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I ♥ PIANO  
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山路ゆか(アンナ・マリコヴァ) 田中宣明(羽生結弦)

表紙デザイン

根津雄一

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関本昌平 反田恭平 高橋多佳子 辻井伸行 仲道郁代 久元祐子 福岡洸太郎 宮谷理香

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From 12 January in China the “Int’l Harbin Music Competition will be held, with Anna Malikova serving on the jury. A world class pianist, she has often performed and given masterclasses in Japan, fascinating music fans with the beautiful sound colours which her fingers produce. With her gentle personality and always cheerful, she makes everybody around her feel happy... We met a charming Anna Malikova.

First time this Year!

Harbin Int’l Music Competition

In the focus of the competition world

Pianist  
Special  
Interview  
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**Anna Malikova**

The pianist was born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and was educated at Central Music School and Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow. After she taught herself at Tchaikovsky Conservatory in the following years, she attracted attention as one of the upcoming pianists, winning finalist prizes at the Int’l Princess Sereia Competition in Oslo, Int’l Chopin Competition in Warsaw, Int’l Piano Competition in Sydney. In 1993 she won 1st Prize at ARD Competition in Munich - a prize which had not been awarded for a period of 12 years. Among others, she was soloist with some of the most important orchestras, like Bavarian Radio Orchestra, Cologne Radio Orchestra, National Philharmony Warsaw, Oslo Philharmonic, Northwest German Philharmony, Sydney Philharmonic, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Tokyo Philharmonic, Japan Century Orchestra, Hiroshima Symphony. In the coming years she will be busy with recitals and concerts and was recently on the jury of competitions like Chopin Competitions in Warsaw, Moscow and Asia, European Piano Competition, and others.



## About one of the biggest competitions worldwide

You are one of the jury for the 1st International Music Competition Harbin. What kind of competition is this IMCH? Could you explain its character?

It is a new competition, organized by the City of Harbin in Heilongjiang province and by Harbin Conservatory of Music. It will be one of the biggest competitions of the world, with the three sections violin, voice and piano. The Chinese do everything in grand style! It is the same with the conservatory, it is absolutely huge! I can say, that I have never before seen such a beautiful and enormous conservatory before! And it is very interesting for me to see, that it is built totally in Russian style! Do competitions have something like a “character”? I don't know. What I however know is, that my husband (he is the general secretary) is trying, like at last Tchaikovsky Competition, to organise an open, fair and transparent event. This is seemingly not so easy in China.

I've heard that you were on the jury for the selection of the contestants in August. And I think

that the results of applications have been announced. How is the atmosphere of this competition? And What do you expect the contestants to do?

For me the atmosphere during the video screening was very friendly and sympathetic – although we had really a lot of work! We tried to take our task very seriously: we listened to about 150 videos and were sitting for 4 days from morning until evening. I know, that this part of screening is not done with the same devotion at other competitions! The results have been published on the website on 1 september, even the playing order of the first round. I find this a very good idea: all contestants can plan from beforehand when they would like to arrive, for instance to avoid problems with jetlag etc.

This Competition will be held in Asia. What do you think of the Asian pianists, including Japan?

Haha, maybe it is not so important what I think, if one looks only at the facts: there are many, many pianists from Asian countries, especially from

Japan, Korea and China. Japan has a longer tradition of classical music than any other Asian country, this is visible by the intense music life of Japan, by the good musical education etc. Japan began a little earlier with this than Korea and much earlier than China. I don't think one country is "better" or "worse" than any other country, not in Asia and not in Europe.

**You yourself won 1st Prize at the ARD Competition Munich and other competitions. You also acted as judge at many famous competitions. What is a competition for you? What kind of thing it is?**

A competition is first a lot of stress, an enormous effort for everybody who prepares himself for participation. Nobody goes to a competition just for fun! It is more a technical thing: without success at competitions it is really very difficult to make yourself known and begin to work! For me I can definitely say, that the ARD helped me a lot, also Chopin Competition, but not Osly and not Sydney, where I also took part. For me as a judge today things look naturally different. If you try to be serious, it is also not much fun! It is a lot of intense work and the feeling of responsibility does not really make it easier. But I don't sit in very many competitions and don't want to belong to those who make this their "speciality".

