

The Chopin Foundation
of the United States
Northwest Council



2025

**GOLD MEDALISTS'
CONCERT:**

SUNDAY, FEB 9, 2025

1:30 pm and 3:30 pm

Overlake Christian Church

9900 Willows Rd NE

Redmond, WA 98052



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The Origins of Chopin's Melancholy

In the vibrant tapestry of musical history few figures have left such an indelible impression as the renowned composer and pianist, Frédéric Chopin. Employing a remarkable amalgamation of his Polish heritage combined with an artistically creative brilliance, it appears that he fashioned many of his compositions out of intricately entwined memories from his remarkable childhood. Like a painter shaping an assortment of colorful images from a broad palette, Chopin used his piano to skillfully transform his recollections into often-melancholic melodies that continue to captivate audiences to this day. Although just how he accomplished that remains largely shrouded by the enigma of musical genius, are there clues from his life that can shed light on the sources of his inspiration?

Some of those indicators might be traced to his letters to his friends. For example, "Oh, how miserable it is to have no one to share sorrows and joys, and, when your heart is really heavy, to have no soul to whom you can pour out your woes." Or this, "It is dreadful when something weighs on your mind, not to have a soul to unburden yourself to...I tell the piano the things I used to tell you." These are the laments of a lonely man, an individual deprived of close companionship. Chopin's music was recurrently imbued with this sense of sadness, a longing for a bygone era along with the reflections of his own bittersweet memories. A sad and lonely person often will turn to nostalgia in an attempt to recreate the past, but was Chopin really this lonely and if so, why?

Of all of Chopin's music his Nocturnes express the greatest manifestations of melancholy and nostalgia. He wrote his first one – Opus 72, No. 1 in E minor - shortly after the tragic death of his artistically talented sister, Emilia. She had died suddenly and unexpectedly in their family's home from a massive pulmonary hemorrhage at the age of fifteen. Then only seventeen, Chopin was devastated; he and Emilia had always been very close. This first nocturne is sadness incarnate.

Chopin's next foray into writing in this genre came in 1830, mere months following his reluctant departure from his beloved Poland for a highly uncertain future in Paris. Soon after arriving in the City of Light the twenty-year old Chopin became extremely homesick and lonely, terribly missing his friends and family, yet he swiftly rendered these feelings into what would become one of his most popular masterpieces, the Nocturne in E flat major, Opus 9, No. 2.

After his engagement to Maria Wodzinska was over-ruled by her aristocratic parents in 1836, Chopin once again entered a deep funk, wrapping a bundle of her letters together and calling them "My sorrow" ("Moja bieda.") Out of this misery he created the Nocturnes of Opus 27, containing some of the most melancholically beautiful works he would ever compose. He had translated his feelings of loss and loneliness into marvelous works of art. He would never forget the terrible tragedy of the Russian occupation of Poland nor would he ever separate his personal sorrows from the fate of his beloved homeland. For the rest of his life Chopin would continue to steep his works in his deep emotional well of sorrow.

Chopin's nostalgia, this melancholic sentimentality for the past, was prompted by his feelings of loneliness, disconnectedness or meaninglessness. Perhaps by revisiting his past he gained much-needed context, perspective and direction. Might it be possible to think that Chopin's obsessive dwelling on the past, while directing him to create the musical masterpieces the world still enjoys, actually allowed him to find solace and come to terms with his sorrows by becoming psychologically cathartic, even therapeutic?

Steven Lagerberg November, 2024 Paris

Dr. Steven Lagerberg is retired as a practicing physician from Kaiser Permanente and is the founder of the NW Council of the Chopin Foundation. Steven is the author of: Chopin's Heart: The Quest to Identify the Mysterious Illness of the World's Most Beloved Composer and Essays on Chopin

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GOLD MEDALISTS' CONCERT

1:30 pm

AGES 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11,12

**Overlake Christian Church
9900 Willows Rd NE, Redmond, WA 98052**

Hosted by Dr. Steven Lagerberg and Yunbo Cassady

Group Photo, Medal Ceremony, Certificates and Flowers will be presented at end of concert

6 YEAR OLD DIVISION

Adjudicator: Dr. Theresa Bogard

Charlotte Wu (Teacher: Ni Liu)
Nocturne in C Minor, Posth.

