The 10th International Competition for Young Pianists

Merci, Maestro!

08-12.04.2026
Brussels, Belgium

GALA CONCERT

of the Winners

12th April 2026 (SUN)

19h00

Brussels Town Hall, Gothic Room, Grand Place

Classical music (Piano Solo) | Diploma & Prize Distribution

WWW.MERCIMAESTRO.BE | INFO@MERCIMAESTRO.BE | +32 496 48 87 80



Merci, Maestro!

Dear audience and participants,

Welcome to the 10th edition of the International Competition for Young Pianists "Merci, Maestro!" 2026! This year, we are proud to have selected 53 participants representing 30 countries.

For ten consecutive years, the “Merci, Maestro!” International Competition has provided young pianists with a valuable opportunity to perform before a panel of world-renowned musicians. Participants will also receive feedback from the jury, offering inspiration as they continue their journey toward becoming professional musicians.

This event serves as an international platform for intercultural exchange and provides musicians the opportunity to gain recognition across Europe and beyond. In addition, the winners will have the honor of performing at the Gala Concert held in the stunning, historical building, the Brussels Town Hall in Belgium.

Although the Gala Concert is the highlight of the competition, it is by no means the end! Thanks to the support of various music institutions, festival organizers, orchestras, and many others, the winners of the special awards will have unique opportunities to engage in musical activities across Europe following the competition. This presents invaluable prospects for young musicians to advance their careers.

We deeply appreciate your continued support and eagerly look forward to welcoming you to the next edition of the competition in July 2027! We hope you enjoy the music!

Best Regards,

MERCIMAESTRO

Nataliya Chepurenko
Founder & Artistic Director
International Competition for Young Pianists “Merci, Maestro!” 2026

JURY MEMBERS



Nataliya Chepurenko (Belgium/Ukraine)
President of jury, founder, artistic director of the:
• International Piano competition "Merci, Maestro!"
Founder, director, piano & chamber music teacher of the :
• Brussels International Music Academy
• International Festival "MUSIC ACADEMY FORTE"
• Chamber Orchestra "CAMERATA BRIMA"
For several years main pianist of the Royal Ballet of Flanders pianist at many international ballet companies. Jury member of several international competitions.



Jean-Claude Vanden Eynden (Belgium)
Honorary Professor at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels and Master in Residence at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel. Vanden Eynden was often a jury member in international competitions, primarily on the jury of the International Queen Elisabeth Competition. He was also artistic advisor for some festivals such as in Stavelot.

He built a solid career as an international soloist. He was also artistic director of the Center européen de maîtrise pianistique Eduardo Del Pueyo.



Yannick van de Velde (Belgium)
Professor of piano performance at the Conservatory Grand Duchee in Luxembourg and the Akademie für Tonkunst Darmstadt. He regularly teaches at the International Festival MUSIC ACADEMY FORTE Masterclass, Belgium.

Performed across the world: the Philharmonie of Berlin, the Acropolis Museum in Athens, Lincoln Center in New York, Center of Fine Arts and studio 4 of Flagey in Brussels, Casa da Musica in Porto, Palacio de Festivales in Santander.



Milana Chernyavska (Germany)
Professor of Piano at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (Austria) & Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofía (Madrid, Spain). She leads numerous international masterclasses worldwide. A German artist with Ukrainian roots. A sought-after jury member at various prestigious piano competitions, including ARD (Munich), Busoni Competition, Telekom Beethoven Competition (Bonn), Mozart Competition (Salzburg), Santa Cecilia in Porto Competition, and Bluethner Goldaward (Vienna).



Tamara Kordzadze (Switzerland)
Professor of piano at the Zurich Conservatory. President of Association "Unite Classics" and "Vivace" – an association that promotes and supports musically talented children and adults in Georgia. Was co-founder, board member, and head of international relationships of the association „Youth Classics" and „International Music Week Montepulciano" from 2009 to 2014. Tamara has been distinguished and has won prizes – including 1st prizes – at numerous national and international piano competitions. Jury Member at international Competitions.



Elena Margolina (Germany)
Professor of piano at the University of Music in Detmold, Germany.
Faculty Professor at the Euro Arts Academy. Master classes worldwide, including Germany, South Korea, Canada, China, Albania, Ukraine,, UK, Poland, Italy. Numerous students of hers regularly win prizes at piano competitions around the world, launching successful international careers. A sought-after juror at international music competitions worldwide. Lively artistic career as a concert pianist collaborating with renowned symphony orchestras and distinguished conductors in prestigious concert venues all across Europe and overseas.

