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VOLUME I

S I P C A
2008 SYDNEY
INTERNATIONAL
PIANO
COMPETITION
OF AUSTRALIA

SOLO HIGHLIGHTS

4CD



CD1

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH 1685-1750
trscrb. FERRUCCIO BUSONI 1866-1924

- 1 **Chaconne (after Bach's Violin Partita No. 2, BWV1004)** 13'43
Takashi Sato

DOMENICO SCARLATTI 1685-1757

- 2 **Sonata in B-flat major, K545** 2'46
Balázs Fülei

DOMENICO SCARLATTI

- 3 **Sonata in D minor, K32 (Aria)** 2'32
4 **Sonata in D minor, K1** 2'43
Wojciech Wisniewski

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Partita No. 4 in D major, BWV828 [25'52]

- 5 I. Ouverture 4'50
6 II. Allemande 6'12
7 III. Courante 3'24
8 IV. Aria 2'04
9 V. Sarabande 4'36
10 VI. Menuet 1'27
11 VII. Gigue 3'16
Ran Dank

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART 1756-1791

Sonata in F major, KV533/494 [18'07]

- 12 I. Allegro 5'14
13 II. Andante 6'44
14 III. Rondeau. Allegro 6'04
Konstantin Shamray

JOSEPH HAYDN 1732-1809

Sonata No. 50 in C major, Hob.XVI:50

- 15 I. Allegro [12'41] 5'24
16 II. Adagio 4'55
17 III. Allegro molto 2'19
Yoon Soo Rhee

Total Playing Time 79'02

CD2

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN 1810-1849

- 1 **Barcarolle in F-sharp major, Op. 60** 8'54
Takashi Sato

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

- 2 **Andante spianato, Op. 22** 4'18
3 **Grande polonaise brillante, Op. 22** 8'29
Eric Zuber

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

- 4 **Etude in A minor, Op. 10 No. 2 'Chromatic'** 1'11
Daniil Tsvetkov

FRANZ LISZT 1811-1886

- 5 **Paganini Etude No. 3 'La Campanella'** 4'24
Charlie Albright

ROGER SMALLEY b. 1943

- 6 **Morceau de concours** 5'49
Tomoki Kitamura

ANDREW FORD b. 1957

- 7 **Thin Air** 5'03
Daniil Tsvetkov

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH 1906-1975

24 Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87 [6'24]

- 8 No. 2 in A minor 2'20
9 No. 15 in D-flat major 4'04
Mariangela Vacatello

GIAN CARLO MENOTTI 1911-2007

Ricercare and Toccata on a theme from 'The Old Maid and the Thief' [7'03]

- 10 Ricercare 4'03
11 Toccata 3'00
Charlie Albright

SERGEI TANEYEV 1856-1915

- 12 **Prelude and Fugue in G-sharp minor, Op. 29** 7'55
Konstantin Shamray

SERGEI PROKOFIEV 1891-1953

Sarcasms, Op. 17 [11'43]

- 13 I. Tempestoso 1'49
14 II. Allegro rubato 1'26
15 III. Allegro precipitato 1'56
16 IV. Smanioso 2'49
17 V. Precipitosissimo 3'42
Fernando Altamura

NIKOLAI KAPUSTIN b. 1937

- 18 **Intermezzo, from Eight Concert Etudes, Op. 40** 4'11
Tatiana Kolesova

Total Playing Time 76'35

CD3

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN 1770-1827

Sonata in A major, Op. 101 [18'17]

- 1 I. Allegretto ma non troppo 3'39
2 II. Vivace alla marcia 5'35
3 III. Adagio, ma non troppo, con affetto 3'05
4 IV. Allegro 5'58
Charlie Albright

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Sonata in B-flat major, Op. 106 'Hammerklavier'

- 5 I. Allegro 9'28
Konstantin Shamray

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF 1873-1943

Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 36 [19'08]

- 6 Allegro agitato 7'45
7 Non allegro – Lento 6'10
8 L'istesso tempo – Allegro molto 5'12
Ran Dank

