

Bachelor's thesis
Music degree program
Musician
2016

Maksym Filatov

A) THESIS CONCERT-

1. Music competition “Bravo, Turku 2014!” – 9.5.2014
2. Gala-concert of music competition “Bravo, Turku 2014!” – 10.5.2014

B) MUSIC COMPETITIONS

How to prepare yourself for the competition?



BACHELOR'S THESIS | ABSTRACT

TURKU UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Music degree program musician

2016 | 19 pages

Soili Lehtinen

Maksym Filatov

A) THESIS CONCERT

1. MUSIC COMPETITION "BRAVO, TURKU 2014!"
2. GALA-CONCERT OF MUSIC COMPETITION "BRAVO, TURKU 2014!"

B) MUSIC COMPETITIONS

– HOW TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE COMPETITION?

In this thesis there are two parts; artistic and written. The artistic part contains recordings of my participation in music competition "Bravo", which was in Turku 2014 and of gala-concert one day after the competition.

In this written part of my thesis I share my experience of music competitions. I made some observations and interviewed some teachers, who have taken part in music competitions earlier and who also have had students, who made success in this kind of competitions. The written part of my thesis includes methods, which I'm using for preparing myself for competitions and which I was taught by my teachers.

Main goal of this thesis is not only to find best solution for preparing yourself to a music competition, but also show different sides of participating there. My thesis includes not only professional advices to every day practicing, but also advices about physical and psychological conditions.

KEYWORDS:

Music competitions, everyday practicing, interviews with violin teachers

OPINNÄYTETYÖ (AMK) | TIIVISTELMÄ

TURUN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

Musiikin koulutusohjelma, muusikko

2016, Kevät 2016 | 19 s

Soili Lehtinen

Maksym Filatov

A) OPINNÄYTEKONSERTTI

1. Musiikkikilpailu "Bravo, Turku 2014!"

2. Gala-concert of music competition "Bravo, Turku 2014!"

B) MUSIIKKIKILPAILUT

Kuinka valmistautua kilpailuun?

Opinnäytetyöni sisältää taiteellisen ja kirjallisen osion. Taiteellinen osio sisältää tallennukset osallistumisestani Turussa vuonna 2014 järjestettyyn musiikkikilpailuun "Bravo" ja siihen liittyvästä galakonsertista kilpailun jälkeisenä päivänä. Kirjallisessa osiossa jaan kokemuksiani osallistumisesta musiikkikilpailuihin. Haastattelin kahta viuluopettajaani, jotka ovat myös aiemmin itse osallistuneet musiikkikilpailuihin ja joiden oppilaat ovat menestyneet tämänkaltaisissa kilpailuissa. Kirjallinen osio sisältää menetelmiä, joita viuluopettajani ovat minulle opettaneet ja joita itse käytän valmistautuessani musiikkikilpailuihin.

Opinnäytetyöni päätavoite ei ole pelkästään tuoda esiin parhaita ratkaisuja musiikkikilpailuun valmistautumisessa, vaan myös valaista eri näkökulmia kilpailuihin osallistumisesta. Tuon esiin soittoharjoitteluun liittyvien ammattimaisten neuvojen lisäksi myös fyysisten ja psyykkisten olosuhteiden merkityksen.

-

ASIASANAT:

musiikkikilpailut, harjoittelu, viuluopettajien haastattelu

CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION

2. KNOWLEDGE (HISTORY) OF MUSIC COMPETITIONS

3. PREPARING FOR A MUSIC COMPETITION

3.1 Physical conditions

3.2 Psychological and moral conditions

3.3 Professional advices for violinists

4. GREAT VIOLIN TEACHERS`INTERVIEWS

5. CONCLUSION

REFERENCES

(1. List of music competitions) THIS CAN BE INCLUDED UNDER REFERENCES

ATTACHMENTS

1. Thesis concert hand-program

2. Recording of the thesis concert

3. Physiotoools online

1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis consists of two parts. The topic of both parts, artistic and written, talk about classical music competitions. The artistic part has also two parts: 1. A music competition “Bravo, Turku 9.4.2014!”, and 2. Gala concert of music competition “Bravo, Turku!” 10.4.2014 (took place in Turku, Finland 9.5.14.)

