

# The 9th International Competition for Young Pianists



# Merci, Maestro!

09-13.04.2025  
Brussels,  
Belgium



# GALA CONCERT

of the Winners

# 13th April 2025 (SUN)

# 18h00

Brussels Town Hall, Gothic Room,  
Grand Place

Classical music (Piano Solo) | Reception after the concert

[WWW.MERCIMAESTRO.BE](http://WWW.MERCIMAESTRO.BE) | [INFO@MERCIMAESTRO.BE](mailto:INFO@MERCIMAESTRO.BE) | +32 496 48 87 80



Ambassade d'Ukraine  
auprès du Royaume  
de Belgique





**Dear audience and participants,**

Welcome to the 9th edition of the International Competition for Young Pianists "Merci, Maestro!" 2025! This year, we are proud to have selected 56 participants from 74 candidates representing 24 countries.

For nine 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 April 2026! We hope you enjoy the music!

**Best Regards,**

**Nataliya Chepurenko**

**Founder & Artistic Director**

**International Competition for Young Pianists "Merci, Maestro!" 2025**



# 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.



## **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.



## **Lyudmyla Zakopets (Ukraine)**

Professor of piano at the Lviv State Music Lyceum named after Solomiya Krushelnytska (Ukraine). Coordinator & Professor of International Piano Forum "Beshchady bez kordoniv" (Poland). She is also an organizer and director of the first international young pianist competition "Feurich-virtuos" in Lviv and "Bechstein". Over the years of teaching, the achievements are: 90 prizewinners of international and national competitions, 40 performances with symphonic and chamber orchestras in Ukraine, Germany, Poland and other countries.

# JURY MEMBERS



## **Michail Markov (Netherlands)**

Founder and the artistic leader of the International Piano Competition for Young Musicians in Enschede, The Netherlands. Since 1991, he has been living in the Netherlands where he has continued his successful combination of teaching and musical performances. Since mid-nineties he is working as professor at the piano department of the ArtEZ Conservatory in Enschede, the Netherlands. He is also the co-founder of the special Young Talents piano department of this Conservatory. He has been invited to give Master Classes at many International Music Festivals and Summer Schools in the Netherlands, USA, Austria, Poland and Ukraine.



## **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.



## **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).



## **Tatiana Kozlova (Israel)**

Professor of piano at the Israeli Conservatory of Music in Tel-Aviv. Artistic director of "Stretto international piano competition" in Tel-Aviv. Previously artistic director of Scherzo international piano competition. Teaches constantly around the globe in different master classes: Elena Cobb Star Music Festival, Musicfest Perugia, Carmel Klavier International Piano competition. Touring career: performing at various international festivals and competition in Lithuania, Poland, Holland, Greece and Belgium. Jury member in various piano competitions.



# CATEGORY A

( age 10 and below )



Aaron Yijia Gu  
(Age 9, China)



Emma Mamaieva  
(Age 9, Ukraine)



Yihan-Laura Xu  
(Age 8, China)



Heda Hou  
(Age 10, Netherlands)



Ethan Ng  
(Age 7, Belgium)



Osamu Ishimaru  
(Age 7, Japan)



Rosalin Qin  
(Age 7, Belgium)



Nora Kostenko  
(Age 10, Ukraine)



Pavlo Rovchak  
(Age 10, Ukraine)



Oleksandr Kostyshyn  
(Age 8, Ukraine)



Jingshu Shi  
(Age 9, China)



Agnia Kovaleva  
(Age 8, Belgium)



Huaijie Wang  
(Age 10, China)



Oscar Liu  
(Age 10, Ireland)



Freddy Wu  
(Age 10, Austria)

# CATEGORY B

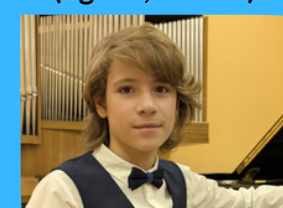
( age 11 to 13 )



Kera Ignatova  
(Age 11, Bulgaria)



Mykhailo Kobetskyi  
(Age 13, Ukraine)



Vladimir Kolarski  
(Age 12, Serbia)



Jayden Liu  
(Age 12, Ireland)



Elin Qin  
(Age 12, Belgium)



Marc Albert Staicovici  
(Age 12, Romania)



Mariia Yermak  
(Age 12, Ukraine)

