

Young Artists International

Newsletter, Opus 1

October 1, 1998

From Artistic/Executive Director

Dear Friends,

If one believes in the motto "Well begun is half done", then our first public "outing" fits into the category. Founded in 1996, receiving a non-profit IRS approval in November of 1997, our fledging organization attempted and successfully brought to fruition an event of international significance, which received immediate attention on the music scene.

The **International Laureates Chamber Music Festival** took place from July 27 - August 16 in Los Angeles and Taos, New Mexico. Six exceptional young musicians were chosen during selection process from November'97 - February'98. Numerous tapes, resumes, recommendations had to be screened, considered and evaluated. Obviously, we made the right choices, seeing the audiences approval with their enthusiastic responses, and receiving an excellent review in Los Angeles Times: "*the festival succeeded in finding talent... richly rewarding concerts...*". While each artist received individual praise, I would like to quote one segment in particular because even our board members did not believe (until they heard it) that musicians who had never met before could put a program together in two to three days. The first concert of the Festival took place on July 30, just two days after everyone's arrival, and here is what review said: "*Ad hoc chamber music has its perils, but violinist Boris Brovtsyn-Gruzenberg, cellist Jonathan Karoly and pianist Robert Thies avoided most of them in a finely detailed, emotionally ripe reading of Tchaikovsky's Opus 50. Every phrase was alive, with dancing variations as compellingly motivated as the surrounding grief. The alert musicians interacted with finesse while projecting individual character with radiant, room-filled sound*".

It cannot get any better than that! And it was true!

Should we mention that having a very tight budget we did not have any paid advertising? Then we should also mention that prior to the Festival the Sunday CALENDAR section of the Los Angeles Times printed a two-page article about the Festival and Y.A.I.; Russian Weekly Almanac ran full-page articles with photos in two editions; Taos's TEMPO had a cover spread article before the artists' arrival; most local newspapers had detailed calendar listings; radio-stations KKGQ and KNX supported advertising with live interviews; and during the Festival KCAL-TV, Channel 9 produced very professional news coverage which aired about 9 times in three days. Needless to say, our young artists felt like real stars with so much attention and delivered their best in return!

None of this could have happened without the support of our Board of Directors, each of whom became an "executive" member for the duration of the Festival, or without many friends and volunteers who gave their time selflessly. One day we will write a memoirs, meanwhile I would like to mention and thank those who really "went the extra mile" to make it happen.

THANK YOU to volunteers: **Tikisha Martin**, who has done thousands of mailing so professionally; **Larry Grodsky** and **Gloria Sheppard** for changing profession during the Festival and becoming designated drivers; to **Flo Selfman** for helping with publicity; to **Hanna Schmieder** for media guidance and TV coverage; to **Sofia Kashper** for literally bringing 40 audience members to the final concert at the Luckman Theater;

THANK YOU to very special "extended" board members, i.e. wives of the board members: to **Mrs. Hakim** who "saved" the very first concert in emergency situation when violinist Tomescu developed an ear infection, by finding the right doctor, who is not only an ENT but also a classical music lover, and treated Tomescu for free;

to **C.C. Lemann** for accepting both violinists for an "unscheduled" night stay before final departure; to **Tonya** and **Lola Gershfeld** for hosting a wonderful and generous reception after the first concert at the Clark Library as well as for "supplying" a full row of audience for every concert of the Festival;

A special **THANK YOU** to **Dr.&Mrs. Parvis Afshany** for hosting a reception in their beautiful home and garden after the concert at the Beverly Hills Library, attended by Rodney Punt, Director of the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department; to **Dr.&Mrs. Asher Kelman** for generously giving their home for artist's practice; to **Dana Ross Photography** for documenting the Festival; and to **Dr.Asher Kelman** for video documentary.

A big **THANK YOU** to our donors, whose names are listed in a Festival's brochure. However, due to editing few names were missed. Our sincere apologies to Mrs. Estelle Schlueter, Dr.& Mrs. Ed Williams, and Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Wong.

We thank all of you for your generous support, which we sincerely hope will continue into the future.

