

WIPAC's 17th Annual Grand Prix: A Testament to the Power of Music to "Speak to Everyone"

by [Henri Georges Polgar](#) • May 3, 2018

The performances of three remarkable pianists at the 17th Annual Winners' Grand Prix Concert of the Washington International Piano Arts Council, amplified the individuality of the art of piano performance and magnified the unique differences in tonal quality, stylistic nuances and interpretative variations of each of the pianists.

The gracious hosts of this event, HE The Ambassador of Bulgaria Tihomir Stoytchev and his wife Dr. Lubka Stoytcheva welcomed guests to the Bulgarian Embassy to hear the three prize winning artists of WIPAC's previous Piano Competitions. The concert was followed by a repast of traditional Bulgarian delicacies.

Winners of the WIPAC and Boston Competitions, Ferdy Talan, Deirbhile Brennan and Hiroaki Taniguchi captivated the audience with their performances at this year's Winners' Grand Prix with a distinct and exciting repertoire. The Chairpersons for this year's concert were Frank and Ieva O'Rourke.

In his welcoming remarks, Ambassador Stoytchev, commented that he and his wife have supported the activities of WIPAC with great pleasure for over four years. As a testament to the power of music to "speak to everyone," the Ambassador wished to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the rescue of Bulgarian Jews during World War II. Because of the activism of ordinary Bulgarian people and members of Parliament who coalesced to protest and intervene, over 20,000 Bulgarian Jewish citizens were saved from being deported outside of Bulgaria, despite the alliance of the Bulgaria government with Nazi Germany. Stated the Ambassador, "this was a story of a generation of compassion bearing witness against antisemitism, extremism, racism. This evening, we speak to everyone through music."

Mrs. Chateau Gardecki, Founder and Board Chair of WIPAC, also welcomed the audience and shared her vision on why she established the WIPAC competition in 2001. When she and her husband, John Gardecki, co-Founder of WIPAC, attended the Paris International competition, she vowed to make Washington a major venue for the finest "amateur" pianists in the world. In quoting the Ambassador of France to the US in 2001 who hosted the first WIPAC competition, the definition of the "amateur" musician is one who loves their art form, devoted to it for no other reason than for "the love of music."

Ferdy Talan, pianist originally from Indonesia now residing in the US is a poet of the piano. Known for his imaginative programming Mr. Talan chose to play the York Bowen Toccata, Opus 155, the Chopin Impromptu No.2 Opus 36, and the Liszt Ballade No. 2 in b minor S.171. York Bowen a prolific British composer and pianist, is having a revival in part thanks to performances by pianist Ferdy Talan. A work requiring extreme dexterity Mr. Talan performed the piece with immense energy. In the Chopin Impromptu, the pianist captured the somber and lyrical quality of the work, and his performance of the Liszt Ballade was equally captivating with Talan's varied tonal palette.

Following Deirbhile Brennan's performance, John Gardecki, exclaimed that her interpretation of the First Movement of the Beethoven Sonata No. 21 in C Major, Op. 53, the "Waldstein", was "totally classical." Indeed, it was a masterful interpretation. Brennan, who lives in Ireland, performed the Bach Prelude, English Suite No. 2 in a minor with great clarity and her choice of the Chopin

Polonaise Fantasie in A flat Major, revealed Ms. Brennan's talents in making such a well-known work, unique and original.

Japanese pianist Hiroaki Taniguchi is an artist of enormous energy, mesmerizing his audience with the Chopin Nocturne No. 13 and the Verdi/Liszt transcription of Miserere du Trovatore. His performance of the Liszt, Legend No.2 "St. Francois de Paul: marchant sur les flots" was received with a standing ovation.

Mr. Taniguchi shared with the audience that playing the piano has always been an important part of his life. As a young pianist in Japan he had the opportunity to meet one of the world's most acclaimed pianists, Alexis Weissenberg, who expressed his admiration of Mr. Taniguchi's artistry as a pianist and encouraged him in his artistic pursuits. Taniguchi explained that performing at the Bulgarian Embassy was very meaningful to him, as Alexis Weissenberg was from Bulgaria and he was dedicating this performance to Alexis Weissenberg.

In his introductory remarks, Michael Davidson, Esq., the new President of WIPAC, stated that these performers, who spend countless hours devoted to perfecting their craft as pianists whilst active in other professional careers, are to be lauded for their dedication.



