

# 12 pianists in final stage of prestigious Chopin competition

WARSAW, Poland, Oct. 18, (AP) — Twelve pianists from around the world have been admitted to play in the final stage of the 18th edition of the prestigious Frederic Chopin piano competition, reputed for launching world careers for its finalists.

In a sign of appreciation for the competitors' artistry in performing Chopin's works, the international jury admitted two more finalists than the regulations foresee.

They are Leonora Armellini of Italy; Canada's J.J. Jun Li Bui and Bruce (Xiaoyu) Liu; Alexander Gadjević, representing Italy and Slovenia; Martin Garcia Garcia of Spain; Eva Gevorgyan representing Russia and Armenia; Jakub Kuszlik and Kamil Pacholec of Poland; Japan's Aimi Kobayashi and Kyohei Sorita; China's Hao Rao; and Hyuk Lee of South Korea.

Between Monday and Wednesday, each will perform one of Chopin's two piano concertos, with the orchestra, before the audience at the National Philharmonic in Warsaw which is traditionally packed for the concerts.

The winner is to be announced late Wednesday and will receive a gold medal and a prize of 40,000 euros (\$45,000) funded by Poland's president, as well as prestigious recording and concert contracts. The second prize is worth 30,000 euros (\$35,000) and the third prize is 20,000 euros (\$23,000.) and various prizes for other finalists, funded by Poland's government, music institutions and by private persons.

Among past winners are Martha Argerich, Garrick Ohlsson from the United States, Poland's Krystian Zimerman and Artur Schnabel and Seong-Jin Cho of South Korea.

The first edition of the competition was held in 1927. It normally takes place every five years. The current edition — in which 87 pianists took part — was postponed by a year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Poland's best known and beloved classical music composer and pianist, Chopin was born in 1810 in Zelazowa Wola near Warsaw to a Polish mother and a French father. He left Poland at 19 to broaden his music education in Vienna and then in Paris, where he settled, composing, giving concerts and teaching piano. He died Oct. 17, 1849, in Paris and is buried at the Pere Lachaise cemetery. His heart is at the Holy Cross Church in Warsaw.

There were no auditions Sunday, when traditional observances of Chopin's death anniversary were held at the Holy Cross that included Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Requiem," music that Chopin asked to be played at his funeral.

The auditions can be followed live on the Chopin Institute YouTube channel and on Polish state radio's channel.

**Also:**

**LOS ANGELES:** Flea had a funky birthday. So did the music school he co-founded that has become an LA institution.

As the Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist turned 59 on Saturday, and his Silverlake Conservatory of Music turned 20, they celebrated with a joint party in the parking lot for the Los Angeles school that often serves as a de facto performance space for its faculty and students.

Flea led a band assembled for the occasion through a series of

funk standards including **James Brown's** "Gonna Have a Funky Good Time," banging his orange-beaned head and scissor-kicking across the makeshift stage.

"This is the best possible birthday gift I could have imagined, being here with everybody, celebrating that we got to do this for 20 years," Flea said. "I'm so grateful for the opportunity to be part of a community and to work together with people to uplift young people."

His bandmates for the night included keyboardist **Cory Henry**, members of Fishbone — another punk-funk hybrid band from 1980s LA — and members of the school's youth chorale, who joined them as backup singers on the Meters' "Hey Pocky A-Way."

The kids, who have hardly sung in front of people since the start of the pandemic, took center stage earlier in the evening for a singing of **Patti Smith's** "People Have the Power."

"It felt really good," said 13-year-old **Isla Farris of Pasadena**, one of the song's soloists. "We were all kind of a little bit panicked but it was a really good experience for all of us. We enjoyed it after we got out of our heads."

She and other students got to know Smith when she recently visited the school to record a podcast with Flea — one of the perks of being a conservatory student.

"Curb Your Enthusiasm" actor and comedian **Jeff Garland**, who served as the night's emcee, expressed his jealousy after hearing the kids sing.

