

05 / 2024

## The ZF Music Prize: a springboard for international careers

### Six musicians from six nations in competition for the 2024 ZF Music Prize

June 2 is the scheduled date, so just a few days to go. Then six multi-award-winning musicians from six nations are set to take up the challenge and compete in the piano competition for the 2024 ZF-Music Prize, in its eleventh instalment: Sophie Druml from Austria, Roman Fediurko from Ukraine, Julian Gast from Germany, Jacopo Giovannini from Italy, Seonghyeon Leem from South Korea and Muzi Li from China.

The piano competition for the ZF Music Prize has proved to be an important stepping stone along the path to an international career. Past winners include such renowned piano virtuosos as Herbert Schuch (2004), Alexej Gorlatch (2008), Claire Huangci (2012), Aaron Pilsan (2014), Raúl da Costa (2016), Dmytro Choni (2018) and Xiaolu Zang (2022). They have gone on to confirm their exceptional prowess with first prizes at internationally renowned competitions such as the *London International Piano Competition*, the *Vienna International Beethoven Piano Competition*, the *ARD Music Competition in Munich*, the *Hamamatsu International Piano Academy Competition in Shizuoka* (Japan) and the *Allessandro Casagrande International Piano Competition* in Terni (Italy). And all have since stepped out onto the world's big stages and enjoyed international acclaim.

Herbert Schuch, winner of the 2004 ZF Music Prize, puts it in a nutshell: 'Back then, the festival proved very, very rewarding for me – being able to play with an orchestra during a festival simply cannot be taken for granted. The ZF Music Prize provided the vital spark as it were. It was to be the first of four competitions that I would go on to win.' Shaun Choo, the 2010 winner, could not agree more: 'The ZF Art Foundation played an important role in my music career. I had my first success with the ZF Music Prize and it ushered in a number of other highlights in 2010 alone. The piano festival paved the way for me to perform at various events with a wide array of orchestras.'

The close ties between the ZF Music Prize and the Young Masters Piano Festival, the opportunity to play with major orchestras at a young age and acquire both stage craft and competition experience are the mainstays that characterise the small-scale yet outstanding piano competition for the ZF Music Prize. The ZF Art Foundation has collaborated with Peter Vogel for 26 years now, with tremendous success. In 1999, the ZF Art Foundation became the main sponsor of the Young Masters Piano Festival, which was designed to enable young pianists to perform with an orchestra. In fact, the first ZF Music Prize was awarded back in 2001.

Indeed, Artistic Director Peter Vogel has been the pivotal figure, not to say the key to our success, with a keen instinct for exceptional talents and outstanding concepts, particularly well-tailored to the needs of young musicians. His international network of contacts connects the Lake Constance region with all the main music academies and international piano teachers, which is why, this year

again, several multi-award-winning musicians with very different backgrounds were invited to compete for the 2024 ZF Music Prize.

The musicians compiled their own personal programme within the framework of the literature on offer. The first concert on May 30 is to feature works by Johann Sebastian Bach and sonatas from the First Viennese School period. For the second competition concert, the four remaining participants will perform works from the period of German Romanticism and one *Neue Musik* work. At the final concert on June 2, the three finalists will again have the opportunity to showcase their virtuosity with concert *études* and one representative work from the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century.

For the second competition concert, Julian Gast has elected to play Liszt's Piano Sonata in B minor, to which he has a very special affinity. 'I fell madly in love with this piece already as a young boy. So performing it always means a great deal to me. By the same token, it's always a special challenge, both artistically and technically.' Austria's Sophie Druml also hopes to make it through to the final as Claude Debussy's *Images Oubliées* – her chosen piece for the final concert – is one that is particularly close to her heart: 'It's a little known yet beautiful work, and I was introduced to it by my professor Jacques Rouvier.' For Seonghyeon Leem, *Fantasie* could easily be the motif for the entire programme: 'Besides Beethoven's *Sonata quasi una fantasia* and Schumann's *Fantasie* my programme includes other *Fantasie* elements such as Carl Vine's *Piano Sonata No. 1* and Stravinsky's *Firebird*. I hope the audience will join me on a journey of discovery and use these *Fantasiestücke* for their own interpretations,' says the young South Korean pianist.

But of course it is up to the four-member jury to decide who makes it through the first two rounds of competition concerts to progress to the final. As in previous years, the jury will once again be chaired by Peter Vogel, Artistic Director of the ZF Music Prize. The other members of the jury are Prof. Yuka Imamine, Prof. Roland Krüger and Xiaolu Zang, winner of the 2022 ZF Music Prize. The jury will rank the finalists based on their performances in all three rounds of the competition. The award ceremony will take place right after the third competition concert.

**Press contact**

ZF ART FOUNDATION

Regina Michel

D-88038 Friedrichshafen

P +49 7541 777114

[kunststiftung@zf.com](mailto:kunststiftung@zf.com)[www.zf-kunststiftung.com](http://www.zf-kunststiftung.com)

**Press photos:**



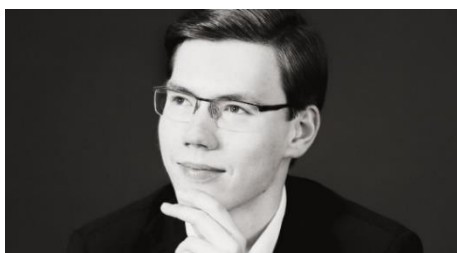
Herbert Schuch, winner of the 2004 ZF Music Prize © Felix Broede



Shaun Choo, winner of the 2010 ZF Music Prize © Gerald Chin



Sophie Druml, 2024 ZF Music Prize piano competition © Julia Wesley



Roman Fediurko, 2024 ZF Music Prize piano competition © Julia Wesley



Julian Gast, 2024 ZF Music Prize piano competition © Artist



Jacopo Giovannini, 2024 ZF Music Prize piano competition © Corinna Raupach



Seonghyeon Leem, 2024 ZF Music Prize piano competition © estro studio



Muzi Li, 2024 ZF Music Prize piano competition © Artist