ALEXANDER Scriabin 1872-1915

- 9 **Sonata Op. 68, No. 9 'Black Mass'** 7'52
Ran Dank

MAURICE RAVEL 1875-1937

- 10 **La Valse** 10'52
David Fung

FRANZ LISZT

- 11 **Spanish Rhapsody** 12'44
Eric Zuber

Total Playing Time 78'56

	ROBERT SCHUMANN 1810-1856 arr. LISZT	
1	Widmung (Dedication)	3'28
	<i>Takashi Sato</i>	
	FELIX MENDELSSOHN 1809-1847	
	Songs without Words	[5'42]
2	Op. 19 No. 1	3'49
3	Op. 67 No. 2	1'52
	<i>Xun Wang</i>	
	JEAN SIBELIUS 1865-1957	
4	Sonnet, Op. 94 No. 3, from Six Pieces	3'12
	<i>Tomoki Kitamura</i>	
	CLAUDE DEBUSSY 1862-1918	
5	No. 12 'Feux d'artifice' (Fireworks) from Préludes, Book II	4'45
	<i>Ran Dank</i>	
	PIERRE BOULEZ b. 1925	
	12 Notations pour piano	[8'36]
6	Fantastique – Modéré	0'51
7	Très vif	0'22
8	Assez lent	0'45
9	Rythmique	0'27
10	Doux et improvisé	0'51
11	Rapide	0'25
12	Hiératique	0'52
13	Modéré jusqu'à très vif	0'46
14	Lointain – Calme	1'27
15	Mécanique et très sec	0'19
16	Scintillant	0'29
17	Lent – Puissant et âpre	1'01
	<i>Ran Dank</i>	

	FRANCIS POULENC 1899-1963	
18	Presto in B-flat major	1'26
	<i>Takashi Sato</i>	
	IGOR STRAVINSKY 1882-1971	
	Three Pieces from Petrushka	[15'14]
19	Russian Dance	2'29
20	Petrushka's Room	4'15
21	The Shrovetide Fair	8'30
	<i>Tatiana Kolesova</i>	
	FRANZ LISZT	
22	Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6	6'28
	<i>Xun Wang</i>	
	ANDREI SCHULZ-EVLER 1852-1905	
23	Concert Arabesques on Johann Strauss the Younger's 'On the Beautiful Blue Danube'	6'45
	<i>Hoang Pham</i>	
	FRANZ LISZT	
24	Isoldes Liebestod, S.447 (Isolde's Love-Death, after Wagner's Tristan und Isolde)	7'20
	<i>Konstantin Shamray</i>	
	JOHANNES BRAHMS 1833-1897	
25	Paganini Variations, Op. 35 Book II	10'36
	<i>Yoon Soo Rhee</i>	
	Total Playing Time	74'43

Followers of the Sydney International Piano Competition marvel at the wealth of repertoire that is performed. Thanks to the rigorous but all-encompassing guidelines, each pianist plays a minimum of 40 minutes of music over the first two stages, with much latitude for creative programming. Those who progress to the Grand Finals perform a further 90 minutes of solo music, as well as trios and concertos. The results of such diversity are wonderfully displayed in this 4CD set of solo highlights: just over five hours of pianistic ecstasy, captured at the York Theatre of the University of Sydney's Seymour Centre. Performances by all six finalists and ten other pianists have been included, showcasing their wares on Steinway, Yamaha and Shigeru Kawai grands.

Each CD has a mini-theme of its own, be it a journey from the Baroque to the Classical era; Romantic and Neoclassical studies; great sonatas and showstoppers; or miniatures and outrageous transcriptions. Each could be sampled on its own. When heard in succession (and excesses of this kind should never be resisted), a fuller picture may be discerned – the class of SIPCA 2008 was indeed an extraordinary collection of musicians.

