



Chopin Society of Atlanta

NEWSLETTER

March 2005

www.chopinatlanta.org

Vol. I, No. 1

Letter from the President

Welcome to the first issue of the Chopin Society of Atlanta Newsletter.

March is the month when we celebrate Chopin's birthday, so it is a perfect time to start publishing our newsletter, which I hope will be a great way to communicate, to inform you about our events, and to bring you interesting facts about Chopin's music, life and times.

This year is very special for all Chopinophiles - it is the year of the Fifteenth Chopin International Piano Competition, which has been held in Warsaw, Poland, every five years since 1927. One look at the list of past winners shows that success at the Chopin Competition leads to a great career on the concert stage: Bela Davidovich and Halina Czerny-Stefańska (1949), Adam Harasiewicz (1955), Maurizio Pollini (1960), Martha Argerich (1965), Garrick Ohlsson (1970), Krystian Zimerman (1975), and Yundi Li (2000). Some of the participants have even found acclaim because, contrary to the expectations, they lost, such as Ivo Pogorelich. We are all eager to learn who the next winner will be! There is a short history of the Chopin International Piano Competition on page 3.

In anticipation of the Fall Competition in Warsaw we will present the winner of the National Chopin Piano Competition in Miami

in June. He or she will also compete for the First Prize in Warsaw.

This year, for the second time, we are hosting the Chopin's Life & Work Annual Competition for Atlanta Youth. Last year more than 60 students participated. Please look for more information on page 2.

Working with the younger generation is especially important for the Chopin Society of Atlanta. We strongly believe that financial considerations should not be an obstacle for music students to attend a classical music concert. That is one of the reasons why we decided to invite all students from North Fulton County who are interested in music to attend our concerts free of charge. Our initiative proved to be a great success last year. More than 100 students used this opportunity to attend the latest concert. In exchange they were asked to write a report about Chopin's life. Please read the related article on page 2. It was all possible thanks to our sponsors, whose generosity is greatly appreciated. Thank you very much!

If you believe it is important that great music should be a part of every child's life, without financial barriers, your donation will be most welcome.

I hope that all of you will find great pleasure in attending our concerts and events, and the Board of Directors and I look forward to seeing you there.

Dorota Lato
President and Founder

Happy Birthday!

Frederick Chopin was born in 1810 in Żelazowa Wola.

The exact date of his birth is not known. According to the register of the baptism found in the St. Roch parish house in Brochów, Chopin was born on February 22, which was confirmed by his father's signature. The birth certificate also bears the signatures of his godparents. Many Chopin's biographers have disputed this date arguing that his family celebrated his birthday on March 1. Chopin himself gave March 1, 1810, as the date of his birth in his letter to the Polish Literary Society in Paris of 1833. The confirmation of this date can also be found in Justyna Chopin's letter to her son, dated 1833, and in a letter of Frederick's pupil, Jane Sterling. However, no firm evidence has so far been able to prove either date.

The landscape around Żelazowa Wola, a little Mazovian village on the Utrata River, some 35 miles west of



Warsaw, is not much different from what it looked like in Chopin's day. It is a flat country with meadows, aged willows, silver birch groves and fields, whose coloring is especially beautiful in spring and summer. The sad weeping willows have become a symbol of Chopin's incurable nostalgia for his native land which permeates many of his works. Wacław Szymanowski, a Polish sculptor who designed the Chopin monument in Łazienki Park in Warsaw, placed the figure of the composer under a Mazovian willow to symbolize Chopin's homesickness.

Excerpt from Antoni Grudziński's "Chopin Cult in Poland."

The Chopin Society of Atlanta was established in December of 2000. It is a not-for-profit organization devoted to promoting music, culture, and the arts in the metropolitan Atlanta, GA, area. Its goal is to generate understanding and appreciation of Frederick Chopin's music and its influence on the art of piano performance, and piano compositions. Additionally, the Chopin Society of Atlanta is dedicated to advancing and promoting young talent in performing Chopin's music.

Society members enjoy many exclusive benefits including special evenings with the performing artist, first access to event tickets, and discounted tickets. Join today online at www.chopinatlanta.org or call 770.663.0620.

Upcoming Events:

Chopin's Life & Work **April 23, 2005** ***Second Annual Competition for Atlanta Youth***

Chopin Society of Atlanta, in cooperation with the Polish Saturday School, is organizing the Second Annual Competition for Atlanta Youth, dedicated to Chopin's life and work. The competition will take place on April 23, 2005, at 10:00 am, at Northminster Presbyterian Church in Roswell (2400 Old Alabama Road).