I played in the competition 1st movement of Sibelius violin concerto. That performance was one of most successful things for me, because I won Grand Prix. In my opinion this is good topic for my thesis. In artistic part I have recorded two recordings: one from the competition and other one from gala-concert of this competition for a sake of comparison.

It's very good now afterwards to compare those two performances. It is easy to notice the difference between them, for example when concerning the vibrancy of the area and intensity of the sound. It sounds different when you play well prepared and very intensively concentrated, although under stress during the performance in competition, and on the other hand one day after the competition, when you play on gala-concert. relaxed, or a little bit tired, or even when you have become lame.

In my opinion the competition performance sounded better with more musical interpretation, although there were some technical mistakes. The performance in gala-concert was played technically more correct, but it was a little bit phlegmatic and sounded more conventional violin playing.

i would rather choose to listen the performance in the competition.

The written part of this thesis is about how to prepare yourself for these kind of music competitions. This written part includes interviews of well-known violin teachers from Finland, my personal experience of participating music competitions and advices from people, who already have researched this topic.

In my life I have taken part in more than ten music competitions, big ones and small. During my study year 2013-2014 in Turku Music Academy I have partici-

pated in five musical competitions and got one Grand Prix, two first prizes and one second. So I think I have quite much experience of the topic I'm writing about and I want to tell about that also for those who would wish not only to participate in competitions, but also to win them as well.

2. KNOWLEDGE (HISTORY) OF MUSIC COMPETITIONS

A music competition is a public event designed to identify and award outstanding musical ensembles, soloists and musicologists. The European Classical art music idiom has long relied on the institution of music competitions to provide a public forum that identifies the strongest young players and contributes to the establishment of their professional careers. Popular instrumental ensembles, such as brass bands and school bands, have also long relied on competitions and festivals to promote their musical genres and recognize high levels of achievement. In recent decades large competitions have also developed in the field of popular music to showcase performances by pop vocalists and rock bands (e.g. "Idol series" and "Battle of the Bands" events) (Wikipedia 20.11.2015). Nowadays there are two biggest organizations, in which they have united best classical competitions: "World Federation of International Music Competitions (WFIMC)" and "European Union of Music Competitions for Youth (EMCY)".

WFIMC is an organization based in Geneva, Switzerland, that maintains a network of the internationally recognized organizations that aim to discover the most promising young talents in classical music through public competition. It was founded in 1957, and now 120 of the world's leading music competitions are members of the federation (wfimc.org 20.11.2015)

EMCY is a European umbrella organization for about fifty national and international music competitions for young people. It is founded in the 1960s in order to develop the musical education of young Europeans. EMCY arranges concerts (with and without orchestra), broadcasts, tours, award ceremonies, master classes and courses for outstanding competition prize winners throughout Europe (emcy.org 20.11.2015)

In my opinion one of the best websites, where you can find a lot of competitions, master classes and jobs auditions for you instrument or even buy one is the following: <https://www.musicalchairs.info>

3. PREPARING FOR A MUSIC COMPETITION

3.1 Physical conditions

To participate in any competition, you should also be in a good physical condition for the reason that your body could resist long everyday practicing. Before any performance, (which have huge responsibility some time before), from one month till 2 weeks before performance, your mind is automatically getting stress already and it causes big tensions in muscles, which in some bad situations can cause irritation or even damage. Short time big loadings can release and remove tension from muscles. Also there are very important stretches for muscles. For this kind of action there are very useful gym exercises. In attachment I have added pictures of exercises which are useful especially for violinists and violists. Also you could check this website, where are exercises for fixing violinists and violists postures: http://www.wps.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/yoga_for_posture.htm

It is also very important to have enough sleep. If you are doing a lot of things through the day and getting really tired, then you should sleep minimum 8-9 hours. To have enough sleep really influence on your brain conditions through the day. You need to have clear mind and rested brain for it. So it's hard to make it without proper sleep. If it's impossible to sleep like that, then you should have at least 7 hours of sleep per day.