CD1 *From Baroque to Classical*

During SIPCA 2008 a substantial audience greeted each pianist in the black box that is the York Theatre. Other than errant phones going off (out of forgetfulness rather than malice), and bronchial coughs, each performance was imbued with rapt attention. Whenever there was a superlative reading of a given work, foyer raves and discussions were rife. Listeners around the world, including audience members with headphones, heard veteran piano pedagogue Gerard Willems on ABC Classic FM as he commented on each pianist. Whether they agreed or disagreed, every listener had an opinion; there were over 300 self-appointed judges in attendance.

'Well-schooled' was a term Willems used regularly as a mark of high praise, and there was no better representative than Takashi Sato, the 24-year-old Japanese studying in Hanover, Germany. His reading of the **Bach-Busoni Chaconne** (CD1 [1]), which opens this collection, was brilliantly accurate and polished to a fine lustre. The Italian pianist-composer Ferruccio Busoni took the final movement from Bach's Violin Partita No. 2 in D minor BWV1004, a set of very compact variations, and made it his own through his arrangement for keyboard. With richly augmented harmonies, flying arpeggios and flurries of octaves, the work stands as a supreme achievement in the art of transcription.

The 555 or so keyboard sonatas of **Domenico Scarlatti** translate brilliantly into gems on the piano. Composed mostly when the Italian composer was in service to the royal family in Spain, these miniatures traverse a wide range of moods and colours. Whether performed singly or in groups, they never fail to entrance and delight. The Hungarian Balázs Fülei performed the mercurial Sonata in B-flat major (CD1 [2]) with crystal-clear articulation. The Polish-Australian Wojciech Wisniewski played two widely contrasting Sonatas in D minor: the Aria K32 (CD1 [3]) sang with barely contained grief, whereas K1 (CD1 [4]) displayed a stunning staccato technique. ‘*Vivi felice!*’ (Live well!), wrote Scarlatti at the end of his volume of sonatas.

By Stage III of the competition, the 26-year-old Israeli Ran Dank had established himself as a front-runner. The generous amount of playing time accorded him on these four discs is a testament to his wide-ranging prowess. Pride of place goes to his reading in Stage IV of **Bach’s** Partita No. 4 (CD1 [5]-[11]): all seven movements of it. Here is playing of highest refinement, far removed from Bach’s description of his Six Partitas as *Clavierübung*, mere utilitarian ‘keyboard exercises’.

The Classical sonata form came into its own in the mid-18th century with Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. **Haydn** wrote over

50 sonatas, of which the Sonata No. 50 (CD1 [15]-[17]) is a happy marriage of form and humour. Its finale, with its deliberate ‘wrong note’ excursions and *faux*-stuttering, was captured with alacrity by the Korean Yoon Soo Rhee, winner of the Haydn sonata prize. **Mozart** refined the sonata form into a vehicle for greater lyrical expression and virtuosity. The Sonata in F major (CD1 [12]-[14]) was a hybrid of two separate works, brought together in a seamless way that could only have been achieved by Mozart. It received a performance of balanced beauty and clear-headed objectivity from Konstantin Shamray, winner of the Mozart prize and eventual overall winner of SIPCA 2008.

CD2 *Studies, Romantics and Beyond*

Early rounds of piano competitions inevitably produce a surfeit of *études* – ‘studies’ to demonstrate the technical capabilities of instrumentalists – and SIPCA 2008 was no different. It yielded six performances of **Chopin’s** first Etude (Op. 10 No. 1) and four of his ‘Winter Wind’ Etude (Op. 25 No. 11). Out of this storm of arpeggios flew Kazakhstani Daniil Tsvetkov in the ‘Chromatic’ Etude (CD2 [4]), like a wind-caressed feather. Tossed off with such nonchalant ease, this effort won for him the Stage I Etude prize.

Yet more studies emanated from the fingers of 20-year-old American Charlie Albright, who offered not one but four etudes in Stage I, including his clear-as-a-bell account of **Liszt’s** transcription ‘La Campanella’ (CD2 [5]), adapted from the finale of Paganini’s Second Violin Concerto. Albright went on to play ten etudes from Chopin’s Op. 25 set over the course of four stages, and also a further etude-like work from American composer **Gian Carlo Menotti**. The Ricercare and Toccata (CD2 [10]-[11]), his only piano work, was based on a theme from the one-act opera *The Old Maid and the Thief*. A quasi-Shostakovich theme and Bach-like counterpoint were merely the prelude to an exhilaratingly precise finale.