We invite all children between the ages of 7 and 14 to participate. The competition will be held in English in two age groups, 7-10 and 11-14, and in Polish (one group). For more information, please contact the Chopin Society of Atlanta at 770.663.0620 or chopinsociety@mindspring.com.

The competition will consist of three parts: a written test on Chopin's life and music, a short essay and audio questions concerning Chopin's work. Awards will be given as follows: First Prize \$150 (all groups), Second Prize \$50 (all groups). The deadline for submitting an entry to Chopin Society is April 1, 2005. The winners will be announced at the Chopin Society's concert on May 14, 2005.

"Reflections on Chopin" **May 14, 2005 7:30 pm** ***Adam Makowicz and Piotr Folkert, piano; John Lemley—host***

World-famous Polish pianist, Adam Makowicz, will be performing his jazz interpretations of Chopin's music. Piotr Folkert will perform Chopin pieces in original form.

Jim Fuselli of the *Wall Street Journal* wrote: "*Adam Makowicz has been praised by Benny Goodman, compared with Art Tatum, Erroll Garner and Teddy Wilson, honored by jazz publications and toasted all over Europe as a genius. Mr. Makowicz's fiery style, firm chording, and rapid, Tatumesque right hand phrasing make him more than deserving of the accolades he has received.*"

Ann Ker of the State Journal, Springfield, Illinois, wrote: "*Piotr Folkert is a stunning virtuoso with a stellar technique. Full of tenderness, passion, joy, sorrow, and singing style that made the music comes to life: Folkert showed the stuff the world-class are made of.*"

The concert will be hosted by John Lemley, radio presenter from public radio station WABE, 90.1 FM.

Details: St. James United Methodist Church, 4400 Peachtree Dunwoody Road, Atlanta, GA 30342.

Tickets: \$25 Adults, \$15 CSA Members (with paid dues for 2005), \$15 Seniors/Students, FREE Students of teachers that belong to North Fulton Music Teachers Association (excluding adult students) Call 770.663.0620.

Annual Fundraising Event **May 15, 2005 5:00 pm** ***Chopin Society Member Exclusive***

Come enjoy a special evening with world-famous Polish pianist, Adam Makowicz. A great opportunity to make a personal connection with this outstanding artist and for the Chopin Society members to get together again. If you would like to contribute an appetizer or dessert, it would be greatly appreciated. Location: 540 Morton Mill Court, Alpharetta, GA. RSVP by May 5 at 770.663.0620.

All-Chopin Recital **June 5, 2005 4:00 pm** ***Winner of the National Chopin Piano Competition in Miami***

We are proud to present this year's winner in concert in Atlanta. More details on page 3. Tickets: \$20 Adults, \$15 CSA Members (with paid dues for 2005), \$15 Seniors/Students, FREE Students of teachers that belong to North Fulton Music Teachers Association (excluding adult students). Call 770.663.0620.

Congratulations to the Essay Contest Winners

In keeping with our mission statement of promoting music, culture, and the arts in the metropolitan Atlanta, especially among the young people, an essay contest was held for all students of the North Fulton Music Teachers Association. Each student was required to write a minimum one-page essay on Chopin's life. For their efforts, each student received a free ticket to the Ilya Itin concert on November 6, 2004, at the Roswell Cultural Arts Center and the opportunity to win a gift certificate to Barnes&Noble. Each essay was judged by an independent panel, according to age appropriate criteria, originality, and demonstrated effort in researching deeply into Chopin's life.

More than 100 of students participated. This year's winners are:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| First Place | Michael Egan Katherine Chew |
| Second Place | Elizabeth Moore Melissa Creviston |
| Honorary Mention | Hannah Gillchrist Anjana Kallarackal Natalie Bohdan Anna Moore Mathew Egan |

Students presented details from Chopin's life in Poland and France; they noted his stormy personal relationships and struggle to make a living: "During day he taught piano lessons and at night he played concerts" (Melissa Creviston, age 7). But most of all, students wrote about Chopin's music, trying to analyze it and showing great appreciation for his genius: "When there was war he put his sadness in his music" (Michael Egan, age 7); his music "shows the spirit and loyalty he felt for his home country" (Katherine Chew, age 14); "He may have lived hundreds of years ago, but his music lives on" (Elizabeth Moore, age 10).

Thank you to all the music teachers and students for your involvement and participation. Check our website for future contest announcements and opportunities for children to earn free concert tickets.

The Frederick Chopin International Piano Competition: History

The Frederick Chopin International Piano Competition is one of the oldest events of its type in the world, and enjoys great prestige and universal renown. In the seventy years of its existence, the Competition has evolved, transformed itself, and created its own extensive tradition. The initiator of the Frederick Chopin Piano Competition was Prof. Jerzy Żurawlew (1887-1980), an outstanding Polish pianist, teacher, and composer.