Any sport is good for muscles relax as well, even jogging or football. After it you have better blood circulation, which can fix many problems, as well as irritations. For some people who has problem with back, it's very useful to swim. If you are practicing a lot, your muscles are already quite in big stable tension and swimming has stable loading, not instant and it can only make worse muscles tension. Massage is very good for muscles relax, as well as physiotherapy. So if you have any problems after practicing it's good to know some good massagist, as well as physiotherapist. Exercises with foam roller is also quite effective and takes not much time and you can do it every day. You can buy it in any sport's

shop or just from internet and after you have done this, consult with a physiotherapist which exercises fit you the best.

Now about practicing, how better to organize it, that it will not cause any problem for your muscles? First, for example, if you are practicing 6 hours per day, then ideally is if you practice in the morning 3 hours and in the evening 3 hours. Every hour you should make a small break for at least five minutes and stretch your muscles. Also, if you have any pain in muscles very good warm and cold compresses or just take warm bath with salts, which is relaxing for muscles. Sauna is also very good for muscles relaxation, especially in the end of the day. If you have any pain it's good to visit doctor or physiotherapist, but in any way, you always can use Voltaren gel or Ibuprofen (Burana) to kill inflammation and pain. From my experience I would say, that gel is more effective than pills. If you have any pain, but still have to prepare yourself for a competition, it's good to reduce practicing time to 3 hours for one week at least and put more time on theoretical side of works, which you are playing.

3.2 Psychological and moral conditions

For moral endurance sport is also very important, as well as for physical conditions. Sports give you some free space in mind from other problems and negative thoughts. Also if you feel good physically, you feel also stronger psychologically. When you just practice a lot from day to day, it's really hard to bear it, so it's very important to have some other things to relax your mind as well. If you have whole day practicing at home, it's very good to have some calm walk after it in the evening, fresh air clears your mind. Also talking with some friends makes good after practicing, but anything you do I recommend to do it after you finished your practicing. I wouldn't recommend any big parties, alcohol or anything that can make your mind unclear and disrupt brain working. If you feel really nervous, it's good sometimes to take some sedatives, but do not take it too much. In the beginning of your preparations to any competition, you should make one thing clear for you, do you really need it? If you are unsure in yourself

or you feel that you are not so stable and morally strong person for it, better give up in the beginning, but if you really want to participate the competition, then remember it until your performance is finished and the competition is done.

It would be very important to have someone, who would inspire you, it is very good, if it's your teacher, but it also can be anyone, who you would mention yourself, when you are thinking "why should I play there?" and "what is this worth for?" Don't wait that everyone would support you, of course it's nice, when someone supports you, but from my experience I would say, that sometimes absence of support can make even better moral effect for you than presence of it. As I wrote before, you need also good sleep, because it does influent not only to your physical conditions, but also psychologically. When you are preparing to a competition, you should mainly concentrate on it, it should be your primary thing as early as possible, at least one month before the competition all other things should become secondary. No other problems should kick out you from your goal and you should be so prepared that anyone would understand you in it. Of course music is not a sport, but music competitions are really close relative to sport competitions. Most of advice for sportsmen could be useful also for musicians, who participate in music competitions. It is very important to have competitive environment, it's also really motivating, especially when someone is playing better than you. When you evaluate your own playing level, try to be objective, don't try to praise yourself or oppress. If you feel that you are playing not good enough, don't give up, your assertiveness can make a wonder.

When the day of the performance comes, try not overstress yourself. Don't think that if you feel nervous it's bad, it's normal, and it's good, it gives you some extra energy, which you could share with audience. If you feel little bit scared, it's also fine, try to think that everyone feel actually same, and every other participations are in same conditions. When you are already playing, don't think that you have not done everything that you wanted to do, or that you are making some mistakes. No one is perfect. Think about what people actually are waiting from you, music! Most of musicians, while they are playing on the stage and feeling nervous, think that everything depends from now here and now, but in fact eve-

Everything depends on what you have done for it for all time you studied and prepared. While playing you should take off all negative thoughts from your mind, even if you cannot concentrate fully on music, then you should have at least positive thinking. Also, while you are playing, you shouldn't think about what you are doing badly, but what are you doing well actually, and try to show it also to the jury and audience.

