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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

**T**he launch of a new periodical focused on Chopin invites answers to two questions: Why introduce another musicological journal to an already saturated market, and why devote any such publication to Chopin studies in particular? The Publisher's Foreword offers one set of answers, and another can be found in the ensuing pages, which explore a theme of direct relevance to the music of Chopin but with much broader import too.

This first issue of *The Chopin Review* amounts to a proceedings of a conference held in Warsaw immediately after the 17th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition, which ran from 1 to 20 October 2015, with prize-winner concerts to follow. The two-day conference – hosted by the Chopin Institute on 22 and 23 October 2015 – was entitled 'The Competition, or Music Put to the Test: Piano Competitions from Psychological, Sociological, Historical and Aesthetic Perspectives'. The programme included a roundtable discussion chaired by John Allison; papers by Richard Rodzinski, Lisa McCormick, Richard Parncutt, Anna Chęćka and Wojciech Kocyan; and a panel led by Wojciech Bońkowski and myself. The diversity of the participants and the topicality of their contributions resulted in an extremely stimulating and enriching event.

Issue 1 of this Review attempts to capture the intellectual vibrancy of the conference by presenting its essential content in a reordered form. All of the material has been anonymously peer-reviewed and duly revised in accordance with the reviewers' recommendations. One feature that has been preserved is the complementary nature of the perspectives on offer, which is one of the ways in which this inaugural issue aspires to be more than the sum of its parts. The first of four main articles, by Anna Chęćka, explores a range of aesthetic, philosophical, ontological and epistemological factors relevant to music competitions. What is at stake, Chęćka argues, are not just 'artistic personalities' but also 'aesthetic values' manifested through performances in which 'victory is never unequivocal'. This theme is indirectly taken up by Wojciech Kocyan, who focuses on an ostensible evolution in the performance styles witnessed at successive Chopin Competition performances during the twentieth century. Numerous case studies are considered, including performances both by laureates and by those who did not win prizes but nevertheless influenced Chopin performance practice. Richard Parncutt then surveys pertinent scientific literature in assessing the reliability and validity of cognitive and emotional approaches to the evaluation of musical performance as well as their implications for competition juries, including those taking part in the Chopin Competition. In a fourth and final article, Lisa McCormick draws

from the ‘sociology of scandal’ in order to identify the conditions predisposing classical music competitions to what she calls ‘moral disruption’, and to investigate ‘the cultural process through which a scandal attains legendary status’. She too focuses on the Chopin Competition, especially the controversy surrounding Ivo Pogorelich’s elimination from the 10th Competition in 1980.

What follows in the Forum is an edited transcript of the roundtable discussion between John Allison and five representatives of internationally prominent competitions, namely Peter Paul Kainrath (Busoni), Jacques Marquis (Van Cliburn), Michel-Etienne Van Neste (Queen Elisabeth), Artur Szklener (Chopin) and Richard Rodzinski (formerly Tchaikovsky and Van Cliburn). This account ‘from the trenches’ both confirms and provocatively challenges the conclusions advanced in the preceding articles while also offering a host of practical observations and insights – as did Richard Rodzinski’s additional paper at the 2015 conference (not reproduced here) on the role of auditions in musicians’ lives, the subjectivity of ranking, and defining success.

As a member of the jury of the 17th Chopin Competition, I found it fascinating to hear the successive presentations at the conference and to gauge speakers’ comments against my recent experiences, some of which were cited in the roundtable discussion.<sup>1</sup> I later had the opportunity to work with the respective speakers in editing this issue of the new journal, which ends with reviews of books on international competitions (Lisa McCormick) and musical performance (Nicholas Cook), followed by critiques of two Chopin resources published in recent years.

The thematic focus of most of the material in this inaugural publication should be of value to those working on Chopin and indeed to anyone with an interest in the world of classical music competitions and the complex questions surrounding them, whether aesthetic, psychological, historical or sociological. What emerges is the revelation that music and musicians are indeed ‘put to the test’ in competitions such as those under scrutiny here, but so too is the very nature of what it means to be competitive and why we as humans need, or at least want, to attach value to contest and to the contestable.

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1 See also John Rink, ‘Judging Chopin: An evaluation of musical experience’, in Gianmario Borio, Alessandro Cecchi, Giovanni Giuriati and Marco Lutz (eds), *Investigating Musical Performance: Theoretical Models and Intersections* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, forthcoming 2019).