

THE COMMENTS OF THE JURIES

The 18th International Piano Duo Competition 2013

Director: Tatsuya Suzuki

The final round of the International Piano Duo Competition was held at the Nihon University College of Art Hall on October 14, 2013 in which I could serve as a member of jury among the well known college professors. Number of contestants at the final was 24 pairs and the competition lasted about 7 hours from 9:30 in the morning.

Previously I could enjoy listening performances of the competitions for many years but this time I had to listen to the performances with much attention to score for the jury committee.

As they have already reached to the final after winning through the preliminaries, most of the finalists played very well maximizing the merit of one piano four hands or two pianos four hands. Evaluating 7 hours flid very quickly.

The required piece was the new composition named “**Sôhyô**” by **Akihiko Kanai**, which was the winning piece at the composition competition last year. This piece requires good musical expression not only with pianistic technique but also with **color and depth of sounds**. It also needs good structure though it is a rather short piece. I was looking forward to hearing how contestants would interpret it.

Upon evaluating all of the performances, the Grand Prize was awarded to **the Liang-He Duo** who participated in the competition from U.S. and they were surpassing others with wide margin. They looked as if playing together as a duo for a long time, their two piano 4 hands duo produced superb and refined ensemble with clarity and color of sound. The required piece they played was well structured with rich and colorful sound as it required. Witold Lutoslawski/ Paganini variation and William Bolcom/ “The Serpent’s kiss” from the Garden of Eden they also played as their own elected pieces were good choice musically and they showed great technique and orchestra effect with two pianos. I learned later at the reception that they came from Beijing and Shanghai in China to Chicago and received Doctorate from North Western University. I wish them for their bright future.

Two piano 4 hands would produce a large scale music as orchestra when the duo made a good ensemble, but, on the other hand, **some cases were found even in this competition that each of them was insisting to play too loud as if competing against each other** making a bad result. In this same line the Liang-He Duo created a great ensemble to make music together on two pianos.

The Bose-Pastor Duo who received the 2nd Prize were from Spain and U.S. residing in Geneva Switzerland and played 4 hands on one piano. They played the required piece nicely with good phrase line and rich color. They also played Ravel/ Rapsodie Espagnole IV. Feria superbly with impressive rhythm.

I should also acknowledge **Tomoyo Sakabe/ Kiyami Miyahara Duo** who received the 3rd Prize performing with 4-hands on one piano, **Ayako Tani/ Rui Fujiyama Duo** who received the 4th Prize performing on two pianos 4 hands, and **Yuri Komiyama/ Sachiko Komiyama Duo**, mother and daughter, who received the Steinway Award for their nice work.



→At the reception party Mr. Suzuki is making a speech & toasting



Piano duo competition review

Pianist: Ronald Cavaye <0673>

Once again the International Piano Duo Competition came to a successful conclusion and this very valuable competition succeeded in highlighting the piano duet and two-piano repertoire.

As a member of the jury of, I found the experience enjoyable and rewarding. We heard a broad range of repertoire, although, as usual, difficult classical pieces were largely ignored in favour of the romantic or modern repertoire. I was, however, very pleased with the two performances of the **Mozart** Sonata for Two Pianos, one of which in particular, was extremely professional.



As a judge, what am I listening for? First, what did I most dislike? The short answer to that is “**dynamics**”. Looking at my notes, I see that so often I wrote, “**too loud**”. This was especially obvious in the performances of the set piece, **Kanai Akihiko’s “Sôhyô”**. This work begins *pianissimo* but how many duos really played *pianissimo*? Very few indeed! It was nearly always too loud.

I had a similar problem with the many performances of the *Tarantella* from Rachmaninoff’s Suite No.2. I understand that performers like to play “**showy**” pieces but, with one exception (**the Toyama & Hagino Duo**) nobody ever achieved a proper dynamic range. The *ff* sections were always loud. The *pp* were never quiet enough. This is clearly a problem and I would advise duos to try harder **to learn to play softly!**

What did I like the most? As a member of a jury I like to be surprised by a performance. So often one hears the same mistakes over and over again, and when a duo plays correctly it is always very pleasing. I also like to hear pieces I have never heard before and which are played well. On this occasion I would like to particularly mention the **Sakabe and Miyahara Duo’s** performance of the Rosenblatt *Concertino* and the winning **Liang-He Duo’s** performance of the William Bolcom piece, *The Serpent’s Kiss* which was spectacular and great fun, particularly in its use of percussive (knuckles on the keyboard cover) and vocal clicks!

