International Competition of Young Pianists “Merci, Maestro!” 2026
Jury rules and regulations

General Information about competition

The competition is organized among 6 categories of candidates:

- Category A: for candidates younger than 10 years old (inclusive) at the first day of the Competition, 11th April 2025.
- Category B: for candidates from 11 to 13 years old (inclusive) at the first day of the Competition, 11th April 2025.
- Category C: for candidates from 14 to 16 years old (inclusive) at the first day of the Competition, 10th April 2025.
- Category D: for candidates from 17 to 19 years old (inclusive) at the first day of the Competition, 10th April 2025.
- Category E: for candidates from 20 to 22 years old (inclusive at the first day of the Competition, 9th April 2025.
- Category F: for candidates from 23 to 25 years old (inclusive) at the first day of the Competition, 9th April 2025.

The competition implies 2 phases:

1. Pre-selection phase: based in YouTube videos

In all category maximum 140 candidates will be chosen for the main phase of the competition

2. Main phase of the competition: performance in Brussels

2.1. First round of the competition

In all category maximum 70 candidates will be chosen for the second (final) round

2.2. Second (final) round of the competition

In category A: no limited number of finalists will receive the prizes (diplomas of 1st, 2nd, 3rd prize).
In categories B, C, D, E, F: maximum 8 finalists will receive the prizes (diplomas of 1st, 2nd, 3rd prize).
Some finalists at each category will be able to obtain specials diplomas (for example as the youngest promising pianist etc);
Special prize: participation in several workshops, concerts and festivals in Europe

Jury rules and regulations

1. The management of the Competition will appoint the members of the jury at its sole discretion. There is no limit to their number. They are chosen for their international reputation in the world of music, without taking into account any racial, ideological, political or linguistic considerations. The composition of the jury may vary from one round to another.
2. The jury is chaired by a person appointed by the competition management.
3. Relatives or allies of a candidate may not vote for a candidate (up to the 4th degree of kinship).
4. Members of the jury may not vote for a candidate of whom they are or have been a professor. A "student" is defined as a candidate who has been taking courses on a regular basis within last 10 years preceding the competition with the member of the jury in question. Activities such as master classes, workshops, festivals are not considered as regular courses. In case of doubt, the interested parties will contact the management, which will determine the position to be taken. If a member of the selection board does not provide a mark for a candidate, the average of the points awarded to the candidate by the other members of the selection board, multiplied by the average of the points awarded to all candidates by the member of the selection board concerned, divided by the average of the points awarded to all candidates by all the other members of the selection board, is added to the sum of his points.
5. Candidates do not have the right to challenge a member of the jury.

6. The list of names of all candidates will be given to each member of the jury.
7. At the beginning of the session, the list of names of the jury members will be published on the competition website.
8. Each member of the jury will submit to the Competition secretariat a signed declaration (see the end of the document).
9. If it is shown that the declarations in Article 8 are not true, their signatory would be excluded from the jury and the Competition.
10. Throughout the session, the members of the jury will refrain from any direct or indirect contact with a candidate, and a fortiori from living under the same roof as him.
11. The number of finalists maximum of 70 in all category will be selected for all categories.
12. The decisions of the jury are final. The Jury may decide not to award any prizes in either category. In the event of a tie, the chairman of the jury and the artistic director shall have the casting votes.
13. The jury will vote by secret ballot. Ballots may not be made public. The results will be presented for the jury without discovering the names of the participants. Only the President of jury and jurt Secretary can see the separate votes of each jury member.
14.The jury members will vote independently and it is not permitted for jury members to discuss performances of the candidates while they are still participating in the competition.
15.The jury members who have their student(s) among the candidates (or who have been otherwise disqualified from voting) will put "#" mark next to the name(s) of the candidate(s).
16. In case if a member of the jury does not inform the management of the competition about the current relationship between him/her and a candidate, the competition management has a right to exclude this jury member from the jury.
17.The vote of a jury member will be taken into account only if this member has heard performances of all candidates within the round. The management of the competition has a right to make exceptions from this rule.
18. Under no circumstances may the members of the jury communicate to each other the marks they have awarded. It is forbidden to use mobile phones for the entire duration of the competition (it is only possible to use mobile phones during breaks.)
19. The function of the Chairman of the Jury is to direct the operations of the Jury during the session.
20. For the choice of works and parts of works to be performed: there is a precise program.
21. In the event of illness or incapacity of a major force, the jury member shall be replaced, for the entire session or part thereof, either by a member of the Executive Committee appointed by the Chairman of that Committee or by a musical personality appointed by the Executive Committee of the Competition.
22. The President of the jury or artistic director shall announce the results of the tests, faithfully reflecting the decisions of the jury.
23. Jury members who have one or more students among the finalists will not rank their student(s).

24. Performance assessment rules

Pre-selection round:

For the preselection round, 3 jury members will receive all names of the candidates and the links to video files.
They will give each candidate a score "+" ("YES") or "-" (NO) corresponding to the assessment of the performance, which will indicate whether the candidate passes or not to the first round.
The number of the participants who can pass to the first round is limited to a maximum of 120 in all category.
The voting results will be assessed by two independent people.
In case of equal number of "+" and "-" votes the negative votes get higher weight in final evaluation.

All dispute cases will be resolved by mutual decision taken by the President of the jury and the Artistic Director of the Competition.

