

Against the torrent of awards in chess composition

"The chessmen are like printing types bringing thought into form; and although these thoughts leave a visual impression on the chessboard, their beauty is abstract like a poem."

(Marcel Duchamp)

Introduction

Chess paired itself in a variety of relationships with several arts because of its high cultural heritage. Thus we find it, for example, as a musical theme, in literature with Stefan Zweig and his "Schachnovelle", and in the paintings of many major artists. One of them is Marcel Duchamp (28. 7. 1887 - 2. 10. 1968), a pioneer of Dadaism and Surrealism, who entirely devoted himself to the game of chess after his painter career, and as such participated in five chess olympiads as a member of the French national team. He created this oil painting:



Marcel Duchamp:

The game of chess, 1910

But chess doesn't need to be paired with other arts to be deemed as part of art - chess can become an art on its own. This is because chess composition - the composition of chess problems and endgame studies - usually is seen as an art, because it's not chained to the terms of a chess game and thus allows its creators the opportunity to display chess ideas in crystal-clear form without any unnecessary ballast. Some games may be described as a piece of art, too. In chess compositions, however, the struggle for the victory, which marks a game of chess, largely gives way to the presentation of art.

Some time ago the well-known chess player and chess composer Yochanan Afek reassured me: *"I will just say that for me a chess study is first and foremost a creation of art and as such it should contain a theme or leitmotif (preferably original) and a process of paradoxical moves leading to some surprising climax, some highlight. Else it's simply a technical analysis of a chess position leaving*

*no impression or kick.... The role of the composer (problems too) is in my opinion to discover and expose the treasures of chess (in particular those rarely occur in the realm of competitive chess) and that's what most of us try to do. Bazlov, like Matous to name just two, carry on this concept of their great predecessors such as Liburkin and Gurevich."*¹

This view apparently is also the consistent and often postulated requirement of many other experts, as the following example concerning chess problems shows. Ado Kraemer and Erich Zepler wrote in the introduction to their book "Im Banne des Schachproblems": *"What, now, is beauty in chess problems? On what scale shall it be measured, according to which rules be sensed? The question is difficult to answer, but finally not harder than the analogous question for the beauty of a poem, a song, a painting. By such a comparison, we want to express absolute creed that the chess problem belongs to the performing arts."*² Arthur Gehlert, in his book "Über das Wesen des Schachproblems" 1927, however, expressed himself more cautious.³ As the game of chess and thus chess composition, in contrast to other areas of art, is not accessible to anyone without a more detailed knowledge of the rules of the game, its existence in the world of art - and even in the world of chess - is rather subordinate.

If chess composition is just a special art genre, then like all other art genres - true to the Latin motto "De gustibus non est disputandum" - it eludes an undisputed rating. The judge on the lasting value of a work of art, by common experience, is time, and that wisdom should also hold for chess compositions. Nevertheless, this wisdom is challenged. This is because in chess games the concept of beauty prize originated. In the "Lexikon für Schachfreunde" an entry for this keyword is as follows: *"On chess events, a frequently offered prize for the best game of the tournament. A jury is set to evaluate the submitted games. Until the beginning of this century the beauty prize, which was awarded after the conclusion of the strongest international tournaments, was deemed to be equal to the first prize, or even surpassed it in importance. One was inclined to rate the creative power in chess higher than the mere result."*⁴

Historical development

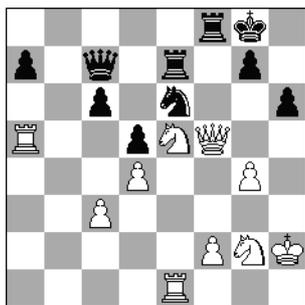
Which is now the origin of awards in the field of chess? If we for once ignore the Arabic and medieval bet games, because they were solving competitions, then shortly after the London chess tournament from 1851, a turning point in the chess history of the modern period, for the first time we meet the concept of a beauty prize. It was awarded in 1876 to the Englishman Henry Edward Bird for his game against James Mason in New York, where Bird sacrificed his queen with the surprising move 31.Ra6! and (not only because of this Queen sacrifice) won the beauty prize:

¹ In his email, dated December 2nd 2007

² Website of Ralf Krätschmer: <http://www.berlinthema.de/Banne1.htm>, as at March 2008.