I would like to congratulate the prize winners and thank all who took part and helped make this such a successful competition.

→Mr. R. Cavaye is translating from Japanese to English for Chair woman, Sumiko Minemura



Comments to the 18th International Piano Duo Competition

Frankfurt music university, former professor:

Rainer Hoffmann<0189>

First of all I would like to thank Minemura-sensei for asking me to join the Jury during the Final Round of this competition. I enjoyed very much listening for about seven hours to the 24 participants. Congratulation not only to the prize-winners, but to all of the competitors, as the serious and intensive preparation for the competition is the more important reason and help for personal and artistic development. Most of the duos **impressed me** with their technical and musical performances.



Considering that most of the compositions at Mozart's time were written as "Hausmusik" – used at home in the family or to be played by teacher and pupil – it is amazing, what development the piano duo literature has made in the past approximately 150 years. The composers of the classic and romantic era probably had never expected that their works would become so famous even in the Asian world.

Since the art of piano duo in our time became worldwide so interesting, it is necessary that composers create new pieces for the many piano couples. Therefore it is an excellent idea that the International Piano Duo Association holds yearly **alternating competitions** for composers and respectively interpreters (players).

So we had this time the chance to listen 24 times to the prize-winning composition from last year, Akihiko Kanai's "Sôhyô", which can be played with four hands on either one or two pianos. Wonderful to hear **how different a piece can be interpreted** if no comparison to a recording exists! We heard mixtures between typical Japanese and modern western art of playing.

One duo excited me with a marvellous perfect but yet very musically played interpretation of the very difficult "Andante and Allegro brillant" by **Mendelssohn**.

We also had the chance to listen 5 times to the "Tarantella" of Rachmaninoff's Suite op.17, different in tempo and the use of rubato, different in balance, different in dynamic. I felt sometimes that we have to consider that also two pianos have **a level limit for loudness**: more force does not really create more **"good" sound**...

In rare cases I found that the character or the way of playing of two pianists did not suit together. Of course it is quite difficult to find a partner that **"fits"**. An excellent example of **fantastic partnership** was the winning duo of the Grand Prize, amazing talents that probably will start a successfully international career.

For the future of the IPDA I hope that it finds more international reputation to increase the number of foreign competitors. Thank you and much success!



←Mr. H. Kubo is translating from English to Japanese.

The review at the final round of the 18th Competition

Chairwoman: Sumiko Minemura<1236>

I did not notice so much difference between A section (1 piano 4 hands) and B section (2 pianos 4 hands) at this competition. Duo performances by the section could make so much difference that in the past years we made it into two separate competitions.

The required piece for this final competition was “**Sôhyô**” composed by Akihiko Kanai. This was the Grand Prix composition at the 17th competition.

The composition was on condition that it could be played either A and B section. I noticed some pairs at B section (2 pianos 4 hands) slightly off the synch between the primo and the second players. On the other hand I was impressed by many duos that played nicely with beautiful clear sound and music memorized.



Jue HE and Xiaomin LIANG duo who received the Grand Prix played excellently (they played “Paganini variation” by Witold Lutoslawski and “The Serpent’s kiss” by William Bolcom as the free choice). They understood the pieces precisely and performed them splendidly technically as well as musically.

The Second Prize winner, **Pia Bose and Antonio Pastor Otero duo** performed “Rapsodie Espagnole IV. Feria” by Ravel as the free choice. I felt very comfortable listening to their beautiful performance of Rapsodie Espagnole, as I expected, with their natural prominent rhythmical sense.

The 3rd Prize winner, **Tomoyo Sakabe and Kiwami Miyahara** played the same piece of “Concertino on two Russian Themes” as they had played at the Elimination round in March. I thought the music they played at this final was much refined compared to what they had played at the Elimination Round.

Other impressive duos were **Ayako Tani and Rui Fujiyama duo** that they had both required piece and “Danse Macabre Poeme symphonique Op.40” memorized and played nicely with rich musical expression.

