



## Interview with Professor Pavel Gililov

Bonn, June 2011

### “The mark of a good musician is how they fill the pauses”

- Professor Pavel Gililov, Artistic Director of the International Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn (ITBCB) on the quality and demands of Deutsche Telekom's international young musician competition.

---

### There are many renowned piano competitions. What is special about the ITBCB?

As part of its promotion of music, Deutsche Telekom's goal right from the start, when the competition was established in 2005, has been to give the International Telekom Beethoven Competition its very own, unique profile in terms of the program. The Beethoven Competition of the Academy of Music in Vienna, for instance, only allows works by Beethoven. We, on the other hand, are trying to bring across how important Beethoven has been for the entire development of music and still is today. We want to demonstrate his influence on composers of all generations after him. Each competition round is therefore dedicated to a specific period in the history of music: the first round focuses on the Baroque music of Bach and Handel, followed by the – mainly German – Romantic period, the Classical Modern period and finally the music of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Beethoven's influence can be felt in each of these periods – and this is what we want to show. Naturally, all this is to supplement the magnificent

compositions by Beethoven himself, which are of course at the center of our competition too.

**One gets the impression that you have raised the bar quite high. Even for the qualification round, candidates must prepare very demanding pieces...**

Yes, this is also something which sets us apart from many other young musician competitions. It is usually the instrumental skills that are examined initially. The question is for instance: can the candidate play a difficult étude or a complex fugue clearly and with virtuosity? Expectations are then increasingly set higher from one round to the next. Our approach is different. We demand a repertoire of the highest standard right from the start, such as Beethoven's last three sonatas. We want to see not only the technical skill of the candidate, but also his or her ability to interpret the music, to fill the pauses between the notes. It is said that the mark of a good musician is how he or she approaches the pauses. We expect from our candidates a very personal, individual interpretation of the required performance pieces, the build-up of tension and suspense, a great deal of intensity, the ability to understand a composition as a whole. Incidentally, word has already got around that we provide very high quality. The fact that we attract large audiences even for the initial rounds of the competition is unusual and can rarely be said of other competitions.

**Given the high standard you require, are you actually able to attract a sufficient number of applicants?**

Our high expectations mean that the number of young musicians applying for our competition may be slightly lower than for other competitions. Two piano concerti as well as solo and chamber music recitals must be prepared in order to register; nearly three and a half hours of music of the highest standard! This requires not only talent, but character and an inner strength to cope with the high psychological and physical pressure during the competition. But there are a lot of extremely talented young pianists out there. After all, we had nearly 250 registrations the last three times the competition was held.

**What has happened to previous winners? Was it good for their career to have participated in the International Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn? Are you still in touch with them?**

Yes, I watch the development of our prize winners very closely. Our first winner in 2005, Henri Sigfridsson, is now a professor at the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen and is a sought-after concert pianist. The winner of the second round, Ian Yungwook Yoo, is now a professor in Seoul, has recorded many CDs and gives concerts in Europe, Asia and the United States. Our last winner from 2009, Hinrich Alpers, is also very successful and performs in major concert halls all over the world. He, too, holds a professorship at the *Institut zur Frühförderung musikalisch Hochbegabter* [Institute for the Advancement of Young Musicians] at the University of Music, Drama and Media Hanover. He also leads and organizes master classes and his career is progressing well.

**What is your overall opinion of young piano talents? Are young pianists becoming better and better or is the opposite the case?**

I would say that the former is true. As the bar is raised higher and higher, so the pianists are getting better and better too. Incidentally, competitions have a great influence on this development. In the past, competitions focused more on the technical skill of the candidates, the formally correct performance. The result was that pianists did not play very freely. They were too concerned with a safe performance and did not dare to show much of their own interpretation. Below the line, these concerts were rather boring. This is no longer the case now. We are looking for musicians who are individualists, people whose imagination is fired and who are inspired by their faithfulness to the music. Minor mistakes are forgiven, because passion is what counts. This is why each of our concerts is truly an event.



## **What do you think of the International Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn as an instrument to preserve Beethoven's legacy?**

It is important to continually invest effort in classical music, to ensure that every new generation is able to experience the art. The works by great composers such as Beethoven are of everlasting value. They convey a feeling of harmony and accomplishment; they are like the most beautiful works in painting.

Beethoven's music induces creativity and sensitivity; it makes people reflect.

This is what we are trying to promote effectively with our competition. We will continue to strive tirelessly to confirm our good reputation in the future.

### **Deutsche Telekom AG** Corporate Communications

René Bresgen  
Phone: +49 (0) 228 181 94 473  
rene.bresgen@telekom.de

**Ketchum Pleon GmbH**  
Vera Feller  
Phone: +49 (0) 228 915 14 310  
vera.feller@ketchumpleon.com

Isabel Flaspöhler  
Phone: +49 (0) 228 915 14 148  
isabel.flaspoebler@ketchumpleon.com

Further information can be found at: [www.telekom-beethoven-competition.de](http://www.telekom-beethoven-competition.de)  
<http://www.facebook.com/TelekomBeethovenCompetition>