# CATEGORY C

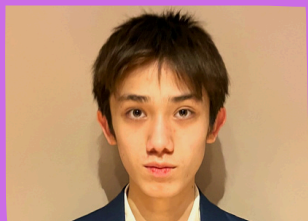
(age 14 to 16)



**Martin Bajer**  
(Age 16, Czech Republic)



**Nelis Vernik**  
(Age 16, Estonia)



**Léo D'hose**  
(Age 14, Belgium)



**Sebastian Congyi Wang**  
(Age 14, United Kingdom)



**Konstantinos Drosinakis**  
(Age 15, Greece)



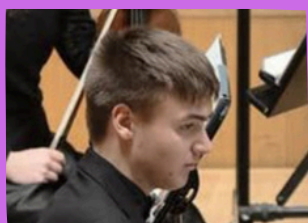
**Chenrui Zhang**  
(Age 15, China)



**Clovis Gobry**  
(Age 15, France)



**Mishel Kostenko**  
(Age 15, Ukraine)



**Ondrej Sýkora**  
(Age 16, Slovakia)

# CATEGORY D

(age 17 to 19)



**Ario Bashirtash**  
(Age 17, Belgium)



**Yurii Nechypor**  
(Age 18, Ukraine)



**Ivanna Davydiuk**  
(Age 19, Ukraine)



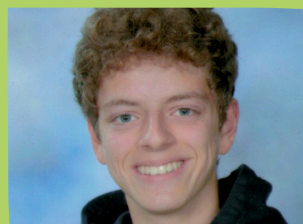
**Magdalena Pflüger**  
(Age 17, Germany)



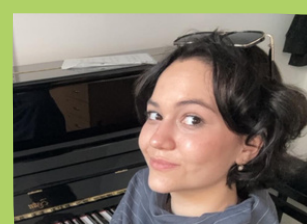
**Tibo Glowczynski**  
(Age 17, Belgium)



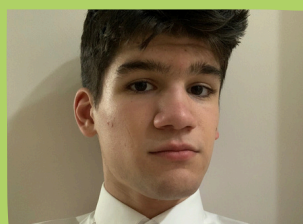
**Sin U Sou**  
(Age 19, Macau)



**Daniele Grassi**  
(Age 17, Italy)



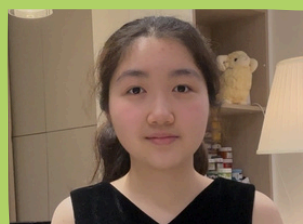
**Maria-Louisa van Staden**  
(Age 17, Romania)



**Zsombor Horváth**  
(Age 18, Hungary)



**Tomasz Widłak**  
(Age 19, Poland)

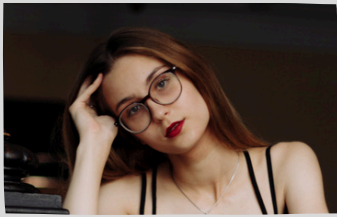


**Shiyi Liu**  
(Age 17, China)



# CATEGORY E

( age 20 to 22 )



**Yana Kalenchuk**  
(Age 20, Ukraine)



**Steven Kleeven**  
(Age 20, Belgium)



**Ihor Panchenko**  
(Age 20, Ukraine)



**Kyoka Sasaya**  
(Age 22, Japan)



**Salome Tsankashvili**  
(Age 20, Belgium)



**Raffaella Witzemann**  
(Age 22, Austria)

# CATEGORY F

( age 23 to 25 )



**Fumika Matsumura**  
(Age 23, Japan)



**Akito Nagai**  
(Age 24, Japan)



**Lilianna Oliinyk**  
(Age 25, Ukraine)



**Nikolas Pappas**  
(Age 24, Greece)



**Pierre Risopoulos**  
(Age 25, Belgium)



**Matthew Tao**  
(Age 23, United States)





With the support of the City of Brussels and the Embassy of Ukraine in the Kingdom of Belgium,  
the 9<sup>th</sup> International Competition for Young Pianists “Merci, Maestro!” 2025 presents:

# GALA CONCERT

of the winners 2025

13.04.2025 | 18:00 | Gothic Room, Brussels Town Hall (Grand-Place)

with reception after the concert

## PROGRAM

CATEGORY A: 2nd Prize

**Jingshu Shi**

*China, 9 years old*

W.A.Mozart: Sonata N16 C Major, K 545: III rondo

CATEGORY A: 2nd Prize

**Pavlo Rovchak**

*Ukraine, 10 years old*

E.Grieg: The Poet's Heart

CATEGORY A: 2nd Prize

**Agnia Kovaleva**

*Belgium, 8 years old*

J.S.Bach: Invention N15 in b minor, BWV 786

CATEGORY A: 2nd Prize

**Nora Kostenko**

*Ukraine, 10 years old*

I.Shamo: Prelude N8, "Quasi Campana"