The next one was **Miki Katayama and Shun Katayama**, sister and brother duo. Their beautiful and tender performance of “Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune” by Debussy at the Gala Concert in June gave a strong impression to me, and at this final they played “Hopi Snake Dance” by A. Jolivet and they played with nice technique and sensibility, though it was a rather rhythmical and difficult piece in contrast to the one by Debussy.

Yuri and Sachiko Komiyama pair participated in the competition at the Elimination Round in March and went on to play at the Gala Concert in June and then on to the final in October.

They played at the final “Variations on a theme by Paganini” with music memorized, perfectly in tune with each other and rich musical expression.

Saori Toyama and Mioko Hagino duo participated in the Elimination Round in March and they developed into a nice new different pair only for 6, 7 months and played “Tarantelle” by Rachmaninoff beautifully, which I was comfortable listening to it.

I really hope all the finalists regardless whether they won or not would make a challenge to participate in the next competition with further development.
(Translated by Tetsuya Suzuki)

→With Jue He & Xiaomin Liang



IPDA Comments of the competition 2013

Director: Hiroshi Kubo<0004>

My impression of the final stage of the competition is that many duo groups played with quite enough music technique and high expression. Performance of the **two pianos** was more effective in regarding representation of sound and dynamic atmosphere, but it impressed me that there were some pairs with very rich and high-quality even by **1 piano** 4 hands.

Several groups played Rachmaninoff's Suite No. 2, 'Tarantella', each played with technical perfection, but it seemed very difficult that various tones and balances of the voices in this piece were clearly recognized.

Both pianists should be **just as a conductor** so that they may recognize various tones of the instruments of the orchestra. Pianists would be fully aware of each voice, tone and balance, listening to their own music being mixed together, rather than listening to each part. In this viewpoint, the pair who played Saint-Saëns 'Dance macabre' with the sense of flowing sonority was so much better.

Each performer played 'Sōhyō' in a very interesting way. "**Thoughts being drifting...**" represented a lot of inner or even dramatic atmosphere of the entire songs. I could imagine the nuance of the whole piece when I heard just **the first few bars** of it.

This new composition which was played by **Bose -Pastor Duo** was very impressive to me.

As for the performance with over-acting, or nonchalant pedal sound, or without fully digesting the music, I was not interested in these factors even if the pairs are in top ranking. But I think two piano effects and technical perfection was evaluated because of their charm.

I wish that the performers would be increasingly enhanced as a real art of the piano duo, and be more attractive!



↑ Mr. Kubo is giving the Encouragement Award to the Ayako Tani & Rui Fujiyama DUO



↑ Mr. Kubo is giving the Encouragement Award to the Saori Toyama<1467> & Mioko Hagino DUO

A Brief Competition Review

Director: Fumihiko Yagi<0010>

This Piano Duo Competition was on much **higher level** comparing the previous one.

As to the set piece “*Sôhyô*”, I was very interested in hearing various kinds of their thoughts and feelings through this piece.

The most contestants eventually played it fairly good trying to nuance the line nicely.

I would, however, point out that the **tone color of weak sound**, particularly at the **opening and the ending** of the piece, must be produced much more carefully with the technical control since this piece demands the wide range of weak sound, that is from *mp* to *ppp* and even below *ppp*.



In the freely chosen pieces, many of the performers performed their music nicely.

The following three prize-winners, **Duo Sakabe-Miyahara**(the 3rd Prize), **Bose-Pastor Duo** (the 2nd Prize) and **Duo Liang –He** (the Grand Prize) may have something common each other as to their musical facets; they played their music with the great flexibility, the effective and careful pedaling, the good tonal balance, the well-trained brilliant technique, the strong sound without banging, and so on.

I hope you all contestants will play an active part in the field of piano duo music from now on.



↑ Mr. Yagi is giving the Jury Special Award to the Akiko Itou<1512> & Sachiko Kusaka<1511> DUO. They are new members.



↑ Mr. Yagi is giving the Jury Special Award to the Miki Katayama & Shun Katayama DUO.

Remarks as the composer of the required piece

Akihiko Kanai (the winner of the 17th composition competition)

I enjoyed listening all of the performances at the final round of the performing division of 18th International Piano Duo competition. I heard it not only as an audience but also as the composer who made the required piece. Though the competition lasted for long hours, I could hear all of them carefully with great interest because every duo performed very impressively and profoundly.