³ Arthur Gehlert, Über das Wesen des Schachproblems, Leipzig 1927, p. 4: *"In every respect the impacts of chess compositions don't come up to those of other natures of art at all. Firstly they can't reach the human feeling immediately. They are directed just at one's intellect and not at one's emotion. Secondly we need our own perception whereas other arts are able to illustrate their contents: The poet possesses the melody of speech, the musician that of the sound; at the sculptor's and painter's disposal is the complete body language including the infinite diversity of forms, colors, contrasts of light and shadow. Against these mighty elements of sensuous feelings there are no comparable elements for the effect of products of chess composers."*

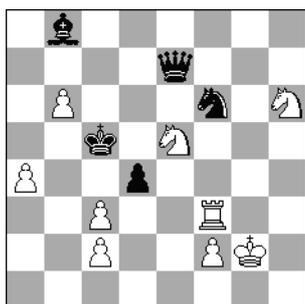
⁴ Manfred van Fondern, Lexikon für Schachfreunde, edition 1980, ISBN 3-7658-0308-1, p. 277.



Bird - Mason, 1876

1.e4 e6 2.Q4 Q5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.exQ5 exQ5 5.Nf3 BQ6 6.BQ3 O-O 7.O-O h6
 8.Re1 Nc6 9.Nb5 Bb4 10.c3 Ba5 11.Na3 Bg4 12.Nc2 QQ7 13.b4 Bb6 14.h3 Bh5
 15.Ne3 Rfe8 16.b5 Ne7 17.g4 Bg6 18.Ne5 Qc8 19.a4 c6 20.bxc6 bxc6 21.Ba3 Ne4
 22.Qc2 Ng5 23.Bxe7 Rxe7 24.Bxg6 fxc6 25.Qxg6 Nxc3+ 26.Kh2 Nf4 27.Qf5
 Ne6 28.Ng2 Qc7 29.a5 Bxa5 30.Rxa5 Rf8 31.Ra6! Rxf5 32.gxf5 NQ8 33.Nf4 Qc8
 34.Nfg6 Re8 35.Nxc6 Qc7+ 36.Nce5 Qxc3 37.Re3 QQ2 38.Kg2 QxQ4 39.f6
 gxf6 40.Rxf6 Ne6 41.Rg3 Ng5 42.Ng4 Kg7 43.Nf4 Qe4+ 44.Kh2 Nh7 45.Nh5+
 Kh8 46.Rxh6 Qc2 47.Nhf6 Re7 48.Kg2 Q4 49.Ne5 Qc8 50.Ng6+ 1-0

Beauty prizes for chess games almost always were and are individual prizes. It's unusual to determine a ranking here. Other rules apply in the solution tournaments. Already in 1854, London had seen the first problem-solving tournament which found Walter Grimshaw as winner. In such tournaments a unique ranking of the participants can easily be done due to quality of the solution and time consumption. In the field of chess compositions, on the other hand, the now customary evaluation of a ranking calls for a very different kind of qualification, because here art is to be judged. How futile such efforts can be to formulate universally valid criteria for the evaluation of art in chess is illustrated by the Austrian champion Johann Berger (1845 - 1933) with his book „Das Schachproblem und dessen kunstgerechte Darstellung“, in which he tried to constitute the principles of the broadly laid variant problems of the older German school. This is history now, and therefore no longer up to date. But also in recent times there was no lack for tries to get a grasp on art in chess. The assessment system by Vaux Wilson (1899 - 1982) from his book "When the pieces move" 1978 can be cited as example. This work saw the quite quaint attempt to rate chess problems with a numerical scale for pins, unpins, line openings etc. (and was blown to smithereens by twomover expert Herbert Ahues). But let's get back to the historical events. One didn't have to wait very long for the first composition tournament. After Manchester 1857, Birmingham 1858 and Cambridge 1860 there followed the more well-known London chess tournament of 1862. The 1st prize was awarded to Conrad Bayer (direct mates), Arnold Pongracz (selfmates) and Bernhard Horwitz (studies), who composed the following work, which got awarded then:



Bernhard Horwitz, 1862

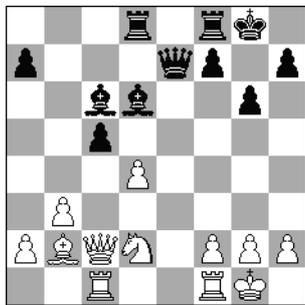
Win

Solution: 1.cxd4+ Kd5 2.c4+ Ke6 3.Rxf6+ Qxf6 4.d5+ Kd6 5.Kf1 Qf4 6.Nhf7+
 and White wins.

