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## CELLO COMPETITION

# Pulling Strings to Help Young Musicians

*A cello competition taking place in February will be many Polish cellists' first opportunity to compete in the international forum.*

The first Polish international competition to promote young cellists, taking place in Warsaw from Feb. 17-23, will feature 28 talented musicians from Europe and Asia. World-renowned Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki will be the jury's honorary chairman.

The event, organized by the Foundation for Promoting Young Cellists, was established in May last year thanks to the efforts of a group of musicians and teachers, as well as private individuals linked with classical music. Its main goal is to promote outstanding young cellists through concerts, festivals and recitals. "Public presentation of their skills gives those young people an exceptional opportunity to develop their talent and make their way into music lovers' awareness," says Prof. Kazimierz Michalik, a musician, teacher and the foundation's chairman.

As its first task the foundation decided to organize an international cello competition for musicians up to 24 years of age, an idea which received support from teachers and students in music schools and academies. "Up till now, we could only afford to send a few people to international competitions," says Michalik. "Organizing such an event in Poland will provide our musicians with an opportunity to compare their achievements with those of their foreign counterparts."

The inauguration concert, the competition stages and the finale concert will take place in the Karol Szymanowski State

Musical School in Warsaw, and the auditions are being held in the Frédéric Chopin Music Academy in Warsaw. The music performed will include works by Johann Sebastian Bach, Witold Lutosławski, Joseph Haydn, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Sergei Prokofiev, Ludwig van Beethoven and Johannes Brahms. "On the one hand the program reflects the requirements of renowned international competitions, while on the other it enables the youngest and less experienced musicians to participate," says Bogdan Pałosz, the event's organization director. The jury, led by Michalik, will also include other famous personalities: Daniel Shafran (Russia), Milos Sadlo (the Czech republic), Tobias Kuhne (Austria) and Andrzej Bauer (Poland). Total prize money amounts to zł.25,000, with the main prize of zł.10,000 funded by Minister of Culture and Arts Zdzisław Podkański.

Every year about 40 cellists graduate from Polish music academies. According to Michalik, that's quite a substantial number, considering the obstacles that young musicians have to face at the beginning of their career. Michalik thinks musicians have a low status in Poland, and that earnings are very modest—10 times lower than in Western Europe and the United States. "Perhaps thanks to the competition and effective promotion, the most talented Polish cellists will stop leaving the country and decide to pursue their careers in Poland," Michalik hopes.

**Małgorzata Bakowska**