Most demanding event of its kind in world

American wins Rubinstein piano competition

music

By
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JERUSALEM

Jeffrey Kahane of the U.S., who performed at Town Hall last winter, won the fourth International Artur Rubinstein Master Piano Competition at Mann Auditorium, beating out 48 other contestants, including Toronto's Joanne Ezrin.

His victory in the final round followed an 1½-hour-long decision by the top-ranked international jury, which had to make a tough choice between him and Taiwan's Hung Kuan-Chen, who chose a more difficult final entry, Brahms Concerto No. 2. It was Kahane's more definitive sense of contrast in his interpretation of Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini which finally tipped the victory decision in his favor.

Jeffrey Kahane went on to perform a full concert, again with the Jerusalem Symphony, at Jerusalem's Binyamei Ha'oomah Auditorium four days later, hosted by Israel's leading dignitaries. And, on Dec. 12, he will be introduced by Leonard Bernstein at a gala New York debut. From which time on he will be universally recognized as one of the great pianists of our time.

Small wonder, as the Artur Rubinstein competition is the most demanding contest of its kind in the world. It is the only master competition in the world. In the words of its director, Jacob Bistritsky: "It is not discovering new talents."

"Artur Rubinstein lent his name to this competition on two conditions," he explains: (1) to create an international forum for confrontation of already discovered talents, giving them the opportunity to meet and compete with the best (in the words of the late great instuctor Nadia Boulanger, it is not important to be a prize winner, rather it is important to be allowed to participate), and (2) that it not be a burden of government and public money but that it be self-supporting.

From its very inception, both these conditions have been met. More specifically, Artur Rubinstein set the most rigorous challenges ever presented to contestants in any major musical competition. They consist of three stages: (1) an hour-long solo recital of a narrowly-defined choice of works; (2) a 75-minute recital consisting of both solo renditions (including an Israeli composition sent to the contestant three months prior to opening) and chamber music selections, and (3) two concerts with the Jerusalem Symphony under the baton of Mendi Rodan.

The jury consists of some of the world's top piano authorities. This year it included distinguished New York Times music critic Harold Schonberg.

What makes the fourth International different from its three triennial predecessors is, of course, the fact that the maestro is no longer with us. But, according to his widow, Artur Rubinstein's spirit was present, together with the guiding principles which, together with the competition, comprises a living memorial to the artistic, humanitarian and Zionistic phenomenal personality that he was.

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