"Nobody told me when I was a kid that people had the power," Garland said. "If I'd known Patti Smith, I might have known it. But I only knew the Partridge Family."



**Variety**



This image released by Disney shows Mirabel, voiced by Stephanie Beatriz, in a scene from the animated film 'Encanto.' (AP)

**Film**

First Latino woman to co-direct a Walt Disney Animation movie

## Castro Smith finds her own value in 'Encanto'

By Sigal Ratner-Arias

Charise Castro Smith, the first Latino woman to co-direct a Walt Disney Animation Studios movie, admits that she has felt terrified at times. But when the chance to work on "Encanto" came around, she had no doubts.

"I said, 'I have to do this. I have to,'" Castro Smith said in an interview with The Associated Press. She joined the project as a writer and had never been in a directing role.

Castro Smith, who has a young daughter, said "it means the world to me for little brown kids everywhere to get to see themselves and to see themselves represented in a positive way and feel seen."

"Encanto," which she co-directs with Jared Bush and Byron Howard, is set in Colombia — the land of magical realism — and follows Mirabel Madrigal, a teenage girl dealing with the frustration of being the only member of her family without magical powers. It opens in theaters Nov. 24.

Castro Smith and Bush also share writing credits with Lin-Manuel Miranda, who created original songs for the film. The cast, led by Argentine American actor Stephanie Beatriz ("Brooklyn Nine-Nine," "In The Heights"), includes Diane Guerrero, John Leguizamo, Wilmer Valderrama and Colombian Angie Cepeda.

"Encanto" is undoubtedly a big step for Castro Smith, who started as a playwright and has credits as a writer for "Devious Maids." She was also a producer and writer for "The Haunting of Hill House" and "The Exorcist."

Her perspective as a woman raised in a Cuban American family proved useful to the job.

"Charise was a godsend from the moment she joined 'Encanto' and created a foundation of heart, vulnerability and authenticity that the entire film is built upon," Bush said in an email to

the AP. "From day one, she wanted to create a unique, flawed and utterly human character in Mirabel that spoke to the experiences of so many Latinas, while at the same time being relatable to audiences around the world."

Initially brought on as a writer to collaborate with Bush, Castro Smith was asked to be a co-director after seven or eight months, she said. "So it sort of happened organically and it's been amazing."

She especially credits her bond with her Cuban grandmother as a source of inspiration for Abuela Alma, who is voiced in the film by Colombian actor María Cecilia Botero.

"I just remember watching that (talk) show 'Cristina' with her a lot," Castro Smith recalled of her own abuela. "She encouraged me a lot. She was an amazing woman. Actually, the play I wrote most recently ('El Huracán,' or 'The Hurricane') is about her."

**Storytelling**

Although Alma "is temperamentally really really different than my grandmother was... that bond and that closeness I think was something that really informed me as I was writing," she said.

Howard could see this too. "From the very beginning, Charise knew who Encanto's Abuela Alma needed to be, inside and out," he wrote in an email to the AP. "Charise's writing showing Alma's bravery and struggle became the emotional heart of the film, and I know that much of this intimate connection with the character comes directly from the strong women in her own family."

"This unique talent of blending real-life emotion with heightened, supernatural storytelling comes naturally for Charise," Howard added. "She always writes with a sense of emotional truth."

Castro Smith was raised in Miami and attended

Brown University as an undergraduate student and later the Yale School of Drama, where she earned an MFA in acting.

Growing up, storytelling was a big part of her life.

"My mom used to tell stories about how, when I was a little kid, I was like putting on plays that I wrote in the living room and my grandmother really really encouraged it," she recalled. "Then I went to see my first musical when I was like in third or fourth grade ... and from that moment I was like, 'I have to do this, I have to be involved in it.'"

Besides the opportunity of bringing to the screen characters that children of color can relate to, Castro Smith said she was also drawn to "Encanto" by the idea of a protagonist that at the beginning may not be able to accept herself but learns to see and embrace her own value.