7 YEAR OLD DIVISION

Adjudicator: Dr. Ernest Barretta

Erica Xu (Teacher: Yanan Li)
Waltz in B Minor, Op. 69 # 2

Juno Wang (Teacher: Adam Aleksander)
Waltz in F Minor, Op. 70 # 2

8 YEAR OLD DIVISION

Adjudicator: Dr. Theresa Bogard

Athena Li (Teachers: Tracy Xu/Peter Mack)
Waltz in F-sharp Minor, Posth.

Daniel Wang (Teacher: Hanna Cyba)
Nocturne in G Minor, Op. 15 # 3

Ellie Zhang (Teacher: Sasha Starcevich)
Waltz in A Minor, Op. 34 # 2

9 YEAR OLD DIVISION

Adjudicator: Dr. Elizabeth Schumann

Annabelle Wang (Teacher: Tatiana Lanford)
Waltz in A-flat Major, Op. 69 # 1

Harper Li (Teacher: Ekaterina Melkamini)
Mazurka in A-flat Major, Op. 24 # 3

10 YEAR OLD DIVISION

Adjudicator: Dr. Grace Liu

Chloe Nari Wang (Teacher: Adam Aleksander)
Waltz in E Minor, Posth.

Crystal Jiao (Teacher: Hanna Cyba)
Polonaise in G Minor, Posth.

Felix Zhang (Teacher: Sasha Starcevich)
Waltz in E-flat Major, Op. 18

11 YEAR OLD DIVISION:

Adjudicator: Dr. Ernest Barretta

Alexander Wang (Teacher: Tatiana Lanford)
Nocturne in E Major, Op. 62 # 2

Alvin Lee (Teacher: SH Youn)
Scherzo in B-flat Minor, Op. 31

Daniel Luan (Teacher: Peter Mack)
Nocturne in D-flat Major, Op. 27 # 2

Ru-Shan An (Teacher: Hanna Cyba)
Nocturne in E Major, Op. 62 # 2

12 YEAR OLD DIVISION

Adjudicator: Dr. Theresa Bogard

Arthur Zhang (Teacher: Nino Merabishvili)
Waltz in E-flat Major, Op. 18

Cara Fan (Teacher: Nino Merabishvili)
Etude in C-sharp Minor, Op. 25 # 7

Lucas Popescu (Teacher: SH Youn)
Mazurka in C-sharp Minor, Op. 50 # 3

GOLD MEDALISTS' CONCERT

3:30 pm

AGES 13, 14, 15, 16, 17-18

**Overlake Christian Church
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Hosted by Dr. Steven Lagerberg and Yunbo Cassady

Group Photo, Medal Ceremony, Certificates and Flowers will be presented at end of concert

13 YEAR OLD DIVISION

Adjudicator: Dr. Elizabeth Schumann

Ethan Kyte (Teacher: Nino Merabishvili)
Nocturne in C-sharp Minor, Op. 27 # 1

Jane Kwon (Teacher: SH Youn)
Nocturne in E-flat Major, Op. 55 # 2

Zhuoxi (Daniel) Liu (Teacher: Adam Aleksander)
Nocturne in C-sharp Minor, Op. 27 # 1

