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Janice Weber, Giving Renewed Light to Paderewski

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Pianist Weber performed works of two Polish composers. (By Lynn Wayne)

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The Washington International Piano Arts Council wrapped up its annual piano competition on Monday at the Polish Embassy with a recital by one of the competition judges, Janice Weber.

Weber, when not concertizing, is a professor at the Boston Conservatory as well as a novelist. It makes sense that an artist of diverse talents would be attracted to the music of Poland's most revered polymath,

Ignace Jan Paderewski -- pianist, composer, statesman and one of the architects of Poland's 1918 independence movement.

Paderewski's music -- a fixture on recital programs during the early decades of the last century -- has faded from popularity. But hearing his Variations and Fugue in E-flat Minor, Op. 23, on Monday suggested that a reappraisal might be in order. Filled with echoes and foreshadowings of works by [Mussorgsky](#), Liszt, Scriabin and [Rachmaninoff](#), it nevertheless possesses a somber, hypnotic power all its own -- especially when played with the steady technique, attention to musical architecture and cohesion among variations that Weber brought to it.

A similar clarity in the logic and trajectory of the musical argument was heard in Chopin's B-Minor Sonata, in a reading that thought in long paragraphs while not losing the work's moment-to-moment drama. Grazyna Bacewicz's roiling 12-tone miniature "Little Triptych" benefited both from Weber's structural smarts and her elucidation of the score's inner voices.