Since 2000, for each edition of SIPCA two Australian composers have been commissioned

to write *morceaux de concours* (a French veneer for mere English ‘competition pieces’). *Morceau de concours* was the exact title of **Roger Smalley’s** contribution (CD2 [6]), which covered a panoply of technical devices to virtuosic effect. In contrast, **Andrew Ford’s** *Thin Air* (CD2 [7]) had fewer notes but relied on the contrast of sound and colour. From the 20 quarter-finalists in Stage III, there were 12 readings of Smalley and eight of Ford. The 17-year-old Japanese Tomoki Kitamura, who played the Smalley, was judged to have been the best interpreter of an Australian work. Daniil Tsvetkov is featured here as Andrew Ford’s favourite interpreter of his piece.

Popular Romantic repertoire loomed large in almost every pianist’s program and there were several lovely performances of **Chopin’s** music. Takashi Sato, who won the Chopin prize, applied the Midas touch to the Barcarolle in F-sharp major (CD2 [1]). His lyrical line smiled like a Venetian gondolier in love and the filigree in the final pages was gilded. The American Eric Zuber exuded a wholesome, big-hearted sound with musical gestures to match in every work he touched, such as the nocturne-like *Andante spianato* followed by a *Grande polonaise brillante* romp (CD2 [2]-[3]).

Russian repertoire also had superb showings, not necessarily by Russian pianists. The Italian Mariangela Vacatello won over the audience with two varied **Shostakovich** Preludes and Fugues

(CD2 [8]-[9]). These were among 24 written for Tatiana Nikolayeva after her triumph at the 1950 Leipzig Bach Competition. No. 2 in A major contrasted limpid, flowing lines in the Prelude with a jaunty, jumpy Fugue. The madcap waltz Prelude of No. 15 in D-flat major set off the near-atonal Fugue. Not to be outdone, Konstantin Shamray's reading of **Sergei Taneyev's** Prelude and Fugue in G-sharp minor (CD2 [12]) was the proverbial finger-twister, something from the torture chamber of the Moscow Conservatory, where Taneyev (Tchaikovsky's favourite student) became professor of composition to the likes of Rachmaninoff, Scriabin and Medtner.

Only in a competition would one encounter two performances of **Prokofiev's** *Sarcasms* in the space of one afternoon. Italian Fernando Altamura offered a sharply delineated and no-holds-barred outing (CD2 [16]-[17]). This was the *enfant terrible* of Russian composition's rudest 12 minutes of grotesquerie and vitriol, aimed at St Petersburg's conservative establishment.

This disc of studies, toccatas and fugues closes with something extraordinary: the Russian Tatiana Kolesova lounging around in Ukrainian jazz sensation **Nikolai Kapustin's** Intermezzo (CD2 [18]), the seventh of his Eight Concert Etudes Op. 40. Beginning innocuously enough, the feeling of insouciance and *ennui* soon gives way to roudades of thirds and a Broadway show-tune grandstand finish.

CD3 *Great Sonatas and Showstoppers*

Unusually, two semi-finalists chose to perform **Beethoven's** monumental 'Hammerklavier' Sonata. Konstantin Shamray's masterly performance won the Beethoven prize. His was a solid, granite-like view of this late work, culminating in the massive fugal finale. Time permits only for the first movement (CD3 [5]) to be heard here. The marking *Allegro* does not quite convey the headlong rush of chords that opens the work, a moment of pianistic *bravura*.

Beethoven's Sonata in A major (CD3 [1]-[4]) is heard here in its entirety, performed by Charlie Albright. The first movement's wistful opening theme is echoed in a nostalgic return leading into the triumphant fugal finale.