14 YEAR OLD DIVISION

Adjudicator: Dr. Ernest Barretta

Connor Wang (Teacher: Tatiana Sharapova)
Ballade in F Minor, Op. 52

15 YEAR OLD DIVISION

Adjudicator: Dr. Grace Liu

Alexander Vollmer (Teacher: SH Youn)
Barcarolle in F-sharp Major, Op. 60

Isabel Yang (Teacher: SH Youn)
Ballade in F Major, Op. 38

16 YEAR OLD DIVISION

Adjudicator: Dr. Theresa Bogard

Angelina Mitrianu (Teacher: Ekaterina Melkamini)
Ballade in A-flat Major, Op. 47

Taiyo Oishi (Teacher: Oksana Ejokina)
Mazurka in F-sharp Minor, Op. 59 # 3

17-18 YEAR OLD DIVISION

Adjudicator: Dr. Elizabeth Schumann

Michelle Cao (Teacher: Sasha Starcevich)
Ballade in F Minor, Op. 52

Helen Belvin Scholarship

Our four adjudicators will each choose recipients to receive a Helen Belvin Memorial Scholarship Prize from their roster of 2025 Gold Medalists. We will announce the Scholarship Recipients at the:

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SUNDAY, FEB 9, 2025
1:30 pm and 3:30 pm
Overlake Christian Church
9900 Willows Rd NE
Redmond, WA 98052**

Helen Belvin – A Tribute



Few people know that Helen Belvin played a critical role in the history of the Northwest Council of the Chopin Foundation. In the year 2000 I founded the Northwest Council in Seattle. From its humble beginnings the organization focused its energy presenting classical piano concerts showcasing the music of Frédéric Chopin. Two years later, in order to interest more piano students and introduce them and their teachers to this music, our annual Chopin Festival was introduced. Staging concerts continued to be a major challenge for the organization, however, as it lacked sufficient donors and ticket revenue. Despite the superb artists the Foundation procured some concerts were wildly successful; others not so much. In a bold move in an attempt to improve its financial position, in 2006 the Council decided to join with the Northwest Chamber Orchestra to present the widely celebrated local pianist, Craig Sheppard, performing Chopin's concerti at two consecutive concerts at Benaroya Hall. These concerts were nearly sold out affairs and were considered to be complete artistic successes. Unexpectedly, immediately following these concerts the NWCO suddenly declared bankruptcy. The Chopin Foundation would not be able to reap any financial benefit from those concerts and we were left owing a large sum of money for their expenses. Our large financial investment had failed. We were at a critical crossroads. The future of our organization looked grim. No

one could then have predicted that Helen would come to its rescue.

Compounding this crisis was the fact that I had previously committed to moving to Paris where my wife and I had recently purchased a home. I had fully expected the monetary cushion provided by the Benaroya concerts to propel the Council to a secure future. With the financial failure of those concerts and without finding someone who wished to continue in a leadership role I was distraught.

Soon thereafter I was startled to run into Helen outside the door of the now-closed Sherman Clay store in downtown Seattle. As we stood there on the sidewalk discussing the unsettled future of the Chopin Foundation I came to fully realize the depth of this woman's passion for the music of Chopin and the importance for her of passing that enthusiasm on to the next generation of piano students. She immediately offered to take on the mantle of leadership of the Council. I felt tremendously relieved. From that moment in our relationship I observed that she possessed a remarkable combination of leadership ability, deep musical knowledge, and a steely determination to do the right thing.

I had always known Helen to be a fine performing artist and superb teacher, revered by hundreds in our community. What I hadn't previously appreciated was her extraordinary thoughtfulness, kindness, and grace. She also possessed the wisdom to shift the focus of the Foundation toward its Festival and away from the economic uncertainties of presenting large public concerts. With her unwavering leadership as President of the Council for several years she attracted the attention of many locally prominent piano teachers and hence their students. From that new direction the Festival blossomed to become what is today one of the largest and most successful Chopin festival-competitions in North America.

In her retirement Helen continued to support the Northwest Council, organizing popular concerts presenting the winners of our Festivals to the residents of her large retirement home in Bellevue. Once, as an aside to me during one of those concerts, she shared with me that she thought she had obtained her "grit" and determination from her late father, a Norwegian immigrant and renowned local surgeon. Whatever the source of her personality strengths, she served the Northwest Council exceedingly well and her singlehanded efforts helped to safeguard its future. In the year following her death in 2019, the Northwest Council was surprised to receive a very generous sum of money that she intended to be used as an endowment for the organization. This bighearted gift has only served to burnish her already praiseworthy legacy even more.