"I think it is a powerful message that I wanted to offer to everyone," she said. "But particularly the fact that this is a Latinx character, it was just so personally important to me to put that on the screen. It's meant the world to me to work on this because of that."

In terms of representation, she feels hopeful that "Encanto" and other upcoming projects will pave the way for more productions led by and focused on minorities.

"It's so important just because what we see, we kind of validate; what we see, we can empathize with; what we see, we can sort of put ourselves into the shoes of," Castro Smith said. "I think what I do as a storyteller and what we all do as storytellers is kind of fundamental to the fabric of society."

And Castro Smith has found her own value. "It turns out I really love directing," she said. "I wanna keep doing that after this." (AP)

# Features

ARABIC TIMES  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2021

**LOS ANGELES:** "Halloween Kills" may be available to watch at home, but the latest installment in the Michael Myers saga is making a killing at the North American box office in its first weekend in theaters. The **David Gordon Green**-directed horror scared up \$50.4 million from 3,705 locations, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Universal's "Halloween Kills" far surpassed expectations, which had the film pegged for a more conservative debut in the \$30 million range. It also easily bested its main competition, which included the James Bond pic "No Time to Die," in its second weekend, and **Ridley Scott's** medieval epic "The Last Duel." Both are playing exclusively in theaters.

The film picks up where Green's 2018 "Halloween" left off, on the same bloody night, with **Jamie Lee Curtis** back as Laurie Strode. Some were surprised when the studio made the decision to release "Halloween Kills" simultaneously in theaters and on NBC Universal's Peacock for premium subscribers, but the day-and-date strategy does not seem to have hurt its box office haul.

"David Gordon Green crafted an incredibly terrifying continuation of this franchise that our core audience was more than eager to come out to the theater to see," said **Jim Orr**, Universal's head of domestic distribution. "Audiences want to be out, they want to be in theaters, and they want to experience it communally."

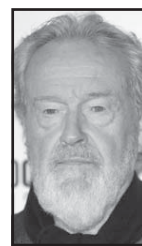
Before "Halloween Kills," which had a reported \$20 million production budget, the biggest day-and-date opening of the year was Warner Bros' "Godzilla vs. Kong" which grossed \$32.2 million in its first weekend while also being available on HBO Max. It's a best for a pandemic-era horror opening, narrowly beating out "A Quiet Place Part II."

The 2018 "Halloween" was a massive hit that opened to \$76.2 million and went on to gross north of \$256 million against a \$10 million budget. And there are plans for a third that will close out the modern Michael Myers trilogy.

The opening weekend crowd for "Halloween Kills" was slightly more male (52%), and it was diverse (36% Caucasian, 34% His-

panic and 18% Black), according to exit polls.

"Horror movies have been a mainstay of the box office throughout the pandemic," said **Paul Dergarabedian**, Comscore's senior media analyst. "Audiences just love seeing horror movies in a movie theater. ... But this also isn't just a horror movie, 'Halloween' is



Scott



Green

a huge brand, and this is 43 years in the making."

The James Bond film "No Time To Die" slid into second place in its second weekend in North America with \$24.3 million, which is down only 56% from last weekend and brings its total to \$99.5 million. Globally, "No Time to Die" has earned

\$447.521 million.

Further down the charts is "The Last Duel," Scott's 14th century drama starring **Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, Jodie Comer** and **Adam Driver**, which has earned only an estimated \$4.8 million from 3,065 locations despite positive reviews and an exclusive theatrical run. Distributed by the Walt Disney

Co, "The Last Duel" was a title the company inherited in the deal with 20th Century Fox.

Next week Warner Bros' big budget adaptation of "Dune" opens in North American theaters and on HBO Max, as does Disney's "Ron's Gone Wrong" and **Wes Anderson's** "The French Dispatch." (AP)