

**XV INTERNATIONAL TCHAIKOVSKY COMPETITION:
NEWS and REVIEWS**

Notes on the XV International Tchaikovsky Competition, piano division

- » Translated excerpts from *Russian Classical Music News* | 14 July 2015
- » Read the entire [article](#) [Russian].

... Much was revealed in the preliminary round, when an American of Chinese descent, George Li, proved himself in a blaze of virtuosity. In the first round it became clear that the technical training of this young man is unparalleled. But that is not all. It is amazing how far Li has managed to immerse himself in the emotions of the most difficult of the late Beethoven sonatas - № 32. Can a 19-year-old boy have the maturity to plumb its depths? Unlikely. But it appears as if Li has in his arsenal a powerful intuitive sense, which helps him to understand the world. For the musician, intuition is often more important than logic.

... “This miracle met with perfection.” That applies exactly to the assessment of two rounds of the XV Tchaikovsky Piano Competition. Here is a miracle: Lucas Debargue. And here is perfection: George Li.

... Playing with the orchestra in final round, as always, there were the "military-card musical acts." As expected, Lucas Debargue was not as his best when playing with an orchestra. But George Li communicated with the orchestra very well. His first concerto of Tchaikovsky sounded fresh. And Prokofiev's Third was a feast of pianism - and a triumph for Li.

Here, in the first movement, George played the dynamics similar to those in a Mozart concerto. In addition, Li created a great deal of diverse forte. Any forte he crafted was rounded and beautiful. At the same time he was able to convey a tough graphic quality, his harmonic language filled with spice and sharpness, as well as incredible expression. Compared to the performance of the same concerto by Dmitry Masleev, who put much less priority on expression, I favor George Li.

♦ ♦ ♦



Gergiev arrives just in time to Mikkeli

- » Translated excerpt from *Helsingin Sanomat Newspaper* | 5 July 2015
- » Read the entire translated [article](#).
- » Watch an [interview](#) with George.

Superstar conductor Valery Gergiev missed his train and arrived late, but still managed to open the Mikkeli Music Festival almost on schedule Saturday night.

The evening's soloist was 19-year-old American George Li, who had captured the silver medal in the Moscow Tchaikovsky Piano Competition on Wednesday. His performance was liberating; his technique, flawless. Li also has considerable energy and charisma.

♦ ♦ ♦

Silver medal in one of the world's most prestigious music competitions for orchestra's frequent guest soloist and friend - George Li!

- » Translated excerpt from *Performing Arts Västernorrland* | 2 July 2015
- » Read the entire [article](#) [Swedish].

Musical prodigy George Li received the silver medal yesterday at the XV International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. George first played with the Nordic Chamber Orchestra in 2009, when he was only 14 years old. The orchestra members were completely taken by surprise with George's performance. He was a smash hit! Today, it is with pride that the Nordic Chamber Orchestra congratulates our super-talented, frequent guest soloist and friend George Li for earning the silver medal in one of the world's most prestigious music competitions.

History:

George Li has performed with the Nordic Chamber Orchestra in 2009, 2012, and 2014, with conductors Johannes Gustavsson and Christian Lindberg.

♦ ♦ ♦

Russian pianist wins the prestigious Tchaikovsky Competition. The silver medalist was George Li, now a favorite in the Chopin Competition

- » Translated excerpt from *wyborcza.pl* [Polish online publication] | 2 July 2015
- » Read the entire [article](#) [Polish].

27-year-old Dmitry Masleev was the winner of the XV Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition in Moscow. Second place went to American George Li who is now the favorite in the upcoming XVII International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw.

History repeats itself (though vice-versa)?

The Tchaikovsky Competition is held every four years. In 2011, pianist Daniil Trifonov was the gold medalist in the Tchaikovsky, after having won third prize at the 2010 Chopin Competition. Now it could be the opposite: the silver medalist in the Tchaikovsky Competition, 19-year-old American George Li of Boston, will compete for the gold medal in Warsaw in October. In the qualifying rounds he gave a sensational performance and easily was selected as one of the more than 80 participants in the Chopin Competition.



TCHAIKOVSKY PIANO FINAL: IT'S LUCAS VS LUKAS

» *by* Norman Lebrecht | *Slipped Disc* | 25 June 2015

» Read the entire [article](#).