Steven Lagerberg January, 2021

OUR 2025 ADJUDICATORS:

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING, Department of Piano

DR. THERESA BOGARD



American pianist Theresa Bogard is a dynamic, versatile performer dedicated to expanding the canon of traditional piano repertoire. Her early career focused on performances of music by women composers, and she continues to include works by other lesser known composers in her varied programs. As a recipient of a coveted Fulbright grant, Bogard was able to explore her interest in historical performance practice and fortepiano studying at the Royal Conservatory of the Hague in the Netherlands. That same year she was a top-prize winner in the International Mozart Fortepiano Competition in Bruges, Belgium. A world traveler with a passion for other cultures, Bogard has performed on five continents in Belgium, Austria, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, Mexico, Bolivia, Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, China, Taiwan, Singapore, and throughout the United States. Her extensive discography includes a wide variety of recordings ranging from solo piano to chamber music collaborations, from music of living composers to her specialty in fortepiano and historical performance practice. She has served on the faculty of the InterHarmony International Music Festival in Italy and the Sulzbach-Rosenberg International Music Festival in Germany and has performed at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall and at the Ravinia Steans Institute with cellist Misha Quint. Since her first concert tour in Brazil in 2007, she has become obsessed with the music of Brazilian composers. Returning to Brazil whenever possible, she has given

masterclasses and performances at universities in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Cuiaba, Curitiba, Florianopolis, Goiania and Porto Alegre. In 2018, she toured five cities in Brazil with the Trio das Nações and will return to Brazil in 2022 for a recording of works for flute and piano by Brazilian composers.

Internationally known as a pedagogue, she has been honored with numerous teaching awards. She attracts students from around the world as professor of piano at the University of Wyoming, where she also served as chair of the music department from 2010 to 2016. In 2008, she was chosen as the Wyoming Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation. Her students have distinguished themselves in numerous piano competitions and been accepted into the top graduate and undergraduate programs in the country including: The Julliard School, Eastman School of Music, Cleveland Institute of Music, Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, Manhattan School of Music and Peabody Conservatory of Music among others. She has also served as an adjudicator at numerous regional, national and international piano competitions. Dr. Bogard is a Steinway Artist.

OUR 2025 ADJUDICATORS:

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, Department of Music

DR. ELIZABETH SCHUMANN



Dr. Elizabeth Schumann has a diverse career portfolio of projects, recordings, and performances which have brought her all over the world as recitalist, chamber musician, and concerto soloist. The Washington Post noted her playing as “deft, relentless, and devastatingly good—the sort of performance you experience not so much with your ears as your solar plexus.”

The first place winner of both the Bösendorfer International Piano Competition and the Pacific International Piano Competition, Elizabeth has won over 25 prizes and awards in other major national and international competitions, including the Cleveland International Piano Competition and the Hilton Head International Piano Competition. Elizabeth was honored with the prestigious Gilmore Young Artists Award, and was highlighted in a PBS Television documentary on the Gilmore Festival.

She has performed in such venues as the Kennedy Center, Vienna’s Bösendorfer Saal, Toronto’s Koerner Hall, and Montreal’s Place des Arts. She was featured at the Cannes Film Festival, the Gilmore Festival, Australia’s Huntington Festival, the Ravinia “Rising Stars” Series, and National Public Radio’s “Performance Today”, and her recitals have been broadcast live on public radio and television in cities around the world, including Washington D.C.,

New York, Sydney, Cleveland, Montréal, Dallas, and Chicago. Elizabeth also gave the world premiere performance of Carl Vine’s Sonata No. 3, which the composer dedicated to her.

As a dedicated chamber musician and proponent of community engagement, Elizabeth is a core member of the Ives Collective, Chameleon Arts Ensemble, and Ensemble San Francisco, a piano quartet dedicated to inspiring a more inclusive world. Elizabeth also conceived and created Son et Lumière: an ongoing performance series that transforms outdoor urban spaces with live music accompanied by large scale video projections to reach beyond the concert hall and bring music into accessible public spaces. The goal of the series is to allow audiences to meet music on their own terms and experience its power without barriers of price or pretense.