JURY MEMBERS



Pietro Sellitto (Italy)
Music teacher at the Italian public school and founder of the International Music Competition CIMN at Italy. He is also a director of chamber, choral and orchestral music, in Italy and abroad. Founder of the Accademia Musicale Nocera and president of the Associazione di Cultura Musicale di Sant' Anna in Nocera Inferiore (SA)- at the moment known as Associazione Musica Nova-, since 2013, he is also the organizer of many significant cultural events during which renowned artist of the opera, classical and contemporary music world are involved.



Illia Ovcharenko (Ukraine)
Internationally Acclaimed Performing and Recording Pianist. One of the world's most celebrated young pianists. He is the 2022 Honens

Prize Laureate. Ovcharenko has received prizes at more than 20 competitions throughout the world. Ovcharenko plays in some of the most prestigious concert halls in the world, including Carnegie Hall, Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, Konzerthaus Berlin, Salle Bourgie in Montréal, and Salle Cortot in Paris. He has also been an artist in the prestigious Classeek Ambassador Programme.



Gustav A. Alink (Nederlands) - Independent Press Jury
Director of the Alink-Argerich Foundation, founded in 1999 together with Martha Argerich. In the early 1980s, it was Martha Argerich who advised him during his research on piano competitions. During this research, Gustav Alink visited some 600 piano competitions worldwide. He published six books and wrote many articles. Because of his dedicated research, Gustav Alink was often referred to as "Mr. Competition".The Alink-Argerich Foundation (AAF) is an independent and objective information and service centre for musicians and competitions with a specific focus on pianists and piano competitions.



Chenrui Zhang (China) - Junior Jury
Laureate (Category C – First Prize) and Special Prizes Winner:
- Invitation to perform as a soloist with the Symphony Orchestraof Lviv in Ukraine
- Participation at MUSICORUM Festival in Brussels, Belgium

of the International Piano Competition "Merci, Maestro!" 2025

Currently a piano performance major at University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (mdw).



Jef Kolacny (Belgium) - Junior Jury
Special Prizes Winner of the International Piano Competition "Merci, Maestro!" 2024:
- Invitation to perform as a soloist with the Symphony Orchestraof Lviv in Ukraine
- Concert with CAMERATA BRIMA
- SOLO Concert at SALON BRIMA,
- Grant for participation in International Festival Masterclasses & Concerts MUSIC ACADEMY FORTE

Currently studying with Julien Libeer at LUCA School of Arts in Leuven and at the Bell'Arte International Music Academy (ICPA) with Nelson Delle-Vigne Fabbri.



Aude Van De Keere (Belgium) - Junior Jury
Laureate (Category C- 3rd Prize) and Special Prize Winner:
- Concert in Belgium organized by BRIMA

of the International Piano Competition "Merci, Maestro!" 2019

Currently continuing her studies at the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp as a soloist master's student under the renowned pianist Polina Leschenko, while continuing her violin education with top violinist Aylen Pritchin.

CATEGORY A

(age 10 and below)



Cecilia Martini
(Age 7, Italy)



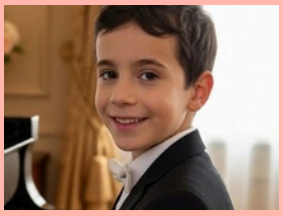
Hilarie Pan
(Age 10, France)



Rebecca Di Marzio
(Age 10, Italy)



Sophia Panagiotou
(Age 10, Cyprus)



Aaron Gruber
(Age 8, Belgium)



Dara Protopopenko
(Age 10, Ukraine)



Stefania Magnani
(Age 10, Italy)



Elena Valchova
(Age 9, Bulgaria)



Guilherme Vale
(Age 9, Portugal)

CATEGORY B

(age 11 to 13)



Angela Kendrick
(Age 11, Ireland)



Tamar Kvitsiani
(Age 13, Georgia)



An Jung Liu
(Age 13, Taiwan)



Sniedze Sarja
(Age 12, Latvia)



Ondřej Skopový
(Age 13, Czech Republic)

CATEGORY C

(age 14 to 16)



Juliette Chachereau
(Age 14, France)



Lilija Muižniece
(Age 15, Latvia)



Miruna-Ioana Covreag
(Age 15, Romania)



Mika Natzke
(Age 16, Portugal)



Clovis Gobry
(Age 16, France)



Olcay Kara
(Age 16, Turkey)



Jason Lee Reks Jacobsen
(Age 15, Denmark)



Lise Ricard
(Age 15, France)



Kalina Jovanovic
(Age 15, Montenegro)