3.4 Professional advices for violinists

While you are preparing to a competition, try at least one or two months practise only those pieces, which you are going to perform there. This rule does not include everyday exercises, as scales, double stops, bowings etc. If you have not enough time to practise everything, try to make shorter your warm-up, but not exclude it at all, because it's still very important. If you have not enough time, don't try to play whole your program for this short period. It is better study one piece, but really carefully and precisely. Always, when you are finishing the practice of some piece, your aim should be, that piece should sound as perfect and ideal as possible. Don't leave anything "for later". Only after it, you can move to the next piece.

When talking about perfect time of practicing, for me it's 5 hours, but 5 hours of clear time, it can take me usually 6-7 "dirty" hours, which include small breaks. More than 5 hours is usually quite hard and exhausting, because it takes 7-8 "dirty" hours. When it takes whole day your brain and body becomes too tired. If you can bear it, then it's only good for you. Less than 5 hours before competition is also not good, because you need a time to make all program, which is usually big in competitions, precisely and perfect. While you are practicing, always play one piece different times in different tempos, slow tempo is good to give attention to every small things, but it is also good to practice with metronome in fast tempos. That organizes you and helps you not to get panic while you are playing fast on the stage.

While the competition is already just about to come, very often people want to play everything just fast and cannot calm down in stress. But if you play everything fast, even just in the day of competition you will be in trouble on stage. The quality of your playing will be much lower than it was before. Some teachers and musicians recommend decreasing time of practicing one week before competition, but it depends on your personal feelings. Some people feel better not practicing at all during the day of the performance, and others like to practice a lot. But anyway, even if you want to practice a lot during the day of performance before, still, try to save your energy for your performance, don't get exhausted. Also, while you are getting stressed on the day of performance, or even some days before, you start to notice small mistakes in your playing, which you didn't notice before and start to think that it's global problems and not just small mistakes. Try not to concentrate on them, and try not to pay so big attention to them, especially on the stage, don't make tragedy from small mistake, of course you should aspire to play perfect, but still main thing for you is to play music, so don't forget about it and try to relax.

4. GREAT VIOLIN TEACHERS`INTERVIEWS

For more information I interviewed two great violin teachers, who use to participate in music competitions and who have also been part of the juries. In my opinion they can give some great advices. I gave same questions to both of them.

One of the interviewees is professor Alexander Vinnitski. He is the winner of third place in Tchaikovsky competition and the second place in All-Union Competition in Yerevan and the first place in Viotti competition in Vercelli. Today he is teaching at Tchaikovsky Music Academy in Moscow, at Sibelius Academy in Helsinki and also in Turku Music Academy/Turku University of Applied Sciences. He has been chairman in a lot of different prestigious competitions and he

has more than 40 years of teaching experience. He is my teacher nowadays as well.

Another interviewee is current concertmaster of Turku Philharmonic orchestra and he is also a teacher of Turku Music Academy. He has long experience of participating in competitions and being part of the juries. He has 40 years teaching experience and he won 3rd place at the competition in Kuopio 1977.

What kind of experience music competitions give for a professional violinist?

Alexander Vinnitski: First thing is, that many people start to practice really hard, when they have some concrete goal. It can be some concert, performance or exam as well, but competitions have big programs and it mobilize yourself and push you maximally use your resources. Just when some extra hours of practice is added, it really has serious influence on playing.

Competitions have positive and negative moments. Very often some people think that if they lose already in first round of a competition, or when some other person has won, that it's for whole life, like a mark or seal, but actually very often those people who has not won anything in competitions become great violinists.