Elizabeth and her sister, Sonya Schumann, formed the Schumann Duo to engage diverse audiences with innovative combinations of piano music, theater, literature, art, and technology. The Schumann Duo’s tours of the US, Canada, and Australia were acclaimed by critics and audiences alike. In response to declining funding for arts education in the United States, Elizabeth devised and directed Piano Carnival, a Schumann Duo project to introduce free, high quality classical concert music to children in areas without arts education. Over 20,000 copies of Piano Carnival have been distributed for free, and multimedia lesson plans and the Piano Carnival iPad and iPhone applications are available free online.

Elizabeth has carried on the pedagogical tradition of her teacher, Sergei Babayan, as faculty at Summer and Winter Performing Arts with Juilliard, Itzhak Perlman’s Perlman Music Program, and the Crowden Chamber Music Workshop. She is the director of the Schumann Studio, a recording space in San Francisco designed to provide a personal individually tailored recording experience for classical musicians.

OUR 2025 ADJUDICATORS:

JUILLIARD SCHOOL, Pre-college Piano

DR. ERNEST BARRETTA



Ernest Barretta was born in McKeesport, Pa., and was a winner of the Pittsburgh Concert Society Young Artists Competition and the Pittsburgh Musician's Club Competition. Among his prizes are the Rudolph Serkin Prize (Oberlin), Strine Award (University of Arts), and Zierler Award (Peabody). He has had extensive performance experience as a soloist and chamber musician in the U.S. and abroad. Among his recent appearances are performances with the National Gallery Orchestra, the Mid-Atlantic Symphony, and the St. Petersburg Symphony. He has recorded as solo artist and with chamber groups on the MRC and Musician's Showcase labels. He is also active as a composer and conductor in the Baltimore area.

He joined the Juilliard Pre-College faculty in 2001 and was formerly a member of the faculty at Peabody Conservatory and Towson University (Maryland). He holds a BM from Oberlin Conservatory, a MM from University of Arts, and a DMA from Peabody Conservatory. He had early studies in piano, organ, and composition in the Pittsburgh area, and later studies with Sanford Margolis, Jonathan Shames, and Yoheved Kaplinsky.

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DR. GRACE LIU



Grace Liu is a Taiwanese-American pianist who performs as a soloist and collaborative pianist in the U.S. and Taiwan, "impressing [audiences] with her finesse and sensitivity" (Orange County Register). She is the recipient of the Pauline Favin Memorial Award in Piano and the Clara Ascherfel Accompanying Award at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. She was also a finalist and recitalist at the Wonderlic Piano Competition and Schlern International Music Competition. As concerto soloist, she has also featured with the UC Irvine Symphony as the winner of the concerto competition.

Liu has been invited to participate in numerous international music festivals, including the Banff Piano Masterclass (Canada), Bowdoin International Music Festival (ME), Beethoven Institute (NY), and Schlern International Music Festival (Italy). She has also participated in master classes taught by Leon Fleisher, Menahem Pressler, Boris Berman, John Perry, Stephen Hough, as well as the Jupiter and Takacs Quartets.

A dedicated teacher, Liu currently holds faculty positions at Peabody Preparatory, St. James School, and the Park School of Baltimore, and she maintains a private studio in Baltimore.

Liu earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Peabody Institute, where she also received her Master of Music degree in piano performance. She completed her Bachelor of Music degree at University of California, Irvine. Her major teachers include Alexander Shtarkman, Lorna Griffitt, Rose Hsin-I Chen, and Daniel Hanley.



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IN-PERSON COMPETITION:

Saturday, May 3, 2025

**Location: Mercer Island Presbyterian Church
3605 84th Ave SE, Mercer Island, WA 98040**

Competition Results will be posted on our website by Sunday, 3 pm, May 4, 2025. Only 250 pianists will be admitted.

REGISTRATION BEGINS FEB. 15th. Registration closes When 250 pianists are registered. No waitlist.