All of the 24 finalists played my composition titled “**Sôhyô**” ~ for 4 hands piano duo ~ as the only required piece because the same piece must be played for both one piano four hands and two piano-duos due to the regulation of this competition.

Every finalist studied the piece very carefully and deeply, and they demonstrated it with their own various interpretations.

I could see **the different styles of “Sôhyô” performances**, as each duo made it different by change of tempo, choice of tone color, dynamic balance, how to make pauses, and total construction of piece.

I was happy to see my work as it stood on its own feet after hearing various style of “Sôhyô”. I could witness many good examples at the final that it could make a very persuasive and great music when **the player expressed his own interpretation with thorough understanding of the piece, and played it with confidence**, even though it could be a different approach to the piece than those made by the composer.

The 3 highest ranked duos did splendid performances technically as well as musically expressing their intention and personality. Besides these three performances there were many duos whose performances gave me good impressions. Among them, I would like to make some comments as below based particularly on the required piece.

Hiromi Morishige & Kyoko Sumitani duo made it as a large nice flow of music with beautiful sound and nice tempo. **Ayako Tani & Rui Fujiyama duo** made the piece nicely with accelerating tension by making tempo faster after tempo-up. **Akiko Ito & Sachiko Kusaka duo** made it a very comfortable piece with nice tempo and intensified tension, **Fuma Ozaki & Keishi Suzuki duo** made their performance lively keeping tension with good tempo. **Jun Nagasawa & Miwa Shimizu Duo** interpreted my piece very close to what I intended at the time when I composed the piece with the tempo and the construction of the piece, and they performed it as if my intention of the piece was realized by their live performance.

I am thankful to have met so many good finalists who understood my new composition extensively and played it with their own feeling, and I am also grateful as the composer to have had such a rare experience.

I met finalists at the reception immediately after the competition where I could hear their frank impressions and their interpretations about the piece. I would like to pay my deep respect to all the participants who performed my piece at the competition. Thank you!

(Translated by Tetsuya Suzuki)



↑ With the girls of the finalists, from the left Yoko Soga, Mirei Fuzimoto, Kyoko Sumitani, A. Kanai, Hiromi Morishige

Comments about the performances of The 18th Competition

Hideki Kajimura,
Administration manager, KAWAI Music Association

I would like to excuse myself for my comments that my view, before making it, is not from professional musician's point of view but from a listener's because I am not a professional musician.

I, however, really paid my attention to listen all the entries carefully without dozing because I was there to represent Kawai to select the winner of the Kawai Award. Frankly speaking it was difficult for me to select the one among all the entries because all of them performed **quite well**.

At the last completion I remember it was not so difficult for each sponsors to select the Sponsor Awards they liked because the performance level and the liking of them were varied, but at this competition most of the performances were equally good, though I could see some preeminent duos which were worth for higher awards, and also I saw some other better ones worth for some awards. In any case I had a hard time to select it, but I needed to select the one relentlessly so I made it as my judging criteria based upon that they performed **with or without music (score)**.

Frankly speaking, I do not think all the performances from memory were better than those with music, but based on my rule I decided to give the Kawai Award to **Miki Katayama and Shun Katayama duo** among those who played from memory both on required and free pieces. The duo played a work by A. Jolivet which is a rather difficult piece for amateur musicians.

I made this selection by myself arbitrarily, and I presume it would be in the same difficult situation for other sponsor companies to select their Awards.

I would also like to mention to those participants who could not get any awards. They should not be disappointed it at all, rather they should **be proud of the fact** that they stayed through and played at the final stage.

(Translated by Tetsuya Suzuki)



↑ Mr. Kajimura is giving the KAWAI Award to the Miki Katayama & Shun Katayama DUO.

Comments on the 18th International Piano Duo Competition final round

President of Steinway Japan: Kazuhiro Goto

The Performing Division Duo competition this year was held on October 14, after the last competition which was held three and half years ago and also the first time after the big disaster in March 2011. Total 24 participating duos performed so excellently that time passed quickly though it took a long time starting at 9:30 in the morning till 5:30 in the evening.