George Li (19, USA) is the pianist of post-Lang Lang's era: he adds new dimensions to piano playing such as fantastic brightness, a feeling of endless possibilities. 'His innovative attitude to piano structure made it sound like a new set of coordinates,' wrote *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*. At the same time, it's quite removed stylistically and aesthetically from the traditional format of standard European musical interpretation.

» Translated excerpt from the original *Russian Gazette* article. | 25 June 2015

» Read the entire [article](#).

The next performer was one of the favorites of the public, George Li, who presented Mozart concerto No. 23, the same composition chosen by the other U.S. competitor. As in previous performances, Li flashed impeccable technique, entirely aimed at the embodiment of the artistic image of music. It was extremely interesting to listen: in every phrase the concert pianist interpreted in the best traditions of vocal and theatrical genre and the characters of Mozart operas seemed to come to life. In the slow movement, Li moved to a secret arsenal of performing assets (and this is something more than charisma, strength, performing intent, and possession of phenomenal musical rhythm), causing the hall, including the jury, to stand still.

■ ■ ■

The Stage II piano auditions—with orchestral accompaniment — for Round II began in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory on June 24th.

» Excerpt from the *XV Tchaikovsky Competition Diary* | 24 June 2015

» Read the entire [article](#).

A good many listeners expected George Li to show off his pianistic “muscles”. However, the 19-year-old American musician had arranged a surprise. His playing showed not even a trace of the powerful virtuosity that astounded everyone when he offered Liszt’s “Hungarian Rhapsody” in Stage I of Round II. For Mozart his tone was notable for its lightness, clarity, and transparency of texture. In the Concerto, particularly in its lyrical and meditative second movement, Li established that he was not merely a brilliant virtuoso of technique, but also a musician of immense potential.

■ ■ ■

Performances of Geniušas and Li became a sensation in the Tchaikovsky Competition

» Excerpt from First Round Review by *Classical Music News (Russia)* | 19 June 2015

» Read the entire [article](#) [Russian].

The sensation of the day was 19-year-old American pianist George Li. The highly artistic, masterful, and enchanting performance of the young pianist caused the wild delight of the public. Architecturally constructed in vertical and horizontal polyphony, George’s performance of the Prelude and Fugue in G minor from the second volume of the WTC created the illusion of auditory three-dimensionality. Mr. Li’s performance of Beethoven’s final sonata was a real work of art. Perfect possession of the instrument, the highest emotional intelligence and artistic charisma, phenomenal polyphony, and mathematically adjusted balance of voice and sound engineering construction of musical form; finally, a brilliant finger perlé and the royal ending - one was reminded of Arthur Rubinstein - it seems that George Li’s pianistic possibilities are endless. The Chromatic Etude by Chopin, which involves the technique of the fourth and fifth fingers, turned into a masterpiece of performing without much trouble, as Pushkin: “There’s the King passing captivates formidable king”. Li - certainly is one of the leaders in the first round.

“Today’s performance in the Great Hall of the Conservatory - an unforgettable and precious experience for me. It’s a terrific competition and I hope to stay there longer. From music performed today I am

particularly close to Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. In Tchaikovsky's music so much feeling, love, grace, and I tried very hard to convey today is what I feel in my heart, to the public" - George Li said after his performance.

■ ■ ■

**The piano auditions for Stage I of Round II began on June 21st
in the Great Hall of the Conservatory.**

» Excerpt from the *XV Tchaikovsky Competition Diary* | 22 June 2015

» Read the entire [article](#).

The 19-year-old American, George Li, was quite properly counting on his phenomenal technique when he included in his programme works written by concert virtuosos—Liszt's "Hungarian Rhapsody" and Chopin's variations on *Là ci darem la mano* from Mozart's "Don Giovanni". He played both pieces with incredible ease and brilliance. However, Li had already shown in Round I that his artistic arsenal held far more than mere technical mastery. Rachmaninov's "Variations on a Theme of Corelli" was grand and full of dramatic contrasts while the two Tchaikovsky pieces, "Méditation" and "Valse de salon," came as a delicate lyrical intermezzo before the Chopin at the end. This American's playing had quite an impact on the audience, and the pianist went offstage to wild applause and shouts of "Bravo!"