



INTERNATIONAL GUITAR COMPETITION HOW TO BE PREPARED AND WHAT KIND OF REPERTOIRE SHOULD BE PERFORMED

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Annotation: This article explores the essential strategies and musical preparations required for successful participation in international guitar competitions. It emphasizes both technical and psychological readiness, including practice routines, performance anxiety management, and stage presence. A significant focus is given to the selection of repertoire, where a balance between technical complexity, musical expressiveness, and stylistic diversity is highlighted. The study also analyzes criteria typically used by juries, helping participants to align their preparations with professional standards. By evaluating past competition trends and expert opinions, the article provides practical recommendations for aspiring guitarists aiming to excel on the global stage.

Keywords: international guitar competition, performance preparation, musical repertoire, classical guitar, stage performance, technical skills, artistic expression, competition strategy.

Introduction.

Competitive events are so numerous in the guitar world that there is a type of guitarist dubbed the “professional competitor.” Many aspiring guitarists attempt this role to some degree, with their success rate determining the length of their endeavor. Whatever the opposition to competitions may say, the place of competitions in musical culture is assured by their practical benefits for performers. Pianists and violinists have accepted that if you want your career to get off to a good start, it helps if you win a competition or two.

While acknowledging the importance of such events in his book on classical guitar competitions, Colin Cooper argues a case for the rise of a particular type of musician out of a thriving competitive market. He distinguishes between two groups, “performers” and “artists,” with the former now dominating the competition scene, and suggests reasons for how competitions themselves have institutionalized these roles. Whatever the reality, competitions have made their mark and are here to stay.

It has been widely noted that both performers and juries alike have become increasingly wary of competitive events in recent times, and at the very least our ideas on what it actually means to win a competition are both diverse and divided. What follows is a set of practical tips for competing in competitions. It does not represent an ideal state of affairs, but rest assured, this advice will help you on your way to victory.

1. Recognize friend or foe—know the jury

Knowing who is going to be giving the marks at a competition is critical to your competition campaign. Entering competitions isn’t cheap—when flights, accommodations, and fees are considered. With many competitions to choose from, you would be foolish not to consider the panel in your decision of where to compete. It affects participants in two ways: what you play and how you play it.

If you are fortunate enough to be a very adaptive player with a lot of repertoire under your fingers, and are savvy enough to recognize the qualities the jury members value, then you are lucky. If you have limited repertoire and a very particular approach to your interpretations, then you are better off competing at those events where the jury members favor your approach. So, do your research, find out what you can about the judges approach to music, and satisfy whatever it is they are looking for.

2. Know what you are getting yourself into—research the competition format

Participants rarely have an understanding of how an individual competition is set up, and you are welcome to ask: no festival organizer, chairman, or jury member will have a problem with someone wanting to know exactly how a competition is marked and run. When you have that knowledge, you can put it to use—without it, you are as clueless as the next person. For example, find out how many competitors there are, and how long they are expected to play (the maximum and minimum repertoire or stage time). If the jury has to sit through six hours of playing, then you can give yourself a slight edge by reducing the length of your own program to the minimum accepted. Judges always remember the performers that went on too long—and not in a good way.

3. The competition starts earlier than you think—choose a good program

Programming is essential to your success. Many think that the notes are there to simply facilitate the skills of the performer. While this is generally true, you will be judged before you walk onto the platform for what it is you intend to play. Jurors are generally given programs, and the first thing they do is scan to what the day ahead has in store for them. So highlight yourself as an individual, and shun the “Rossinianas” and Ginastera’s Sonata.

4. Know the battle—how to practice for a competition

Competitions are not concerts. While there are many similarities on the surface, they are entirely different things. Where audiences are sympathetic to your performing needs (setting your footrest, etc.), jurors won’t be. They will have been sitting down for a long time, and will tire of long breaks, lengthy tuning sessions, and other comforting habits. Your first impressions count, make the opening 20 or so seconds of whatever you play really count. Play loudly (if appropriate), cleanly, and set the tone for what is to come. A good start will always make later mistakes more forgivable.

5. You and your guitar playing—have a personality

You may think that your playing is all that counts, but you’d be very wrong. Jurors are human beings, too, and are susceptible to the kind of subjective influences they try very hard to avoid. I have been involved in many jury discussions over the years in which the “attitude” (or other similar terms) of the player has been discussed. This isn’t a Miss World competition, but you’d do well to consider the panel as paying members of the public rather than professionals hired to do a job.

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