Laura Schmieder

**As for the artistic " in-house" review of the Festival, may we offer
Impressions by Monte Lemann (member of the Board) :**

Y.A.I.'s first International Laureates Chamber Music Festival was launched with a series of highly successful concerts in Los Angeles between July 30 and August 6. The five concerts took place before uncommonly understanding and enthusiastic audiences. The crowds filled each of the first four halls to near-capacity, and even made a sizable impression at the huge Luckman Fine Arts Complex where the final Los Angeles performance took place. It was an exciting time for the artists, who were coming together for the first time and learning to play with each other in several demanding pieces from the chamber music repertoire. Much of the attention was drawn to the two violinists, Boris Brovtsyn-Gruzenberg of Russia and Alexandru Tomescu of Romania. Their styles offered a healthy contrast - Boris's being bold and vibrant while Alexandru displays a slimmer, focused sound and elegant, poetic phrasing. Still, the two players complemented each other superbly in the charming Dvorak Terzetto, in which they were joined by Fumino Ando, who was recently hailed as one of world foremost violists following her performance at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and in an arrangement of Sarasate's sparkling "Navarra", where they were accompanied in suitably dashing style by pianist Robert Thies. Alexandru's concentration and phrasing were especially telling in two rarely heard pieces, Ysaye's "Poeme elegiaque" and Enesco's Sonata No. 3, both of which have mysterious qualities and subtle melodies. Boris made his strengths felt in two grand Romantic piano trios, Tchaikovsky's opus 50 and Mendelssohn's opus 49. In both of these works he was joined by pianist Robert Thies and cellist Jonathan Karoly. These three artists played as if they were old friends, so well were they attuned to each other. The Tchaikovsky occupied the second half of the initial concert, at the classically beautiful William Clark Memorial Library, where it received a thundering ovation. The surging, tuneful Mendelssohn work was a great hit with audiences, and it was featured in no less than three of the concerts. The firm, mellow lines of Jonathan Karoly's cello were also displayed more prominently in Chopin's Polonaise Brillante, accompanied by the Festival's other pianist, the virtuosic Ukrainian Valentina Lisitsa. This took place at the standing-room only performance in the Bing Theater of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where the audience was treated to the beautiful blending of violin and viola from Tomescu and Ando in Halvorsen's arrangement of Handel's Passacaglia, a dashing Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 from Lisitsa and a scintillating account Debussy's L'Isle Joyeuse from Thies, who also accompanied Brovtsyn-Gruzenberg in a flavorful performance of Ravel's popular "Tzigane". Another highlight of the Festival was Fumino Ando's viola sonata performance, in the form of Brahms's "F-A-E" Sonata, which she dispatched with aplomb at the concert in the Beverly Hills Public Library. Audiences also heard the violinists go through their paces in difficult but crowd-pleasing pieces from Paganini and Kreisler, while Lisitsa offered sparkling virtuoso operatic transcriptions by Godowsky and Moskowski.

Throughout the Festival, there were receptions and dinners for the artists, Board members and friends of YAI, which created a great sense of spirit, community and participation among everyone involved. Not only did this make the artists feel at home and appreciated, but it enabled the members of YAI to get to know these fine young performers. In fact, while the artists were lodged at a hotel in Beverly Hills during the Los Angeles performances, a number of them spent the night at homes of YAI members upon returning from Taos before their final departures.

The three concerts in Taos were successful beyond all expectations. Every concert was filled above its capacity, at least 30-50 extra chairs had to be brought in, and at the last concert people agreed to pay half-price tickets for sitting outside and just listening. We are invited back ASAP. Number of concert offers came from the audience members from Colorado and East Coast.

Monte Lemann

Post Festival news:

Valentina Lisitsa has performed 2nd and 4th Rachmaninov's Piano Concertos with the Florida Philharmonic (3 times each), with the Indianapolis Symphony, and recitals in Louisville, Virgin Islands St. Thomas and in duo with her husband in San Diego; following with Tchaikovsky Concerto in Milan, Italy;

Robert Thies had numerous recitals in the US and still touring;

Alexandru Tomescu participated in the Bach Festival in Romania and will soon be back in Washington D.C. performing under the auspices of IMF.

Boris Brovtsyn-Gruzenberg has performed solo with BBC Symphony and is presently back in Moscow in his graduate year at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory.

Fumino Ando accepted a position as concertmaster of the New World Symphony in Miami, Florida.

Jonathan Karoly was on a long European tour with the LA Philharmonic and on Sunday, October 25 you can hear him live in a solo recital at SUNDAYS AT TWO at the Beverly Hills Library.

Currently, the 2nd annual **International Laureates Music Festival** is being planned, and in our Opus 2 Newsletter (expect it sometime in the beginning of 1999) more information will be revealed.

Meanwhile, we are looking forward to seeing you at the Benefactors Concert Series in private homes. Look for invitations in the mail (do not throw away anything that comes in an envelope with a *Young Artists International* return address, otherwise you deprive yourself of unique musical and social encounters).

Of course, you can always call us: 310.281.3303

Or use our website: www.youngartistsintl.com