, with Category A allotted 3-5 minutes, Category B – 4–7 minutes, Category C – 7–10 minutes, Category D – 10–13 minutes, and Categories E and F – 13–18 minutes.

To achieve the objective of promoting the interpretation of national composers' repertoire by young pianists, the selected works performed during the competition included pieces such as *Bătută from Briceni* in D Major (folk melody, trans. I. Stolear); C.-P. Basacopol: *Rondo Op. 2*; V. Beleaev: *Fairy of Dreams*; Gh. Burada: *Pathetic Story*; N. Chilf: *Playing Blind Man's Bluff*; P. Constantinescu: *Song*; E. Doga: *Friday Evening*; T. Dumitrescu: *Prelude in C-sharp Minor*; G. Enescu: *Prelude from the Suite in the Old Style Op. 3*; D. Gherșfeld: *Moldovan Dance* in D Major; L. Gurov: *Sad Song*; S. Lobel: *Dance, The Little Forest, Fairy Tale, Do You Remember*; S. Lungul: *Prelude in D Minor*; C. Miculi: *Hora in Moldova* in F-sharp Minor; V. Mosiiciuc: *Storm*; A. Mulear: *Humoresque*; Gh. Mustea: *Melody*; Gh. Neaga: *Prelude*; Șt. Neaga: *The Rose Waltz*; O. Negruța: *Meditation, Melody, Fairy Tale, Prelude, Waltz*; S. Pîslari: *Three Musical Portraits*; V. Rotaru: *Dance of the Elders, Humoresque, The Game of the Elders, Ostinato*; A. Stârcea: *Prelude in A-flat Major, Vocalise* (trans. A. Sokovnin); G. Șorban: *Danse Roumaine*; O. Tarasenco: *Plow, Humorous Song* in G Major, *The Plowmen's Dance*; Iu. Țibulschi: *An Evening Tale, Waltz-Rondo Margareta* in C Major.

The first edition of the competition brought together a total of 46 young pianists from 13 artistic educational institutions across six localities in the country, representing various levels of musical training:

a) Higher education institutions:

- Academy of Music, Theatre, and Fine Arts, Chișinău
- A. G. Rubinstein Institute of Arts, Tiraspol

b) Specialized secondary education institutions:

- Șt. Neaga Center of Excellence in Artistic Education, Chișinău

c) Music lyceums:

- C. Porumbescu Republican Music Lyceum, Chișinău
- S. Rahmaninov Republican Music Lyceum, Chișinău

d) Arts and music schools in Chișinău and other cities:

- Alexei Stârcea School of Arts, Chișinău
- Valeriu Poleacov School of Arts, Chișinău
- Eugen Doga School of Music, Chișinău
- Maria Bieșu School of Music, Chișinău
- Eugen Coca School of Arts, Soroca
- Maria Cibotari School of Music, Cahul
- Maria Bieșu School of Arts, Ștefan Vodă
- Ghenadie Ciobanu School of Music, Edineț

The considerable number of participants required the maximum involvement of not only the jury members but also the entire organizational team, who gathered their efforts to ensure the smooth running of the competition. It was hard, meticulous work, but without it, the musical celebration we experienced over the two days would not have been possible.

The competition jury was composed of prominent figures in the field: Larisa Jar, Head of the Special Piano Section at C. Porumbescu Republican Music Lyceum, Master of Art – Jury President; Inna Hatipova, pianist, Ph.D., university professor at the Academy of Music, Theatre, and Fine Arts, Master of Art – Competition Director; Paul Gamurari, composer, Chairman of the Union of Composers and Musicologists of Moldova, Ph.D., Vice-Rector at the Academy of Music, Theatre, and Fine Arts, Master of Art; Olga Iuhno, pianist, Senior Lecturer at the Academy of Music, Theatre, and Fine Arts, Master of Art; Irina Pașcan, piano teacher at C. Porumbescu Republican Music Lyceum – Secretary.

The jury deliberated through collegial discussion for each performer, rather than anonymous scoring, fostering a benevolent and trusting atmosphere. According to the jury's decision, which aimed to award all participants with diplomas, the following distinctions were granted: 7 First Degree Diplomas of Excellence with monetary prizes, 11 First Degree Diplomas, 14 Second Degree Diplomas, 11 Third Degree Diplomas, 6 Diplomas for the best interpretation of a work by a national/Romanian composer, a Special Diploma *In Memoriam Lia Oxinoit* with a monetary prize, 2 Special Prizes awarded by jury member Paul Gamurari.

All young pianists enrolled in the competition, alongside their coordinating teachers, were honored at the awards ceremony. The Gala Concert, held on December 24, 2023, featured 11 performances by participants who showcased the most outstanding progress during the competition auditions, transforming the event into a true celebration of pianistic art. Among those awarded the highest distinction—First Prize for Excellence—were Boryshneva Ekaterina and Deleu Mara Antonia in Category A, Artemenco Bogdana and Targon Simion in Category B, Pavaluca Diana in Category C, Obriște Victoria in Category D, Slobodenyuk Sofya in Category E.