Ran Dank is further represented in this collection by two Russian sonatas. Sergei Rachmaninoff and Alexander Scriabin were classmates in Moscow, but their paths diverged. Rachmaninoff spent his time composing, performing on the piano and conducting; he ended his days in sunny Beverly Hills. Scriabin grew increasingly mystical and mysterious, exploring Theosophy, and writing works of extreme sensuousness and psychedelic inspiration.

Rachmaninoff's Second Sonata (CD3 [6]-[8]) is the archetypal competition warhorse, with lots of sound, fury and bell-tones; and, if performed well, usually signifying a place in the next round.

Dank gave a passionate and intelligent reading of the second and revised edition of 1931. **Scriabin's** Sonata No. 9 (CD3 [9]) is known as the 'Black Mass' for its supposedly satanic connotations. As far as pianists are concerned, this dense single movement is the equivalent of black magic on 88 keys.

Competitions are also about thrilling an audience, and showpieces of the Lisztian kind usually do the trick. **Franz Liszt** may have been the world's first pop star on the piano. Unafraid to simulate the sounds of an orchestra on the keyboard, his transcriptions, arrangements and conflations of pre-existing music in other forms were among his most popular works. His *Spanish Rhapsody* (CD3 [11]) combined two already well-known melodies, *La Folía* and *Jota Aragonesa*, in a fantasy of hot-blooded virtuosity that would make the most brazen of Spanish lovers blush. The big-boned pianism of Eric Zuber combined an excellent octave technique and not a small quantum of humour. It was a style well suited for Liszt, and bagged Zuber the Liszt prize.

Following in Liszt's footsteps was the keyboard music of Frenchman **Maurice Ravel**, who was, rather ironically, not a piano virtuoso himself. He left a few important but nondescript recordings of his own piano playing, though none of his famously fiendish pieces, such as *Scarbo* (from *Gaspard de la nuit*) or *La Valse* (CD3 [10]). The

latter, better known in its lush orchestral version, was originally going to be a celebration of the Viennese waltz. The Great War changed all that, and seems to have provoked Ravel to complete this terrifying work. Parts of the piano score call for an extra stave, and many pianists oblige with their own additions in this chord-heavy, *glissando*-laden showpiece. Australian David Fung's rendition captured the *zeitgeist* of the music, described by the composer as its 'fantastic and fatal whirling'.

CD4 *Miniatures and Transcriptions*

The final CD contains pieces which demonstrate why the keyboard lays claim to be the most varied, interesting and popular musical instrument of all time. Among these gems are transcriptions: essentially what pop musicians refer to as 'covers', a personal interpretation of another person's music. Franz Liszt wrote heaps of these, and in doing so generously helped to spread the fame of other people's music.

One of Liszt's most famous efforts in this style is the love song *Widmung* or Dedication (CD4 [1]) by **Robert Schumann**. It isn't particularly difficult to play, but its impact on audiences should not be underestimated, especially when performed with the singing tone and poise of Takashi Sato. (Elsewhere, as an encore, Sato threw in **Francis Poulenc's** tantalising and contrasting Presto (CD4 [18]), a breathless Neoclassical number.) Liszt also transcribed several of his son-in-law **Richard Wagner's** best operatic moments. One does not need to sit through four hours of *Tristan and Isolde* to appreciate the pent-up fraught emotions and eventual sexual meltdown of *Isoldes Liebestod* (CD4 [24]). Konstantin Shamray offers a magnificent storytelling of this epic journey of love and death.

Still on the subject of vocal music, the greatest compliment one could give a pianist is to say that he or she made the piano sing. **Felix**

Mendelssohn wrote no fewer than eight volumes of Songs without Words for the piano, and it is a pleasant surprise to hear any of these often-overlooked works in a competition. China's Xun Wang presented two of these little diamonds (CD4 [2]-[3]).

Another surprise was the airing of Finnish composer **Jean Sibelius'** little Sonnet (CD4 [4]), which in the hands of young Tomoki Kitamura rippled through the competition's thickets of loud playing like fresh spring water. And in a singular performance that relived the urbane charm, tongue-in-cheek wit and free-wheeling virtuosity of the so-called 'Golden Age of the Piano', Hoang Pham played his own version of **Andrei Schulz-Evler's** cumbersomely titled *Concert Arabesques on Johann Strauss the Younger's 'On the Beautiful Blue Danube'* (CD4 [23]).

