

Russian Wins Chopin Contest

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Yulianna Avdeeva speaking to reporters after being pronounced the winner. **Alik Keplicz**

WARSAW — A jury of the world’s leading pianists awarded this year’s Chopin Piano Competition to Russian Yulianna Avdeeva, the first woman to win the prestigious classical music competition in 45 years.

Avdeeva, 25, was selected by the jury for the gold medal and the 30,000 euro (\$41,500) prize. Winning the title opens the doors to the best concert halls around the globe as well as deals with recording companies.

“I’m very excited; it is difficult to describe in words, but I’m very, very happy to be here,” Avdeeva said after the competition, adding that she had been working toward this her “whole life.”

Held only once every five years, the competition involves three grueling weeks of performing the works of Poland’s beloved 19th-century composer, Frederic Chopin. It culminates in concerts of the 10 finalists performing with an orchestra.

Avdeeva said she was so taken by the music, she had no time to think of the competition.

“Chopin’s music is so very special; I was enjoying every performance because I was not thinking about the competition, but was thinking about the music only,” she told reporters.

The contest is known for its tough judging — in 1990 and 1995, none of the contestants was deemed good enough for the top prize.

Martha Argerich, a past winner and member of the jury, said the panel had been impressed by the searching quality in Avdeeva’s performance.

“She’s a very harmonious artist. She’s always searching for some kind of truth,” said Argerich, who won in 1965.

“I am extremely happy about Yulianna, and particularly because she is the first woman after 45 years. After me there was no lady, so I am very happy — double — for this.”

The award for runner-up was shared between Ingolf Wunder, a 25-year-old Austrian, and Moscow-born Lithuanian Lukas Geniusas, 20. Third prize went to Daniil Trifonov, 19, of Russia. Bulgaria’s Evgeni Bozhanov, 26, won fourth prize, and the fifth prize was awarded to Francois Dumont, 25, of France.

The contestants spent three weeks playing technically demanding Chopin works, from etudes and preludes to large forms like the sonatas and, finally, concertos, performed on stage.

Chopin, born in 1810 of a Polish mother and a French father, drew widely from folk and Polish national dance music, like the quick-tempo mazurka or the stately polonaise. The emotional aspects, combined with technical challenges and changing tempos make Chopin’s music especially tough to perform.

The competition started in 1927 and has been held every five years since, except for a hiatus during World War II. Past winners include Maurizio Pollini of Italy, Argentina’s Argerich, Poland’s Krystian Zimerman and Rafal Blechacz. The prize winners are to perform at gala concerts on Friday and Saturday.

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