Juha-Pekka Vikman: I think there is kind of competition going on all the time in your professional life: Since childhood someone always compares you with some other ones. When you are playing concerts in school as a young person, or when you try to get place in the orchestra, there is always a competition present. I think a musician should always be in competitive circumstances. It is very useful to take part in competitions for more stable playing. I have taken part in many competitions and I have learned that when I have to work with very big program, it's very useful to my means for practicing. I felt that I have improved my playing a lot during the preparation periods for competitions.

What are main evaluation criterions in a music competition?

A. V.: It's a good question, because it is not always easy to know how to evaluate. For example if you see a very talented player who has not really accuracy, or another player who has made everything ideally, but who is not really talented. So here is a question, who to choose better and who is worse? And this kind of situations very often cause conflicts in juries. Of course the best variant is when the player has both: skills and talents, and when the violinist also plays everything impeccable, then there is no doubts and problems.

J.-P. V.: Quality, musicality and virtuosity.

When speaking of quality, in the first round of violin competitions there is also always Bach's compositions required. Jury listens everything in detail and precisely: musicality, technique, etc.

- For example in a first round of violin competitions there are always Paganini caprices in the demanded program, and of course the jury wants to hear what kind of ability the competitors have to play them. Some virtuosity is needed of course.

What's the main difference between normal practicing and preparing for a competition?

A. V.: In a competition the impression of ideal playing is demanded. Of course you should try to play like this in concerts as well, but a competition has more accent on this criteria. Also, because a competition has more excitement, you should have more stable playing, much more. There are some concrete advices, some great teachers have said, that for month and half before competition you shouldn't change any fingerings or bows for more stable playing. Of course there doesn't exist ideal playing without musicality, you will just lose, it's just plus for your playing, still more impression cause talented playing. Small techni-

cally mistakes doesn't matter, because they are not so noticeable as in people who are concentrated on technical part.

J.-P. V.: Everyday practicing has big part of basic exercises, when I'm practicing, I use a lot of time for basic exercises, for example Shradik exercises, Carl Flesch exercises, scales, etc. It's very important sometimes come back to basic exercises, play scales very carefully, finger exercises, bow exercises.

How much time practicing per day is optimal for preparing to a competition?

A. V.: Well, it's longless process. I'm sure that when practicing a lot, you sometimes notice, that you think of the competition repertoire even when you are sleeping. Even without instrument you imagine how to play. So it's kind of ceaseless process, that you are living in. When speaking about concrete numbers of practicing hours, it's very different for everyone. It depends mainly on physical conditions if you can practise whole day. Of course clear mind is needed as well. Some musicians believe, that when your brain is tired, it would still be usefull to practise for just muscles memory. But in my opinion it's useless to practice without clear mind, totally exhausting.

J.-P. V.: It depends. If you have some concerts or a competition coming, your practice should be at least 3 hours. Of course, if you are working in some orchestra, maybe it's hard to find so much time to practice, but even I'm in orchestra, I try to play and practice every day 3 hours.

How much the result depends on your instrument?

A. V.: Very much! When somebody is compeating with Stradivarius or Guarinari of course there is really a big difference. Instrument has really big influence on result, of course it's not the main criteria, but still...

J.-P. V.: It's very important to have a good instrument, good bow and good violin. If you have not a good instrument, audience can hear it, so it's very important.

There is an opinion, that competitions are more for soloists, but because mainly violinists become orchestra players, it's useless.

A.V.: Competitive element takes maximum resources from biggest part of competitors. At least about 80% in my opinion, because of competitions players develop better, practice more and grow-up faster as artist, and it's quite a big percent.

J.-P. V.: I think it's very useful for everyone, also for orchestra players this practicing, preparation for competition is very important. That really improves playing. I think there is no difference if you are a soloist or an orchestra player.

Do you recommend for every musician to participate in music competitions?

A. V.: Well, why not, nowadays there are a lot of competitions of different level. Taking part in competitions help to develop yourself. It is also important that you have not become dependent on that you are practicing only because of competition. You shouldn't forget, that we are still playing not for proving, that we are better than somebody, but just because we are loving music. There are a lot of professions where you can just earn money.

J.-P. V.: Yes, when I already worked in orchestra, at the same time, I still participated in music competitions. Of course it's very hard to make it at the same time, but it's possible.