All kinds of awards in the field of chess, despite their age of about one and a half centuries, nevertheless can only be termed newcomers in the over 1,500-year-old chess history. Beside all the bright light shining from such well-meant honors their dark sides may not be overlooked, as will become clear. According to what specific criteria such awards are given for games and compositions? In this area, of course, the freedom of the arts rules too. It can only be the very personal tastes of the judges on diversity, idiosyncrasy and beauty of the events on the 64 fields of the chess board, even if these criteria are now occasionally circumstantiated using mathematical calculations as for the above-mentioned Vaux Wilson. In the book "Wege zu Schachstudien" likewise another such attempt has been tried.⁵ Standardized assessment criteria can and will never exist, however, and therefore disagreements about prize reports have always been on the agenda. The well-known problem composer Juraj Lörinc recently lamented on the frequent one-sidedness of prize judges.⁶ About awards one can debate felicitously, as an earlier example from the tournament history splendidly shows. Siegbert Tarrasch at the St. Petersburg Tournament 1914 delivered a highlight of a game. As the leader of the black pieces against Aaron Nimzowitsch he sacrificed two bishops in the following position:

⁵ Hörning, Josten, Minski: Wege zu Schachstudien, 2006 Homburg, ISBN 3-933648-29-7, p. 232.

⁶ Excerpt from the article of Juraj Lörinc on his website <http://jurajlorinc.tripod.com/chess/judrefpd.htm> as at March 2008: *Judges of tourneys usually write in the introductions of their awards about criteria they've used for judging as well as about the influence of their personal preferences to the award. Yes, it is undeniably true that personal preferences play an important role in ranking the problems. Even the best experts can value and rank a same set of compositions in a very different order. The regular and the most important examples are FIDE Albums (or WCCI). Sections are judged by really experienced persons, usually holding the official title of International FIDE Judge. But their outcomes are often very different. How is it possible that a composition can get 4 points from one judge (it means in his opinion it should surely be in the Album), while other judge gives it only 2 points (it means in his opinion it is good, but probably not enough for the Album)? It is possible, I wouldn't blame the judges, I see why - and I guess you know the answer now too. Despite all more-or-less objective criteria for judgment, personal preferences of the judge play if not the crucial role, at least very important.*



Nimzowitsch - Tarrasch, Petersburg 1914

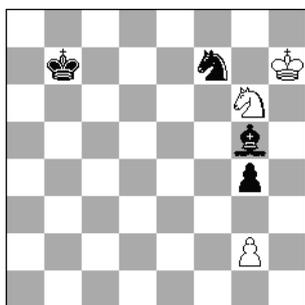
1.Q4 Q5 2.Nf3 c5 3.c4 e6 4.e3 Nf6 5.BQ3 Nc6 6.O-O BQ6 7.b3 O-O 8.Bb2 b6
 9.NbQ2 Bb7 10.Rc1 Qe7 11.cxQ5 exQ5 12.Nh4 g6 13.Nhf3 RaQ8 14.Qxc5 bxc5
 15.Bb5 Ne4 16.Bxc6 Bxc6 17.Qc2 NxQ2 18.NxQ2 Q4 19.exQ4 Bxh2+ 20.Kxh2
 Qh4+ 21.Kg1 Bxg2 22.f3 Rfe8 23.Ne4 Qh1+ 24.Kf2 Bxf1 25.Q5 f5 26.Qc3
 Qg2+ 27.Ke3 Rxe4+ 28.fxe4 f4+ 29.Kxf4 Rf8+ 30.Ke5 Qh2+ 31.Ke6 Re8+
 32.KQ7 Bb5#

The promised beauty prize nevertheless bypassed the disgruntled Tarrasch, so he was left only with scolding the judge, writing: "*This decision, blamably for the judges, is probably mainly due to the chairman of the College Mr. Burn who is a sober Englishman without artistic taste and judges the beauty of a game according to the fatness of the sacrificed piece.*"⁷ This incident reminded not only of the game Bird - Mason with an excellent queen sacrifice, it also highlights an unpleasant side effect of awards: They sometimes lead to clashes.