Yingtong Xie
(Age 14, China)



Yelyzaveta Kalyta
(Age 16, Ukraine)



Enruei Yang
(Age 16, Taiwan)

CATEGORY D

(age 17 to 19)



Wufan Cao
(Age 19, China)



Marii Matesen
(Age 17, Estonia)



Sophus Elmark
(Age 19, Denmark)



Patrick Meier
(Age 17, Germany)



Yutong Huang
(Age 19, China)



Jekaterina Pisarenko
(Age 19, Latvia)



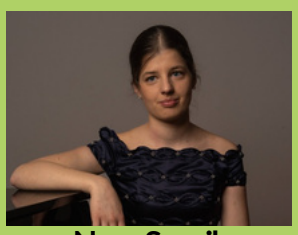
Ching-Hui Huang
(Age 19, Taiwan)



Jingyi Ren
(Age 19, China)



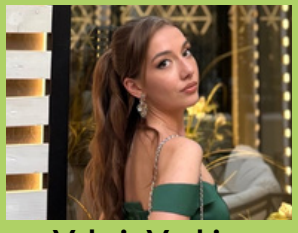
Yazdi Madon
(Age 19, United Kingdom)



Neza Susnik
(Age 19, Slovenia)



Aylin Mahmudova
(Age 17, Azerbajian)



Valeria Vechiu
(Age 19, Moldova)

CATEGORY E

(age 20 to 22)



Ruslan Alentiev
(Age 22, Ukraine)



Gordon Chan
(Age 21, Hong Kong)



Angelina Datseniuk
(Age 21, Ukraine)



Zengyue Fan
(Age 22, China)



Agata Repeć
(Age 20, Poland)



Gustavo Costa e Silva
(Age 21, Portugal)

CATEGORY F

(age 23 to 25)



Letizia Rosaria Palmieri
(Age 25, Italy)



Mariia Zanko
(Age 23, Ukraine)



Wanying Song
(Age 24, China)



Seoyoon Lee
(Age 24, South Korea)



Amira Satey
(Age 24, Kazakhstan)



Yani Sun
(Age 25, China)



Rocío Sonseca Andrés
(Age 25, Spain)



Elen Harutyunyan
(Age 24, Armenia)



YoonSu Kim
(Age 24, South Korea)

Merci, Maestro!

With the support of the City of Brussels and the Embassy of Ukraine in the Kingdom of Belgium, the 10th International Competition for Young Pianists "Merci, Maestro!" 2026 presents:

GALA CONCERT

of the winners 2026

12.04.2026 | 19:00 | Gothic Room, Brussels Town Hall (Grand-Place)

with reception after the concert

PROGRAM

WELCOME SPEECH

Nataliya Chepurenko

Founder & Director of the
International Piano Competition "Merci, Maestro!"

SPEECH

Mr. Oleksandr Ustymenko

Second secretary,
Embassy of Ukraine

SPEECH

Mr. Gustav A. Alink

Independent Press Jury,
Diretor of the Alink–Argerich Foundation

JUNIOR JURY

Chenrui Zhang

Laureate (Cat C – First Prize) & Special Prizes Winner
of "Merci, Maestro!" 2025
F.Liszt: La campanella

CATEGORY A: 3rd Prize (MJ) | 2nd Prize (JJ)

Guilherme Vale

Portugal, 9 years old
M.Ivo Cruz : Canto de Luar, Aguarelas N3

CATEGORY A: 2nd Prize (MJ)

Dara Protopopenko

Ukraine, 10 years old
S.Bortkiewicz : Op. 21 "Poland"
from the cycle "The Little Traveler"

CATEGORY A: 1st Prize (MJ & JJ)

Elena Valchova

Bulgaria, 9 years old
F.Chopin: Polonaise in G minor (posth.)

CATEGORY B: 1st Prize (MJ & JJ)

Ondřej Skopový

Czech Republic, 13 years old
S.Bortkiewicz : Etude Op.15 N9 in f-sharp minor

CATEGORY C: 1st Prize (MJ)

Yingtong Xie

China, 14 years old
T.Takemitsu : Rain Tree Sketch II

CATEGORY D: 1st Prize (MJ) | 2nd Prize (JJ)

Jinyi Ren

China, 19 years old
F.Liszt : Concert Études, S.145, N2
in f-sharp minor, "Gnomenreigen"

CATEGORY E: 1st Prize (MJ) | 2nd Prize (JJ)

Angelina Datseniuk

Ukraine, 21 years old
V.Kosenko : Nocturne fis-moll, Op. 9

CATEGORY F: 1st Prize (JJ)

