

Competition itself that, in many respects, has given great musical life to the region. In fact, it has had a considerable impact on the musical life of Spain as a whole through the Albéniz Foundation, the greatly successful Queen Sofia Advanced School of Music in Madrid, the Summer Courses; a series of master classes and by setting up chamber groups and chamber orchestras that, every year, tour the country with more than two hundred performances in leading cultural centres and auditoriums. Her Majesty, the Queen of Spain honours us attending the closing ceremony of every academic year and demonstrates a sincere interest in the Competition, in the Albéniz Foundation and in the School.

The special nature of this year's competition can be also seen in the important changes introduced:

The twenty pianists selected for Santander will play, besides a recital from a repertoire of their own choice, a quintet for piano and string instruments. The six participants who reach the Semifinals will be considered as Laureates of the Competition and those who do not reach the Finals will each receive a cash prize of half a million pesetas. In the Semifinals, the participants will play a concerto for piano and chamber orchestra plus a recital of a repertoire of their own choice. Three participants will be selected to take part in the Finals with the symphony orchestra. Both the Semifinals and the Finals will take place within the framework of the International Festival of Santander.

The first prize, the Gold Medal, a star-prize indeed, brings to the winner not only six million pesetas but also nearly a hundred performances as well as the recording of a CD and a KAWAI grand piano. The second prize, the Silver Medal, means two and a half million pesetas plus

international performances; the third prize, the Bronze Medal, has one million pesetas plus some performances in Spain. Another interesting innovation is the Audience Prize, which wants to let the audience in Santander take an active part in the Competition by allowing them to cast the votes in the awarding of this prize. This prize consists of Sony equipment up to a value of two million pesetas.

We believe that with this fresh approach we are putting into practice the principles laid down by the founders of the International Federation, since these musical days in Santander are becoming, more and more, times of musical meetings and festive occasions. They provide the opportunity to compare today's young talents as the protagonists of a future that is already the present. In short they provide both a time and place in which each instrumentist, in contact with his peers from other nations, finds himself. When artists have to perform before large and demanding audiences a high degree of tension is created. Therefore, the artist has to capture such audiences with his playing so that the music becomes—as Rougemont wrote—a shared joy.

From here I wish to invite you to take part in this special occasion to celebrate our first quarter-of-a-century birthday.

*Paloma O'Shea*