The required piece at this competition was “Sôhyô” which was the work received the Grand Prix at the composition division competition held in 2012. It was composed by Akihiko Kanai that was made applicable for both 1 piano 4 hands and 2 piano duos. I sat there not as a member of jury but as a sponsor to select Sponsor-Award, and I was listening the performances with my own judging criteria in mind which were the **5 following factors**. ① Beauty of piano sound ② Ensemble ③ Artistic elements ④ Preciseness

⑤ Degree of difficulty in selecting the free choice. To be more precise, ① is how beautiful the piano sound is and I focus on the sound at **forte** to see if the sounds at forte are crushed or not. Sometimes in order to make beautiful sound at some phrase player makes the surrounding phrases muddy on purpose, but I mean that the beautiful piano sound stays throughout the entire piece from the beginning to the end. ② is, needless to say, how much the pair would perform perfectly in tune with each other. Two piano duo might be difficult to be in tune with each other, however I thought 1 piano 4 hands is also hard because it has such cases as hand crossing and pedaling of which two piano duo do not have. ③ is whether or not **players enjoy playing and audiences are also enjoying**. ④ is not only if the players are reading the score precisely, but also if the players convey the **composer’s intention** through their performance. ⑤ is degree of difficulty in selecting the free choice piece and how the players make challenge to it.

I was listening as if I became a jury, but I did it very subjectively. I heard the required piece with the score in front of me and I found it very interesting that there were **24 different interpretations**, though all of them were following the score correctly. I also put a great importance on the point if the players were **playing from memory or not** because it was a competition. When you are making a speech it may not convey your real message when **you read the written script** though you read it correctly. On the other hand you could often convey your real message when you speak **without script**.

I concentrated on hearing the performances and I was really moved by those duos that the jury gave the top ranked awards. At the same time, I personally paid a special attention to **Komiyama pairs** who played at the order of 24th and regrettably they did not receive awards. They played it with beautiful sounds from the beginning to the end and the ensemble was as perfectly in tune with each other as it is natural as members of the same family. Moreover they made a strong musical message to the audiences and they looked enjoying while playing.

I think it is a **lonely journey** to master technique of any musical instruments. It is particularly true when you study piano technique as repertoires for solo piano are immense. On the other hand, one of **the ways to enjoy music is ensemble work**. As for piano playing you could make a complete ensemble as you could play 10 notes by your both hands. But today, this competition made me recognize it again that ensemble by two people playing duo would relieve the loneliness and can be the ultimate ensemble work in the smallest form.

(Translated by Tetsuya Suzuki)



↑ Mr. Goto is giving STEINWAY Award to the Komiyama Duo, from right: Yuri<1439>& Sachiko<1437> ↑

MUSICA NOVA Award and the Competition of this year

Kumio Horiuchi

President and CEO of Ongaku no tomo (Friend of Music) company

The International Piano Duo Association has been holding Composition and Performing competitions every other year alternately in recent years (Except the year when natural disaster interrupted). This year, the performing competition was held after the last competition in 2010.

Total number of participants this year was 32 duos which were almost half of number as in 2010, but the performance level this year was much better than those in previous years, so that I found many outstanding duos even among those who did not receive awards.

I heard all the performances with the idea in mind to select the **MUSICA NOVA Award**. The Award should be given to the pair who has the most potential because it was aimed at **the promising duo** for the future growth.

Ayako Tani and Rui Fujiyama duo was the first duo who gave me a good impression as they played both required and free choice beautifully with long distant projecting sound and they supported each other with understanding of their role as to when and who to be the primo or to be the second.

I was also impressed with the performance of Young **Mami Aoki and Remi Aoki duo** that performed the required piece so beautifully that, at the end of the required piece, I was expecting them to play the free choice as good as the required, but regrettably the piece they selected for the free choice was not the one to show their full potentiality.

I gave the MUSICA NOVA Award this year to **Fuma Ozaki and Keishi Suzuki duo**, that was the only men's duo who played splendidly by hearing each other while playing with colorful sounds creating variety of air.

Among others if I could pick a few to mention I would say that **Miki and shun Katayama** were impressive, and **Yuri and Sachiko Komiya**, mother and daughter, also amazed me that they achieved such a high level.

The level of performance at the last competition was so wide and varied that I had to give the MUSICA NOVA Award to the same duo who received the Grand Prix, but I felt at this competition that every duo did appeal what they had the best and overall it was a good competition.

(Translated by Tetsuya Suzuki)



↑ Mr. Horiuchi is giving MUSICA NOVA Award to the Fuma Ozaki and Keishi Suzuki duo



↑ At the reception party