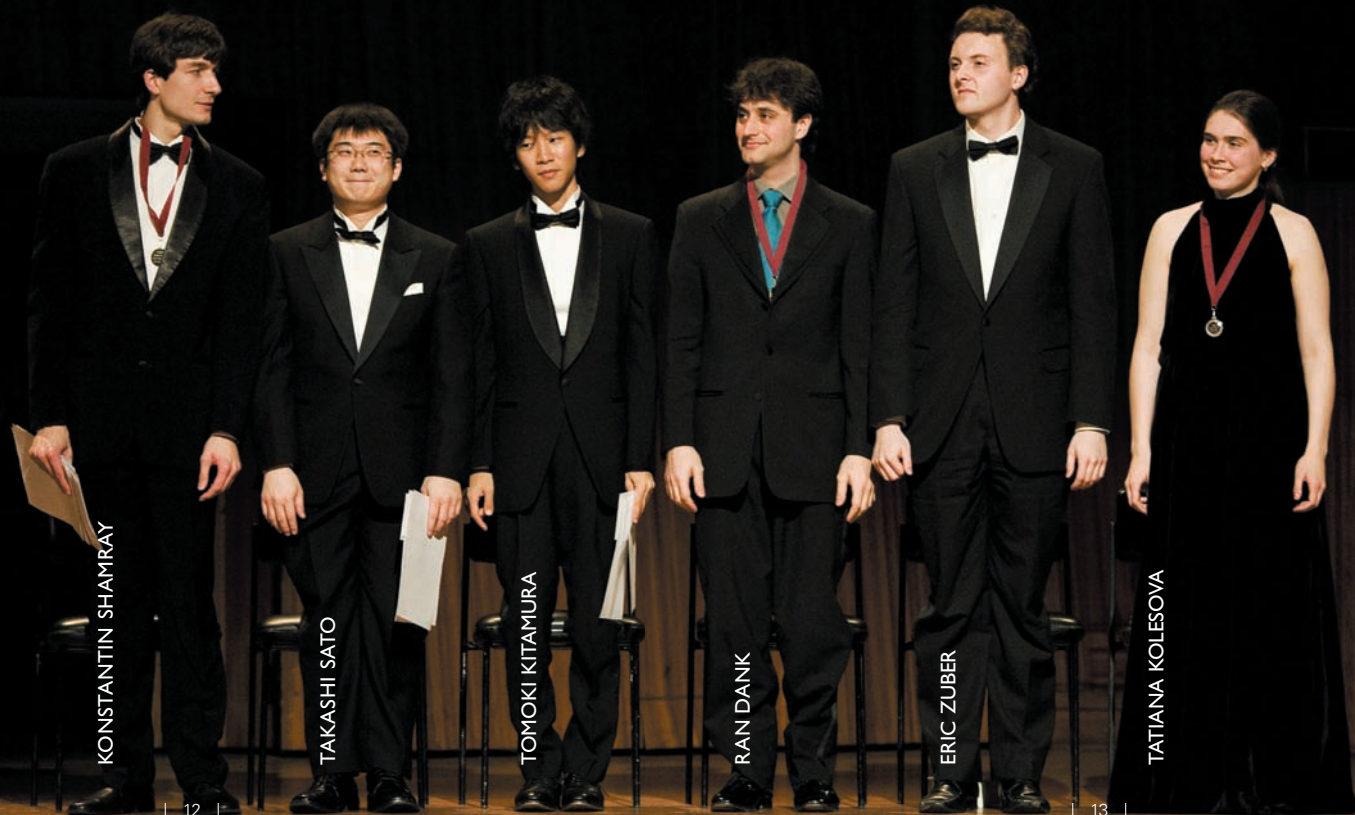
Although **Claude Debussy** was dismissive of Scandinavian miniatures ('Bonbons wrapped in snow' was his assessment of Grieg's *Lytic Pieces*), he was himself a master miniaturist. His 24 Préludes (in two volumes) are tiny tone poems, each with a descriptive title in French appearing *after* the pieces. SIPCA stipulates that competitors must play any one of the 24 (*What The West Wind Saw* excepted) in Stage II. Ran Dank was named the best Debussy interpreter with his performance of the last Prélude, *Feux d'artifice* or *Fireworks* (CD4 [5]). Listen for a fragment of *La Marseillaise* at the end, after the pyrotechnics have burnt themselves out. Also