When judging awards of art works, one should generally keep their specific requirements in mind. On the one hand, they might be a *conditio sine qua non* to complete something unfinished. For example the legacy of Alfred Nobel requires the annual decision of the panel set up by him for one of the proposed literati, or the conduct of figure skating championship the selection of the winner. Without prizes, here goes nothing. Alternatively, award ceremonies might be granted as a subsequent award for already existing art objects. Informal compositions in chess tournaments, after their publication, are perfectly viable without surplus prize reports: They require no proof of their existence or their value by awards, although this may be suitable to increase the reputation of composers, or even the judges. On the border of both categories, there are formal tourneys for chess compositions, which publish the prizes together with a report on it. Let's compare with two other areas: who, for example, would ever have the idea to judge the values of various contributions to a literary Festschrift? And who wanted to call the "Oscar", invented to end the film crisis in the late 1920s, something else than a marketing ploy?

Judges and their awards

Similarly, the FIDE went promotional with the launching of an annual selection of a "Study of the Year" as a permanent campaign, thereby expressly stating its intention of a permanent advertisement for chess composition. For example, it declared the following study by Yuri Bazlov, being awarded the 5th prize in the John Nunn jubilee tourney, as study of the year 2005:



Yuri Bazlov, Remis
 Study of the year 2005

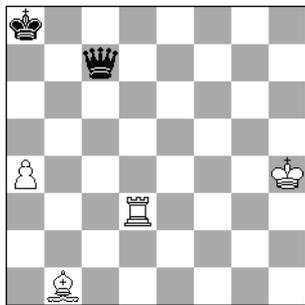
Solution:

1.Nh8! Ne5 [1...Nxh8 2.Kxh8 Kc6 3.Kg7 KQ5 4.Kg6 Be3 5.Kf5 g3 6.Kg4 Bf2
 7.Kf3 KQ4 8.Ke2! =] 2. Nf7! 2...Nxf7 3.Kg6! Ne5+! [3...Kc6 4.Kxf7 KQ5 5.Kg6
 =] 4. Kf5! [4.Kxg5? Kc6! 5.Kf4 KQ6! 6.Ke4 (6.Kf5 KQ5 +-) 6...Ke6 7.Kf4 Kf6
 8.g3 Ke6 9.Kg5 KQ5 10.Kf5 KQ4 11.Kf4 KQ3! -+] 4...Nf7 [4...Nf3
 5.Kxg4][4...Bf6 5.Kxf6 Nf3 6.Kf5 Nh2 7.Kf4 =] 5.Kg6 Ne5+ 6.Kf5! draws.

This is certainly a very crafty piece, even if can be righteously questioned whether it could show the desired promotional effect because of the high level of difficulty and artistic content, which is very difficult to access for an outsider interested in chess. Very symptomatic also it seems to post facto extol a study awarded with a 5th prize, as this relativizes the original verdict of the judges and their understanding of art in a significant way.

In the field of arts competition actually is really out of place, because a battle for places and ranks decries the art itself. What is the nature of such events in chess? Besides team competitions such as e.g. the regular "World Chess Composing Tournament" (WCCT) of the FIDE and its olympic competitions, primarily individual competitions of chess magazines and on the Internet dominate the composition scene. Here, a distinction is made between formal tourneys, which are hold anonymously and publish problems and judge report at the same time, and informal tourneys, where the compositions are published in advance and by name. Awards usually take the form of the titles "Prize", "Honored Mention" and "Commendation". Widely prevalent is the demanding of a particular theme. For example, at the 8th WCCT it was requested in the study sector that immediately after the attack on an unprotected piece a second one is offered, a situation practically never met in a game. As an example, this study was cited:

⁷ Tarrasch, Dr. Siegbert: Das Großmeisterturnier zu St. Petersburg im Jahre 1914. Sammlung sämtlicher Partien mit ausführlichen Anmerkungen. Im Auftrage des Turnier-Komitees. Mit einem Anhang: Die Ergebnisse des Selbstverlag, Nürnberg 1914.



G. Kasparian

1. Preis Magyar Sakkelet, 1969

Solution:

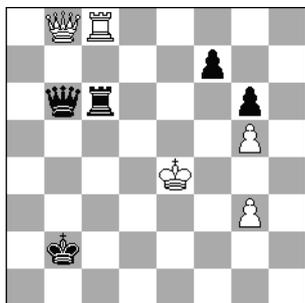
1.Kg4 Q8+ 2.Kf3 (2.Kh4 Q8!) Qb7+ 3. Rd5!! Qxb1 4.Ra5+ Kb7 5.Rb5+ draw.

A true work of art of the well-known master!