5. CONCLUSION

I tried to put most important and useful advices in my thesis. I chose those which have helped me mostly in my preparations. Not all of what I say could fit for everyone, but mostly they are general advices which fit to everybody. It's always good to find out something from yourself, because some most common advices could be good for everyone, but for you, not really, or not at all. Sometimes it's happening, but you should try first at least. Anyway, it's always good if you research something by yourself, because music is not so clear as mathematic.

And remember, competitions could be only part of your life, they shouldn't be the goal of your life, and even if you didn't success at once, don't give up. If you want to win, you would win. It's hard to begin something, and music competitions are already more like sport competitions. As sport competitions very often don't have anything to do with health, music competitions very often don't have anything to do with music. What is needed more, is clear intonation, rhythm and good sound. But don't lose yourself and never give up. Even if you have lost, it doesn't mean that you are bad musician, keep calm and make music.

REFERENCES

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_competition

World Federation of International Music Competitions: <http://wfimc.org/>

European Union of Music Competitions for Youth: <http://emcy.org/>

http://www.wps.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/yoga_for_posture.htm

Information about physical conditions provided by physiotherapists Hanna Ivonen (Finland), Sirli Hinn (Estonia)

Physiotoolsonline:

https://pta003.physiotoolsonline.com/tonnew/TON_PrintPreviewPage.aspx?mode=prin... 14.6.2013

List of music competitions

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_classical_music_competitions

<http://www.emcy.org/member-competitions.html>

<http://www.wfimc.org/Webnodes/en/Web/Public/Home>

<https://www.musicalchairs.info>

ATTACHMENTS

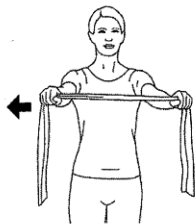
Personal exercise program



Work with the Best

Turun Ortopedinen Kuntotalo Apex Oy
Apex Fysioterapia www.apexnetti.com
Yliopistonkatu 19 A, 20100 Turku
PUH: 02-4140 500

Provided by Hanna Iivonen
Provided for

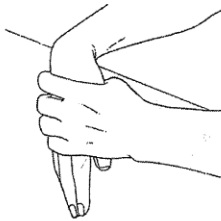


©PhysioTools Ltd

Stand or sit. Hold an exercise band with left hand in front of you like you are holding violin.

Push the band with right hand to side. Do not lift your shoulders.

Repeat 3x 15

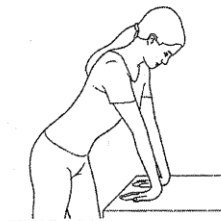


©PhysioTools Ltd

Forearm supported on a table with your hand over the edge and palm facing down.

Let your hand drop down. Gently assist the movement with your other hand. Hold 10 secs.

Repeat 10 times.

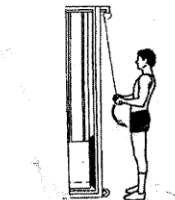


©PhysioTools Ltd

Stand leaning on a table with straight arms, palms against a table and fingers turned backwards. Or do this against a wall.

Move the weight of your body backwards until you can feel the stretching on the inside of your forearms. Hold stretching approx. 10 secs. - relax.

Repeat 10 times.



©PhysioTools Ltd

Grasp V-bar (or knotted rope) with both hands about 10 cm apart. Keep arms pinned to sides. Push bar straight down while exhaling. Hold position for a moment. Let weight return slowly until arms are at 90 degrees. Repeat the exercise.

3x 15

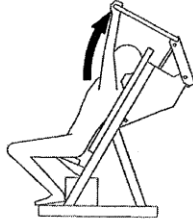


©PhysioTools Ltd

Take a wide grip on the bar. Sit and place knees under pad. Pull bar down in front of neck while exhaling. Return bar slowly to start position while inhaling.

You can also take wider grip or turn your hands facing you

3x 15



©HUR Oy

1 Work with your arms by pushing the lever arm upwards and maintain resistance on the return movement. Keep your shoulders down.

3x 15