CATEGORY A: 2nd Prize

**Heda Hou**

*Netherlands, 10 years old*

I.Berkovich: Toccata

CATEGORY A: 2nd Prize

**Yijia Gu**

*China, 9 years old*

C.Deussy: Children's Corner, L.113 N1

Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum

CATEGORY E: 2nd Prize

**Yana Kalenchuk**

*Ukraine, 20 years old*

B.Lyatoshynskyi: Prelude Op.44 N2

CATEGORY A: 1st Prize

**Yihan-Laura Xu**

*China, 8 years old*

J.Haydn: Sonata in G Major, Hob.XVI 27: Allegro con brio

CATEGORY A: 1st Prize

**Freddy Wu**

*Austria, 10 years old*

M.Moskovski: Etude Op72 N11

CATEGORY A: 1st Prize

**Oleksandr Kostyshyn**

*Ukraine, 8 years old*

L.Revutsky: Waltz

CATEGORY C: 1st Prize

**Chenrui Zhang**

*China, 15 years old*

F.Chopin: Nocturne c# minor Op.27 N1

CATEGORY F: 1st Prize

**Akito Nagai**

*Japan, 24 years old*

F.Chopin: Ballade N3 in Ab Major, Op.47

CATEGORY E: 1st Prize

**Ihor Panchenko**

*Ukraine, 20 years old*

R.Schumann/F.Liszt: Widmung, S.566

CATEGORY E: 1st Prize

**Steven Kleeven**

*Belgium, 20 years old*

F.Chopin: Etude Op. 25 N12 in c minor

CATEGORY D: 1st Prize

**Yurii Nechypor**

*Ukraine, 18 years old*

S.Bortkiewicz: Piano Sonata N2 in c# minor, Op. 60 - 1<sup>st</sup> mov.

# 1-2-3 PRIZES

## CATEGORY A

- 1st Prize:** Oleksandr Kostyshyn (Ukraine, 8 y/o), Yihan-Laura Xu (China, 8 y/o), Freddy Wu (Austria, 10 y/o)  
**2nd Prize:** Agnia Kovaleva (Belgium, 8 y/o), Jingshu Shi (China, 9 y/o), Pavlo Rovchak (Ukraine, 10 y/o), Heda Hou (Netherlands, 10 y/o), Nora Kostenko (Ukraine, 10 y/o), Yijia Gu (China, 9 y/o)  
**3rd Prize:** Emma Mamaieva (Ukraine, 9 y/o), Oscar Liu (Ireland, 10 y/o), Osamu Ishimaru (Japan, 7 y/o)

## CATEGORY B

The members of the jury decided that no prize would be awarded this year in category B.

## CATEGORY C

**1st Prize:** Chenrui Zhang (China, 15 y/o) | **2nd Prize:** Martin Bajer (Czech Republic, 16 y/o) | **3rd Prize** not awarded

## CATEGORY D

**1st Prize:** Yurii Nechypor (Ukraine, 18 y/o)  
**2nd Prize:** Magdalena Pflüger (Germany, 17 y/o) | **3rd Prize:** Shiyi Liu (China, 17 y/o), Sin U Sou (Macau, 19 y/o)

## CATEGORY E

**1st Prize:** Steven Kleeven (Belgium, 20 y/o), Ihor Panchenko (Ukraine, 20 y/o)  
**2nd Prize:** Yana Kalenchuk (Ukraine, 20 y/o) | **3rd Prize:** Kyoka Sasaya (Japan, 22 y/o)

## CATEGORY F

**1st Prize:** Akito Nagai (Japan, 24 y/o)  
**2nd Prize:** Nikolas Pappas (Greece, 24 y/o) | **3rd Prize:** Fumika Matsumura (Japan, 23 y/o)