classed in the category of miniatures are French composer-conductor **Pierre Boulez's** *12 Notations* (CD4 [6]-[17]) from 1945, among the earliest works which he published. Several of these 12-tone pieces, bearing influences of Debussy, Messiaen and Webern, have been transcribed for orchestra. The versatile Dank makes them sound like gold shavings from a master's work-desk.

Competition audiences are often barely-disguised thrill-seekers, hoping to experience faster, higher, stronger (*citius, altius, fortius*) aspects of music in something akin to the Olympic Games. All SIPCA pianists presented an abundance of these attributes, and this disc is rounded off with some of the best: Yoon Soo Rhee in the second (and more treacherous) book of **Brahms'** *Paganini Variations* (CD4 [26]), based on Paganini's Caprice No. 24; Xun Wang in **Liszt's** *Hungarian Rhapsody* No. 6 (CD4 [22]), exhibiting staggering right-hand octaves in its notoriously crippling final pages; and Tatiana Kolesova, an overwhelming audience favourite in the early stages, reliving the earthy dissonances, hustle and bustle of **Stravinsky's** *Three Movements from Petrushka* (CD4 [19]-[21]).

Chang Tou Liang

Dr Chang Tou Liang, a native of Singapore, attended Stages I-III of SIPCA 2008, and through his blog pianofortephilia.blogspot.com captured some of the spirit of the competition.



KONSTANTIN SHAMRAY

TAKASHI SATO

TOMOKI KITAMURA

RAN DANK

ERIC ZUBER

TATIANA KOLESOVA

The Sydney International Piano Competition of Australia

The Competition was inaugurated in July 1977 by Claire Dan AM OBE, and is held every four years. It was admitted as a member of the Federation of International Music Competitions in 1978, and is presented under the auspices of the Cladan Cultural Exchange Institute of Australia, in association with the University of Sydney and with the co-operation of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The 2008 Competition provided air fares, accommodation and daily allowances for 36 competitors, aged between 17 and 31, all of whom played in the first two recital stages. All stages of the Competition were broadcast live throughout Australia and New Zealand and worldwide via the internet on ABC Classic FM.

2008 Prizewinners

Final Placings

- 1 Konstantin Shamray (Russia)
- 2 Tatiana Kolesova (Russia)
- 3 Ran Dank (Israel)
- 4 Takashi Sato (Japan)
- 5 Tomoki Kitamura (Japan)
- 6 Eric Zuber (USA)

People's Choice Konstantin Shamray

Best Australian Pianist Hoang Pham

This recording includes the following prizewinning performances:

Best Performance of a Work by Liszt

Eric Zuber

Best Performance of an Australian Work

Tomoki Kitamura

Best Performance of a Work by Beethoven

Konstantin Shamray

Best Performance of a Work by Chopin

Takashi Sato

Best Performance of a Work by Rachmaninoff

Ran Dank

Best Performance of a Work by Mozart

Konstantin Shamray

Best Liszt Study (Stage I)

Charlie Albright (USA)

Best Debussy Prélude

Ran Dank

Best Romantic Work

Yoon Soo Rhee (Korea)

Best Russian Work

Tatiana Kolesova

Best Haydn Sonata

Yoon Soo Rhee

Best Virtuoso Study (Stage I)

Daniil Tsvetkov (Kazakhstan)

A complete list of prizewinners, competitors, donors and sponsors may be found at

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