The first Chopin Competition took place in 1927, in the Warsaw Philharmonic concert hall. Competitions are held at five-year intervals. The 1942 Competition was not held due to the Second World War, and could not be continued until several years after the war. The first post-war Competition took place in 1949, and became the culmination of the Chopin Year, celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the great composer's death. From 1955 onward, the Frederick Chopin International Piano Competition has been held in the National Philharmonic Hall every five years without a break.

In 1960 The Frederick Chopin Society became the organizer of the Competition, and since then it has been running the Competition's standing Secretariat. After modest beginnings in 1927, when the Competition was attended by 26 pianists from eight countries, the event expanded and attracted an increasingly large number of participants. A record was reached in 1980, with 149 young pianists from 36 countries.

During the Competition auditions, the young pianists play in alphabetical order, beginning with an initial letter selected at random. As a rule, the age of the participants varies from 18 to 29, although it has differed

during particular events owing to changes in the criteria for entry. The youngest participant ever has been 16 years old, and the oldest 32.



Prof. Jerzy Żurawlew

Founder of the Chopin International Piano Competition

Winning one of the prizes awarded at the Frederick Chopin International Piano Competition marks the beginning of a great artistic career and opens a path to the most famous concert halls. The Polish Chopin Competition heralded fame for such well known pianists as Martha Argerich, Garick Ohlsson and Krystian Zimerman. During the first Chopin Competition, the jury was composed exclusively of representatives of the Polish music world. Organizers of successive events have invited the most outstanding musicians and pianists, both Polish and foreign to be members of the jury. Some members of the jury are also winners of earlier Competitions.

The Frederick Chopin International Piano Competition is the only single-composer piano competition in the world that is entirely devoted to the performance of music by this one composer. It is important to note that this feature makes it possible not only to follow the interpretations, judge the technique of the participants, follow the current level of piano performance in general and Chopin interpretation in particular, but also provides an opportunity to observe the changing attitude towards the Chopin

oeuvre and particular music forms.

From 1975 permanent events accompanying the International Chopin Competitions have included a commemoration of the anniversary of Chopin's death. The date of October the 17th has been incorporated into the Competition calendar as a day of reverence to this great Polish composer. On this occasion, the Mozart *Requiem* is performed at the Holy Cross church in Krakowskie Przedmieście Str. in Warsaw, where Chopin's heart is buried in an urn. The same work was played at his funeral at St. Madeleine church in Paris in October 1849.

From the materials of the Chopin Society in Warsaw

From Miami to Warsaw

The National Chopin Piano Competition in Miami, organized by the Chopin Foundation of the United States, is the only major competition in the United States designed solely to encourage America's future master pianists. Beyond the significant financial awards, the top four winners will be sent to Warsaw to participate in the preliminary rounds for the International Piano Competition in October 2005. The competition in Miami has the exact age and repertoire requirements as the International Chopin Competition in Warsaw (see article above).

The previous winners of the Competition in Miami include: Ning An, John Nakamatsu, Kevin Kenner, Jeffery Kahane, and Ian Hobson,

The winner of the prestigious National Competition will perform an all-Chopin concert in Atlanta on June 5, on his/her way to the International Chopin Competition in Warsaw. See page 2 for details.

A Special Thank You to The Chopin Society of Atlanta Sponsors and Supporters:

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Chopin Society of Atlanta Joins Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce

As of January 1, 2005, the Chopin Society of Atlanta is a member of the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. We're looking forward to the cooperation and the many opportunities our membership will provide.

Chopin Society Member Exclusive

Fox Theater International Series Discount Tickets
Bowfire *March 21*
Opera Verdi performs Bizet's *Carmen* *March 27*
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Sleeping Beauty *April 5*

To purchase tickets at a discount visit the Fox Theatre box office and mention J-FOX or call TicketMaster at 404.817.8700 and use the password FABFOX.

Membership Software and Computer Upgrade

We have recently upgraded our membership management software, which will help us more effectively manage communications, event promotions and ticket information to our members and guests. In addition to the software, all computer hardware has been upgraded. We're looking forward to our new capabilities and the new services we can provide to our members. We are looking for volunteers or students who need service hours who can help with easy office work or operate the "ACT" program. Please email chopinsociety@mindspring.com if you are interested.

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The Chopin Society of Atlanta Newsletter is published four times a year. Please check our website www.chopinatlanta.org for more information regarding events, tickets, member exclusives, and merchandise for sale.

Sponsorship Advantages

We are now accepting sponsorship advertisements for our concert programs and newsletter. For more information, please contact Mary Montgomery at 770.587.3240 or ljmontgmry@aol.com.



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