## SPECIAL PRIZES RECIPIENTS:

- Invitation by The Academic Symphony Orchestra of the Lviv National Philharmonic named after Myroslav Skoryk and the Lviv Krushelnyska State Music Lyceum to perform in one concert as a soloist with the Symphony Orchestra of Lviv (Ukraine) 2025/2026: **Chenrui Zhang (China, 15 y/o)**
- Partial Grants for participation in the International Festival Masterclasses & Concerts "MUSIC ACADEMY FORTE" 2025 or 2026: **Martin Bajer (Czech Republic, 16 y/o), Yurii Nechypor (Ukraine, 18 y/o), Shiyi Liu (China, 17 y/o), Sin U Sou (Macau, 19 y/o), Steven Kleeven (Belgium, 20 y/o), Ihor Panchenko (Ukraine, 20 y/o), Yana Kalenchuk (Ukraine, 20 y/o)**
- Full Grants for participation in the International Festival Masterclasses & Concerts "MUSIC ACADEMY FORTE" 2025 or 2026: **Akito Nagai (Japan, 24 y/o)**
- Invitation to participate in the 21st International Piano Forum "Bieszczady Without Borders" in Sanok (Poland) from February 1-7, 2026 (Exemption from the entry fee of approximately 150 euro):  
**Martin Bajer (Czech Republic, 16 y/o), Ondrej Sýkora (Slovakia, 16 y/o), Nikolas Pappas (Greece, 24 y/o)**
- Concert in ITALY organised by ASSOCIAZIONE DI ALTA CULTURA MUSICALE (travel and accommodation are included in the prize): **Yurii Nechypor (Ukraine, 18 y/o)**
- Masterclass in ITALY organised by ACCADEMIA MUSICALE NOCERINA (travel and accommodation are included in the prize): **Nora Kostenko (Ukraine, 10 y/o), Mishel Kostenko (Ukraine, 15 y/o)**
- Participation at the concert of MUSICORUM festival (Brussels, Belgium) 2025/2026: **Chenrui Zhang (China, 15 y/o)**
- Participation at the concert with CAMERATA BRIMA in Brussels, Belgium 2025/2026: **Steven Kleeven (Belgium, 20 y/o)**
- Best performance of a modern composition: **Magdalena Pflüger (Germany, 17 y/o)**
- Prize for the youngest promising finalist in category C: **Sebastian Congyi Wang (United Kingdom, 14 y/o)**
- The best performance of a virtuoso piece-Special edition of music scores of Ukrainian composers: **Akito Nagai (Japan, 24 y/o)**
- Best interpretation of a Ukrainian Composer's composition: **Yana Kalenchuk (Ukraine, 20 y/o)**

## PARTNERS:



**SPECIAL THANKS GO TO :** Mme Natalia Anoshyna, Chargé d'Affaires of Ukraine in the Kingdom of Belgium; Mme Kateryna Bilotil, First 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 2026**

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# International Competition for Young Pianists "Merci, Maestro!" 2025

## MANAGEMENT TEAM

**Founder & Artistic director:** Nataliya Chepurenko

**Program Coordinator, Responsible of Communication:**

HueyChing Chong, Juliette Simonet, Olga Aksionchyk, Baptiste Renglet

## GALA CONCERT

organised with the support of the City of Brussels

under the patronage of the Embassy of Ukraine in the Kingdom of Belgium

Mme Natalia Anoshyna, **Chargé d'Affaires** of Ukraine in the Kingdom of Belgium

Mme Kateryna Bilotil, **First Secretary**

## 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 Hoofdstedelijke Kunstacademie**

## HOST FAMILIES

Godefroy Camauer, Annemie Cordemans, Neil Thomson, Marta Guzy,

Dilber Ahmed, Martine Diss, Cecile Foucard.

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

## PARTNERS



LA VILLE  
DE STAD

Ambassade d'Ukraine  
auprès du Royaume de Belgique

BRIMA  
Brussels International Music Academy



## Next competition "Merci, Maestro!" - April 2026

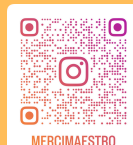
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We're always on the lookout for sponsors to support our upcoming  
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Don't hesitate to contact us if you'd like to join us in our efforts to nurture young talents!

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Merci,  
Maestro!



## Special Prizes:

- 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) 2025/2026
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- Masterclass in ITALY organised by ACCADEMIA MUSICALE NOCERINA (travel and accomodation are included in the prize)
- Participation at the concert with CAMERATA BRIMA in Brussels, Belgium 2025/2026
- SOLO CONCERT at the "SALON BRIMA", Brussels during 2025/2026
- Prize for the youngest promising participants in each category
- The best performance of a virtuoso piece
- Special edition of music scores of Ukrainian composers
- Cash prizes, Medals, Gifts and Diplomas