



Washington International  
Piano Arts  
Council

3862 Farrcroft Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030



2010 Festival of Music &  
The 8<sup>th</sup> Washington International Piano Artists Competition 2010 Finalists

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The whirlwind excitement of the Festival of Music 2010 and 8<sup>th</sup> WIPAC Competition began with a **Welcome Reception** on July 22 from 6:00pm-9:00pm at The Embassy of the Republic of Poland-to honor the pianists, jurors and special guests.

*WIPAC Board members & Committee Members*

It was a well-attended soiree! Members of WIPAC, donors, sponsors and other distinguished guests all came. Some well dressed and some casually attired to survive the summer heat in DC. Malgorzata Szum, Cultural Attaché of the embassy, did the honors of extending a warm welcome and handed the reins to Chateau Gardecki, Chair and Founder of WIPAC, to begin the festivities. She introduced special guests in the audience, Dr. Kalsom Ismail, wife of the Ambassador of Malaysia Jamaludin Jarjis and Princess Alexis N. Obolensky (Mme. Selene), beloved friend of WIPAC.

For musical warm up, John Gardecki opened the program with a performance of Chopin's *Fantasia Impromptu* with aplomb and a very apropos Paderewski's *Minuet*; after all it is a Paderewski piano sitting in the middle of the parlor in the Blue Grand Salon of the embassy. Just a historical tidbit, the Steinway baby grand piano is a present to the Embassy of the Republic of Poland from then Prime Minister and pianist/composer of Poland Ignaz Paderewski. He once was heard to say that he was "a pianist first and Prime Minister second."

What a tribute to the great Pole! Other pianists were also called upon to perform. Damira Feldman a contestant from Florida, who is Russian born, happily obliged as did Thang Dinh, a Vietnamese who now lives in Florida as well, once a contestant in last year's WIPAC Festival of Music and competition and British born pianist Robert Finley, President of Boston Piano Amateur Association. A scrumptious buffet dinner was served and other pianists took turns playing and filled the salon with music of Beethoven, Schumann, Schubert, etc. I am sure I saw the smile in Paderewski's face in a painting at the embassy which hangs over his gift.

All the pianists appeared well prepared for the coveted awards in the competition which-began the next day with the Preliminary Round at The George Washington University Music Department's Phillips Hall. The gorgeous Mexican Cultural Institute was the venue for the Semi- Finals. The Embassy of the Republic of Poland offered two Special Awards (Best Performance for a Chopin work and Best Performance for a Polish Composer work). WIPAC received 22 applications; 20 were accepted and there were three last minute cancellations for personal reasons. Winner of 2010 Festival of Music and the 8<sup>th</sup> WIPAC Competition and The People's Choice Award went to a local pianist, Viscount Thurston of Baltimore, Maryland (tall guy in picture), who placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in last year's competition. Robert Finley, a pianist from UK, now residing in Boston, won 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize and was also given the Press Award. Third Prize was shared by Brad Arington who has roots in West Virginia and now resides in California, and Damira Feldman, Russian émigré now living in Florida. Brad also won the Polish Award for his performance of Polish composer Karol Szymanowski.

New this year was the BEETHOVEN Award sponsored by Dr. Joyce Hagel-Silverman, Chair of Beethoven Society of America, given to the Japanese pianist Hiroko Ohtani now living in Michigan. After the Final Rounds, everybody went to The Army Navy Club for the Celebratory Dinner and there the Chair of the Jury, Michael Davidson, also Parliamentarian of WIPAC, announced the winners of various awards. It was a lovely evening and, as usual, pianists, who never tire playing, took turns "tickling the ivories" as late as we were allowed by the club.

Congratulations to all the pianists from all over the country who came and participated! For those who did not place, there is always next year! With thanks to all the sponsors, patrons and donors, to DC/VA/MD where music lives!

Washington International Piano Arts Council, Chateau Gardecki, Chair and Founder