PRIZES FOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES:

Medals may be awarded to excellent performances. All performers receive Certificate of Achievement and valuable adjudication feedback from world class adjudicators.

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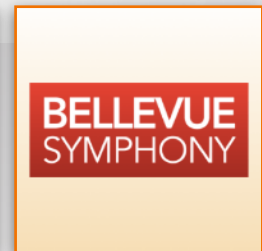
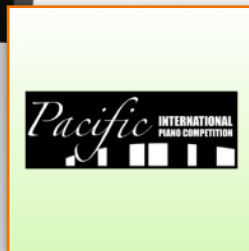




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- *Sonafest Piano Competition*
- *Pacific International Piano competition*
- *International German Music Piano Competition*
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<https://pacificpiano.org>



WHO WE ARE:

Our all-volunteer board of directors and artistic advisors work year-round to produce and manage six high quality competitions for classical musicians. Our paid panel of world-class professors from the nation's finest music schools (Eastman School of Music, Jacob's School-Indiana University, Oberlin Conservatory, Juilliard, Cleveland Institute of Music, San Francisco Conservatory, etc) offer valuable feedback for every applicant. The registration fee collected from every one of our six competitions directly fund Bellevue Symphony. We are a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

ABOUT THE COMPETITIONS:

All our competitions focus primarily on piano repertoire: solo, chamber and piano/orchestra. All of our competitions, except for Bellevue Symphony Concerto Competition, are open to any pianist, any geographical region. Pianists living outside of Washington State are welcome to enter our virtual divisions. We enjoy giving lavish personalized medals, certificates and trophies to our winners! Each of our competitions may have their own set of prizes so please click on each competition link for complete details.

QUICK LINKS TO ALL OUR COMPETITIONS:

[INTERNATIONAL FRENCH MUSIC PIANO COMPETITION](#)

January/February

[SONAFEST PIANO COMPETITION](#)

March/April

[PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION](#)

May/June

[INTERNATIONAL GERMAN MUSIC PIANO COMPETITION](#)

August/September

[PACIFIC NORTHWEST PIANO COMPETITION](#)

October/November

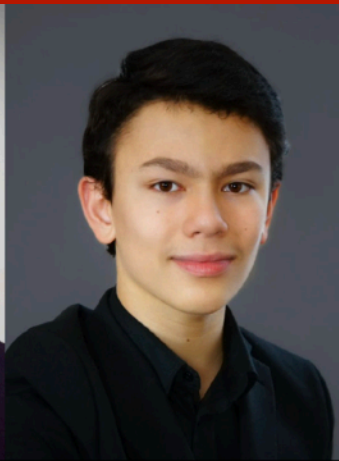
[BELLEVUE SYMPHONY CONCERTO COMPETITION](#)

December

<https://pacificpiano.org>

BELLEVUE SYMPHONY

<https://bellevuesymphony.org>



Bellevue Symphony Spring Concert

SUNDAY, MARCH 2 AT 3 pm

Meydenbauer Theater

11100 NE 6th St, Bellevue, WA 98004

Featuring four Grand Prix winners from the 2024 Bellevue Symphony Concerto Competition and Grand Prix winner from Russian Chamber Foundation of Seattle!

<https://bellevuesymphony.org/>

COMPLETE PROGRAM:

Timothy Yu, Bruch: Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, 1st mov
Alvin Lee, Ravel Piano Concerto in G, 2nd/3rd movs
Sarah Lee, Dvorak: Cello Concerto in B Minor, Op. 104, 1st mov
Jeffrey Zhao, Chopin: Piano Concerto no. 1 in E minor, 1st mov
Alexander Vollmer, Prokofiev: Piano Concerto no. 2, 1st mov

- INTERMISSION -

Tchaikovsky: Symphony no. 5 in E minor, op. 64
Puccini: from Turandot, Nessun Dorma
Special Guest: Michael Nim, Tenor

Enter promotion code: french and get 50% OFF ticket price!

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1129126891929?aff=oddtcreator>