FIRST ROUND:

-For the first round, the members of the jury will receive a ballot paper containing the names of the candidates.
They will give each candidate a score between 1 and 20 corresponding to the assessment of the performance.
The assessment rule is as follows:

• The passing rule: candidates with score 15-20 will pass to the final
• The passing rule: candidates with score 1-14 do not pass to the final

The number of finalists awarded by each jury member is limited to a maximum of 70 in all category.
All dispute cases will be resolved by mutual decision taken by the President of the jury and the Artistic Director of the Competition.
The names of the finalists will be announced after all the candidates have passed.

FINAL ROUND:

All finalists will receive the title of "finalist".
After the audition of all finalists of the category, the jury members will receive a ballot with the names of the finalists.
Next to each name, the members of the jury will give each candidate a score between 1 and 100 corresponding to the assessment of the performance.
The assessment rule is as follows:

- 1st, 2nd, 3rd prizes on each category:
  Categories B, C, D, E, F: the maximum 8 top finalists who'll receive highest scores
  In category A: no limited number of finalists will receive the prizes (diplomas of 1st, 2nd, 3rd prize).
  Prizes can only be split if the scores are approximately the same.
  In that case, if the results extremely different -so if one of jury member put more higher or lower result than all others jury members 15%) - this result will not be recalculated on base of the middle results of others jury members.
- EX EAQUO:
  Categories B, C, D, E, F: if 3 candidates have less than 3 points difference, a 2 the same prices can be given
  Category A: for all candidates have less than 3 points difference, the same prices can be given (so no limited number)
- If the points for a first prize in a category are 10% lower than the other categories a first prize may be refused and automatically 2nd and 3rd prizes
- Special prizes: some participants can receive special prizes (for example as the youngest promising pianist etc) as a participation in several workshops, concerts and festivals in Europe etc

The members of the jury will each sign their own ballot and submit it to the President of the jury.
The ranking will be established on the basis of the totals obtained by adding for each candidate the sum of the points awarded to him by all the members of the jury.
At the end of each category will be announced:

- The names of the winners (without specifying which prize) who'll receive 1st, 2nd, 3rd and special prizes
- The list of the participants of the GALA concert and their program

The list of the winners (with prize specified) will be announced during the GALA concert.

25. PRIZES, DISTINCTIONS AND AWARDS.

Various prizes, distinctions and awards will be distributed among the finalists.

Each prize can be divided between winners and also special diplomas for younger promising participants in each category can be awarded.

Category A:

- First prize: diploma & special gifts
- Second prize: diploma & special gifts
- Third prize: diploma & special gifts

Category B:

- First prize: 200 euro
- Second prize: 150 euro
- Third prize: 100 euro

Category C:

- First prize: 300 euro
- Second prize: 200 euro
- Third prize: 150 euro

Category D:

- First prize: 400 euro
- Second prize: 250 euro
- Third prize: 200 euro

Category E:

- First prize: 500 euro
- Second prize: 300 euro
- Third prize: 250 euro

Category F:

- First prize: 600 euro
- Second prize: 350 euro
- Third prize: 300 euro

All participants will receive certificates. The participants of the first round who were not selected to participate in the final round will receive their certificates at the end of their round at the competition day or after the GALA concert.
All finalists will receive diplomas: the finalists who were not selected to participate in the Gala concert (who did not become winners, laureates) will receive their diplomas after all candidates in the same category have passed to the final.
The winners: the prizes, awards and diplomas signed by the President and the members of the jury will be awarded to the winners during the Gala concert of the laureates of the “Merci, Maestro!”.

26. Young Jury – Special Regulations

For the 2026 edition, the Competition introduces a Young Jury composed of three members. The Young Jury will evaluate the performances independently from the Main Jury.
The results and evaluations of the Young Jury will be recorded, calculated, and presented separately from those of the Main Jury and will not influence the official results, rankings, or prize decisions of the Competition.
The Young Jury may award diplomas only, based on their own evaluation. No monetary prizes will be granted.
However, the Young Jury may award one or more special non-financial prizes (in the form of diplomas), such as for the best interpretation of a modern composition, a Ukrainian composition, or any other outstanding artistic achievement, at their discretion.

26. The Executive Committee of the Competition has the power to accept other donations, scholarships and concert offers for the benefit of candidates and winners.
27. Candidates are passed in alphabetical order. However, the Competition Management reserves the right to change this order.
28. All finalists of the competition could shortly speak with a jury member last evening of the competition, Saturday before the GALA concert at the Piano’s Maene.
All participants of the 1st round, who didn’t pass to the final round, could shortly speak with a jury member after the announcement of the results of the first round at the Piano’s Maene.
More information will be sent by mail.
It’ll NOT be possible to speak with jury members before or after the GALA concert.

DECLARATION

I undertake to comply with it and certify that none of the candidates on the list given to me has related me up to the 4th degree or is (was) my student. If not, I inform the administration of the contest
"Merci, Maestro!" that the candidate(s):

Surname:
First Name:
Category:
is related to me up to the 4th degree or is (was) my student.

I, the undersigned, member of the jury of the International Competition for Young Pianists "Merci, Maestro!", session 2026, declare that I have read the rules of the Competition. I acknowledge that in the event of a dispute, only the French and Dutch texts are legally valid.

Done on...../...../.....at.....

Signature