**You are giving many masterclasses. Why? And I am sure you've been listening to many young pianists. How do you feel about the current world of piano?**



2017 December, masterclass in Hamamatsu; Anna Malikova and students



with husband Peter Grote

Yes, it is true, I am listening to many young people. During the last decades piano playing has reached a level, which – I believe – Bach and Beethoven could not imagine. There is plus and minus to that. I wonder whether it is possible to play the piano (or violin, cello,...) better than today, I think we have reached something like the peak. On the other side: true musicianship is as rare as it ever was! I want to repeat what my teacher Lev Naumov once said: "Among the very

many fabulously well playing young pianists today it becomes more and more difficult to find true musicians". I have nothing to add to this!

**How did you start the piano? How did you decide to become a pianist? Is there any episode with your teacher? What is the piano for you?**

Both my parents were pianists, so my way to the piano is not so surprising. When I was a small child, I began to imitate my mother

on the piano and she used this to make me progress, kind of like playing with me. When I was small I wanted to dance, like many kids. But she said: if you want to dance like a ballerina, you must of course be able to play the music, therefore you need a proper teacher! She tricked me out, and eventually I was accepted into the class of Tamara Popovich, at the time a famous teacher in Tashkent. My dancing plans did somehow not materialize. I did not really “decide” to become a pianist, everything in my life developed somehow naturally.

**When you are not playing the piano, how do you spend your time?**

Well, music is pretty much occupying my time. Don't forget that a musician has constantly to practice and prepare concert programs. Besides I am travelling a lot, which also costs much time and energy. But I like to read books, to meet with friends etc.

**You've been in Japan many times. Do you remember your first time? What kind of impression do you have about Japan?**

Oh, my first time in Japan was almost like a culture shock! Everything was different from what I knew before: the climate, Japanese politeness, cleanliness, organisation... For instance, to tell the truth: during my first visit I had difficulties to eat sushi and sashimi, I just could not imagine that it is possible to eat raw fish. That was more than 20 years ago. But today I love sushi! My husband and me are lucky: we live close to Düsseldorf, where there are many Japanese shops and restaurants. We especially like to buy sushi in one shop – my husband speaks Japanese and we always get a load of extra food, just because he is able to have jokes with their staff in Japanese!

**Is there any composer that you are now working on especially?**

Not really. Much depends on what I am asked to play. Usually, in Chopin years, I am asked a lot to play Chopin. But for instance I also play Scriabin and have released a set of CDs with all his sonatas for his 100th

anniversary. What I can say however is, that I am not really much “experimenting” with music – when it becomes too technical, too electronic or when “music” is written not in traditional form but looks like graphics, I have my reservations...

**Could you tell me about your future projects?**

Well, I will be in January in Harbin on the jury, but I will also play Beethoven's Choral Phantasy in the opening concert of the competition. Actually, I will only judge in the 1st round and then be replaced by Martin Engstroem of Verbier Festival: he could not come from round 1. And I can not continue after round 1, because I have to return quickly home: we are preparing a new CD recording with the piano quintets of Schumann and Shostakovich, for which I will be joined by Belenus Quartet from Switzerland. With these works we will go on tour in autumn 2018. Additionally I will be giving classes and will play



recitals and also sit in competitions in several European countries and the USA.

Is there anything you are careful about when you come on stage?

Before concerts I am trying to prepare myself well and while going out onto stage I try to concentrate. There is really not much more to do!

Please give a message to the readers of this magazine, to the piano fans in Japan.

I am always happy to be in Japan and sense that I have many friends here, especially many young pianists. This is a very nice and comfortable feeling, and I can only be grateful for such a lot of sympathy! Readers of Chopin magazine have maybe already read about me, as this is not my first interview. I greet them all and hope they will continue to love music!

### **1st International Music Competition Harbin**

2018	12 January	opening concert
	13 - 21 January	rounds 1 ~ 3
	23 - 24 January	finals
	26 January	gala & awards concert

For further informations please have a look at the website <http://www.imchr.com>

