L'AMOUR DU CLASSIQUE, LA PASSION DE L'EXCELLENCE

DIAPASON

The 2026 Long-Thibaud Competition

The 2026 edition of the Long-Thibaud Competition, dedicated to the violin, will take place in Paris from 10 to 14 November.

What defines the identity of the Long-Thibaud Competition?

Unique when it was founded in 1943, the Long-Thibaud Competition has played a leading role in the musical world. Its success is due above all to the renown of its founders—the pianist Marguerite Long and the violinist Jacques Thibaud—to the artists it has brought to prominence, and to the distinguished figures who helped shape its history: Arthur Rubinstein, Yehudi Menuhin, Darius Milhaud, Maria Callas, Emil Gilels and Henryk Szeryng, as well as Marguerite Long's close associates, including Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Isaac Albéniz, Camille Saint-Saëns and Gabriel Fauré, and those of Jacques Thibaud, such as Ernest Chausson, Eugène Ysaÿe and George Enescu.

The Long-Thibaud Competition emerged from the vibrant musical life of Paris, which is hardly surprising: Marguerite Long studied under the illustrious teacher Marmontel, who had crossed paths with Chopin and Liszt, while Jacques Thibaud furthered his studies in Paris with Martin-Pierre Marsick, a renowned pedagogue at the Paris Conservatoire around the turn of the twentieth century.

It was to bring joy and hope during the Occupation that Marguerite Long founded the competition with her friend Jacques Thibaud. Having no children of her own, she would go on to have more than a hundred in a sense: artists such as Samson François and Bruno Leonardo Gelber.

What qualities do you look for in the young performers who enter the competition?

It is important to show who you truly are, to be authentic; otherwise, artifice is immediately apparent, both to the eye and to the ear.

I would point to the 2025 First Grand Prize Piano winner, Saehyun Kim, as an example. At just seventeen, this Korean pianist was as mature and wise as a great master. Today, he is travelling the world, performing in prestigious concert halls where so many artists would love to play. The wonderful, lengthy article Marie-Aude Roux devoted to him in Le Monde, following his recital at La Roque d'Anthéron, was remarkable.

It reminds me of the mission Marguerite Long laid down in the statutes of her foundation: to support young artists and promote them throughout the world. In 1949, when Aldo Ciccolini won the Long-Thibaud Competition, she personally arranged more than 150 concerts for him over two years.

Today, I feel proud and happy to see how much the Long-Thibaud Competition has contributed to Saehyun Kim's success on the international stage, as it has to the achievements of such distinguished artists as Brigitte Engerer, Mikhail Rudy, Vladimir Feltsman and Elisabeth Leonskaja.

What is the role of the jury at an event of this kind?

The candidates are the soul of the competition. Jury members should be jurors, not judges who pass sentence, but musicians whose task is to discover fellow musicians among the candidates.

I do not believe that music softens people's manners; indeed, I rather suspect that it intensifies them. Yet personal opinions should have no place in musical criticism.

At the Long-Thibaud Competition, each juror submits a list of names in order of preference, because we believe that, in music, the arithmetic mean is a poor method. It opens the door to unnecessary compromises and backroom arrangements.

Moreover, in the foundation's invaluable archives, I have never found evidence that either Rubinstein or Menuhin ever awarded a single mark! Nor do we discuss the candidates: as in prayer, we communicate a name.

In his Critique of the Power of Judgment, Kant reminds us that there is the object and the objectivity of the thing—in this case, musical literacy, notation, the score, technical mastery, style—and these are matters beyond dispute.

Then there is the soul: the expression of a life, talent, the individual, the woman, the man, a story, a love expressed through sharing. Jury members are chosen instinctively for their ability to respect this philosophy.

Serving the Long-Thibaud Competition is a natural commitment for a France that takes pride in its history and its artists. Let us hold on to hope!

Long-Thibaud Competition, 10–14 November. The final will be open to the public on 14 November at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.

For more information: https://www.long-thibaud.org/

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