Seoyoon Lee

South Korea, 24 years old
F.Liszt : Transcendental Étude N10 in f minor

CATEGORY F: 1st Prize (MJ)

Yani Sun

China, 25 years old
F.Chopin : Etude Op.10. N10

NOTE: MJ = Main Jury | JJ = Junior Jury

1-2-3 PRIZES from Main Jury

CATEGORY A

1st Prize: Elena Valchova *(Bulgaria, 9 y/o)*
2nd Prize: Dara Protopopenko *(Ukraine, 10 y/o)*
3rd Prize: Guilherme Vale *(Portugal, 9 y/o)*

CATEGORY B

1st Prize: Ondřej Skopový *(Czech Republic, 13 y/o)*
2nd Prize: An Jung Liu *(Taiwan, 13 y/o)*
3rd Prize: Angela Kendrick *(Ireland, 11 y/o)*

CATEGORY C

1st Prize: Yingtong Xie *(China, 14 y/o)*
2nd Prize: Enruei Yang *(Taiwan, 16 y/o)*

CATEGORY D

1st Prize: Jingyi Ren *(China, 19 y/o)*
2nd Prize: Yutong Huang *(China, 19 y/o)*
3rd Prize: Sophus Elmark *(Denmark, 19 y/o)*

CATEGORY E

1st Prize: Angelina Datseniuk *(Ukraine, 21 y/o)*
2nd Prize: Zengyue Fan *(China, 22 y/o)*

CATEGORY F

1st Prize: Yani Sun *(China, 25 y/o)*

1-2-3 PRIZES from Junior Jury

CATEGORY A

1st Prize: Elena Valchova *(Bulgaria, 9 y/o)*
2nd Prize: Guilherme Vale *(Portugal, 9 y/o)*
3rd Prize: Sophia Panagiotou *(Cyprus, 10 y/o)*

CATEGORY B

1st Prize: Ondřej Skopový *(Czech Republic, 13 y/o)*
2nd Prize: An Jung Liu *(Taiwan, 13 y/o)* **&**
Angela Kendrick *(Ireland, 11 y/o)*

CATEGORY C

1st Prize: Enruei Yang *(Taiwan, 16 y/o)*

CATEGORY D

1st Prize: Yutong Huang *(China, 19 y/o)*
2nd Prize: Sophus Elmark *(Denmark, 19 y/o)* **&**
Jingyi Ren *(China, 19 y/o)*

CATEGORY E

1st Prize: Zengyue Fan *(China, 22 y/o)*
2nd Prize: Angelina Datseniuk *(Ukraine, 21 y/o)*

CATEGORY F

1st Prize: Seoyoon Lee *(South Korea, 24 y/o)*

SPECIAL PRIZES RECIPIENTS:

- Invitation by The Academic Symphony Orchestra of the Lviv National Philharmonic named after Myroslav Skoryk and the Lviv Krushelnytska State Music Lyceum to perform in one concert as a soloist with the Symphony Orchestra of Lviv (Ukraine) 2026/27: ***Yutong Huang (China, 19 y/o)***
- Grants for participation in the International Festival Masterclasses & Concerts "MUSIC ACADEMY FORTE" 2026/27 (300 euro) – Provided by Nataliya Chepurenko (BRIMA): ***Ondřej Skopový (Czech Republic, 13 y/o); Enruei Yang (Taiwan, 16 y/o)***
- Participation at the concert of MUSICORUM festival (Brussels, Belgium) 2026/27: ***Yingtong Xie (China, 14 y/o)***
- GRANT for Participation at the masterclasses in International Piano Forum Sanok, Poland 2027 -Provided by "Bieszczady Without Borders"2027 (Exemption from the entry fee of approximately 150 euro):
  Enruei Yang (Taiwan, 16 y/o); Yani Sun (China, 25 y/o)
- Concert in ITALY provided by ACCADEMIA MUSICALE NOCERINA: ***Yingtong Xie (China, 14 y/o); Jingyi Ren (China, 19 y/o)***
- Masterclass in ITALY provided by ACCADEMIA MUSICALE NOCERINA: ***Angelina Datseniuk (Ukraine, 21 y/o)***
- Concert in Zurich, Swiss: Provided by "Unite Classics": ***Yingtong Xie (China, 14 y/o)***
- Concert at ART SALON BRIMA,Brussels, Belgium 2026/27,Provided by Nataliya Chepurenko (BRIMA):
  Sophus Elmark (Denmark, 19 y/o)
- "Schubert Prize" for the best interpretation of a work by Franz Schubert, Provided by Elena Margolina-Hait:
  Zengyue Fan (China, 22 y/o); Yani Sun (China, 25 y/o)
- Prize for the youngest promising participant in Category A: ***Cecilia Martini (Italy, 7 y/o)***
- Prize for the youngest promising Belgian participant in Category A: ***Aaron Gruber (Belgium, 8 y/o)***
- Prize for the most promising young talent awarded by junior jury: ***Ondřej Skopový (Czech Republic, 13 y/o)***
- The best performance of a virtuoso-modern composition-Special edition of music scores of Ukrainian composers:
  Yutong Huang (China, 19 y/o)