The First Prize was awarded in each category as follows: Category A – Popa Dana, Surucean Ilinca; Category B – Bocancea Sofia, Braga Anastasia, Burdujan Maria, Butnaru Adelina, Leășoc Loredana; Category E – Jeciu Nicoleta, Stati Oleg, Vechiu Valeria; Category F – Zabolotnîi Dorin. The prize for the best interpretation of a national composition was awarded to: Category A – Deleu Maria Antonia, Category B – Artemenco Bogdana, Category C – Pavaluca Diana, Category D – Obriște Victoria, Category E – Slobodenyuk Sofya, Category F – Zabolotnîi Dorin.

The Lia Oxinoit Prize was granted to Slobodenyuk Sofya for artistry and remarkable performance. The event organization met the standards of a successful competition, ensuring a pleasant and comfortable experience for the young participants. The auditions were held in the Festive Hall of C. Porumbescu Republican Music Lyceum, using a Petrof grand piano. Each participant was offered an acoustic rehearsal in the hall and the opportunity to practice in the lyceum's rooms on the audition day. Video recordings of the auditions were later made publicly accessible for free to all participants.

The high professional level of the young pianists, despite the absence of a preliminary selection process, was especially appreciated by the jury and listeners. The Lia Oxinoit National Young Pianists' Competition maintains an official Facebook page⁸⁰ where interested individuals can find up-to-date information about the event, its schedule, regulations, participant lists, awards, photos from the gala concert, and video recordings.

The competition's success was made possible through collaboration among several institutions and organizations: the General Directorate of Culture and Cultural Heritage of Chişinău Municipality, C. Porumbescu Republican Music Lyceum, the Jewish Community of Moldova, the Union of Composers and Musicologists of the Republic of Moldova, the Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts, the *Art & Music* Musical Instruments Store, musicians, and cultural figures who offered financial support independently.

The educational benefits of the competition include developing interpretive skills by enhancing motivation for in-depth study during preparation for public performances. The strengthening of stage presence and public performance abilities is among the long-term positive outcomes for students participating in such events. From a cultural perspective, through its mandatory program featuring a work by a national composer, the competition promotes national values and cultivates interest among younger generations in national academic music. The broad participation from across the country contributes significantly to building local musical communities, motivating students to elevate their performance levels, and encouraging communication and collaboration among participating pianists and their teachers to foster professional development.

4. Conclusions

The first edition of the Lia Oxinoit National Young Pianists' Competition affirmed the importance and value of such events in the musical-academic life of Moldova. The competition successfully fostered a friendly competitive environment for young talents, encouraged the inclusion of works of national composers in student repertoires, established high-performance standards, and celebrated the legacy of the esteemed piano teacher Lia Oxinoit. The wide geographical participation and the advanced level of artistic performances confirm the competition's potential to become a significant landmark in the development of national pianistic art and performing traditions. The upcoming second edition, scheduled for December 28–29, 2024, represents a new opportunity for interested participants and a step toward ensuring the competition's continuity and prosperity over time.

References

1. Ginsburgh, V., Ours, J., 2003, *Expert Opinion and Compensation: Evidence from a Musical Competition*, in *American Economic Review*, 93, p. 289–296
2. Gupalova, E., 2009, *Process formirovaniya otechestvennogo pianisticheskogo repertuara v Respublike Moldova vo vtoroj polovine XX veka (40 – 60-e gg.)* [The Process of Forming of the National Piano Repertoire in the Republic of Moldova in

⁸⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/concursliaoixinoit/>

the Second Half of the 20th Century (1940s–1960s)], in *Studia Universitatis Moldaviae (Seria Științe Umanistice)*, 2009, 4(24), p. 154–158, 22.04.2009, Chișinău

3. Trushechkin, M., 2018, *Mezhdunarodnyj konkurs molodyh pianistov imeni S.V. Rahmaninova. Pervyj konkurs, 2018. Stat'ya o konkurse Trushechkina M.P.* [International Competition for Young Pianists Named After S.V. Rachmaninoff. The First Competition, 2018. Article About the Competition by M.P. Trushechkin], Gnessin Music College of the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music, date of access: 04.12.2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20200221153703/http://www.gnesin.ru/tvorcheskie_proekty/konkursy/rachmaninoffcompetition/2018/article

4. Tsyganova, N., 2023, *Uchastie v muzykal'nyh konkursah kak sredstvo razvitiya tvorcheskogo potenciala mladshogo shkol'nika* [Participation in Music Competitions as a Means of Developing the Creative Potential of Younger Schoolchildren], in «*Dialog o budushchem*». *Materialy XVI mezhregional'noj nauchno-prakticheskoy konferencii «Rol' koncertno-konkursnoj deyatel'nosti v razviti, obuchenii i vospitanii uchashchihsya DSHI»* ["Dialogue on the Future". Materials of the XVI Interregional Scientific and Practical Conference "The Role of Concert and Competition Activities in the Development, Training and Education of Art School Students"], p. 16–18, 2023, Ulianovsk