PARTNERS:

SPECIAL THANKS GO TO : Mr Yaroslav Melnyk, *Ambassador of Ukraine to the Kingdom of Belgium;*
Mr. Oleksandr Ustymenko, *Second secretary;* **Mr Philippe Close**, *Mayor of the City of Brussels;*
Mr Vincent Lignier, *Piano's Maene, Branch Manager Brussels;* **Mme Solange Bertrand,** *Director of the HOOFDSTEDELIJKE KUNSTACADEMIE*

With your support, young pianists can turn their dreams into music — and fill our community with hope, harmony, and inspiration. Scan the QR code to donate.

Next Competition "Merci, Maestro!" - April 2027

+32 496 48 87 80 | info@mercimaestro.be | www.mercimaestro.be

International Competition for Young Pianists "Merci, Maestro!" 2026

MANAGEMENT TEAM

Founder & Artistic director: Nataliya Chepurenko
Program Coordinator, Responsible of Communication:
HueyChing Chong, Olga Aksionchyk, Sarah Marchal
Video & Multimedia Support:
Vasyl Trushkovskyy, Alexei Novosseltsev

GALA CONCERT

organised with the support of the City of Brussels
under the patronage of the Embassy of Ukraine in the Kingdom of Belgium
Mr Yaroslav Melnyk, **Ambassador of Ukraine to the Kingdom of Belgium**

SPECIAL THANKS GO TO

Mr Philippe Close, **Mayor of the City of Brussels**
Mr Vincent Lignier, **Piano's Maene, Branch Manager Brussels**
Mme Solange Bertrand, **Director of the Hoofsdstedelijke Kunstacademie**

HOST FAMILIES

Godefroy Camauer, Neil Thomson, Marta Guzy, Dilber Ahmed, Cecile Foucard.

And also, all **volunteers** all those who helped with the organisation, especially the employees of the City Hall of Brussels.

PARTNERS

Ambassade d'Ukraine auprès du Royaume de Belgique
BRIMA Brussels International Music Academy
ART SALON BRIMA
BXL LA VILLE DE STAD
MAENE
KUNST HOOFDSTEDELIJKE ACADEMIE
MUSIC forte ACADEMY
UNITE CLASSICS Connecting through Music
MUSIQ3
ACCADEMIA MUSICALE NOCERINA
Member of the Alink-Argerich Foundation
Podkarpacka Fundacja Rozwoju Kultury
Фундація Соломії Крушельницької
musicorum FESTIVAL

Next competition "Merci, Maestro!" - April 2027

open to all nationalities

Do you share our vision and want to help talented young musicians in their careers?
We're always on the lookout for sponsors to support our upcoming international competitions and festivals!
Don't hesitate to contact us if you'd like to join us in our efforts to nurture young talents!

www.mercimaestro.be | info@mercimaestro.be | +32 496 48 87 80

Merci, Maestro!

Special Prizes:

- **GRANT for participation in Masterclasses "MUSIC ACADEMY FORTE" 2026 or 2027** - *Provided by Nataliya Chepurenko (BRIMA)*
- **Concerts at ART SALON BRIMA , Brussels , Belgium 2026/2027** - *Provided by Nataliya Chepurenko (BRIMA)*
- **Concert : participation in festival "MUSICORUM" 2026 & 2027**
- **Concerts in Italy :** *Provided by Accademia Musicale Nocerina*
- **Concert in Zurich, Swiss:** *Provided by "Unite Classics"*
- **GRANT f or Participation at the masterclasses in International Piano Forum Sanok, Poland** - *Provided by "Bieszczady Without Borders"*
- **"Schubert Prize" – for the best interpretation of a work by Franz Schubert** - *Provided by Elena Margolina-Hait*
- **Prize for the youngest promising participants in each category**
- **Cash prizes**
- **Special prizes for category A**
- **Special prizes from junior jury**
- **Others special prizes from: "Point d'Orque" , "MUSIC ACADEMY FORTE", "BRIMA" …**