The FIDE, in clever foresight, has not addressed the theme "art" and its evaluation. Only in a formal sense it dealt with the office of a tourney prize judge and presented its Annex II to the "Codex for CHESS COMPOSITION" and the "Guidelines for the Organization of Tournaments" containing certain rules, because it also organizes its own composition tourneys.⁸ This includes the WCCT under the auspices of the PCCC (Permanent Commission for Chess Compositions). In these tourneys firstly the participating countries have to make an internal choice and then submit the three best drafts. All submitted works are finally evaluated by prize judges from different countries to declare a winner. For the evaluation the PCCC made some specifications.⁹ But even here, there are no specific references to the evaluation in artistic terms. In any case, it's remarkable that not a single judge, but a body of five returns the verdict. This seems to be an important finding for a balanced assessment, because the degree of subjectivity of a single judge will be at least be relativated, and by balancing different opinions put on a wider basis.

There are other attempts to improve awards. The twofold Hungarian master Attila Schneider went beyond the usual scope of assessment and invented a completely new procedure, although there were hardly any followers so far. As judges of his "1. Chess Clinic Study Composing Turnier" there acted a committee made up of all the participating composers (which of course could not assess their own piece). The assessments of participants fluctuated on a fairly large scale. It can't be overlooked that a disadvantage of this system lies in the fact that, to a certain degree, fixes by the participants may tamper with the allocation of points.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the overall result can be seen as positive, because it advanced the assessment framework. Pal Benkő won the first prize of this tourney with this beautiful study:

Pál Benkő, 1. Chess Clinic Study Composing Tourney,
Win



1.Qe5+ Kc1! [1...Kc2 2.QQ6!] 2.Rb8! [2.QQ6? Qb1+ 3.Ke3 Qb3+] 2...Rc4+
3.KQ3 RQ4+! 4.Kc3 [4.QxQ4? Qxb8 5.Qa1+ Qb1+ 6.Qxb1+ Kxb1 7.Ke4 Kc2
8.Ke5 KQ3 9.Kf6 Ke4 10.Kxf7 Kf5] 4...QQ6! [4...Re4 5.Qxe4 Qc7+ 6.Qc4]
5.Qe3+! [5.QxQ4? Qxg3+ 6.QQ3 Qe5+ 7.QQ4 Qg3+] 5...RQ2 6.Rb4 f5
[6...QQ7 7.Qg1+ RQ1 8.Rb1+! Kxb1 9.Qb6+] [6...f6 7.Ra4 Qc6+ 8.Rc4 QQ5
9.Qe1+ (9.Rc8? f5!; 9.gxf6? KQ1!) 9...RQ1 10.Qe2 RQ2 11.Kb3+ Kb1 12.Qe1+
RQ1 13.Qb4 QQ3+ 14.Rc3 QQ6 15.Rc1+] [6...Qc6+ 7.Rc4 QQ5 8.Rc5 Qxc5+
9.Qxc5 Rc2+ 10.KQ4 Rxc5 11.Kxc5 KQ2 12.KQ6 Ke3 13.Ke7 Ke4 14.Kf6!]
7.Ra4! Qc6+ 8.Rc4 QQ5 9.Rc8! [9.Rc5? Qxc5+ 10.Qxc5 Rc2+] 9...QQ7 10.Rc5
QQ6 [10...Qg7+ 11.Kb3+ KQ1 12.Qf3+ Re2 13.Qf1+] 11.Kb3+ KQ1 12.Rc1+!
Kxc1 13.Qe1+ RQ1 14.Qc3+ Kb1 15.Qb2#

⁸ <http://www.saunalahti.fi/~stniekat/pccc/codex.htm> as at March 2008:

Functions of the Judge

Subject to special conditions or restrictions applicable to the tournament, the normal functions of the judge are as follows:

- (a) to satisfy himself that he knows the final form of every eligible composition (i.e. the form incorporating any alteration or correction made by the composer before the closing date);
- (b) to eliminate all compositions which do not conform to any set theme or other requirements of the tournament;
- (c) to consider all eligible compositions in their final form;
- (d) to decide which of the eligible compositions are in his judgment of sufficient aesthetic merit to be honored;
- (e) to satisfy himself, as far as he can, that no composition which he wishes to honor is anticipated, and to take account of any partial anticipation known to him;
- (f) to prepare an award ranking the honored compositions in order of merit according to his judgment, and normally dividing them into grades as prizewinners, honorable mentions and commendations (placing as many in each grade as he thinks fit), and adding such comments as he considers appropriate;
- (g) to submit his award to the director within a reasonable time;
- (h) to consider any objections to his award transmitted to him by the director, and to notify the director promptly of his adjudication of them, including any consequential adjustment of his award.

⁹ <http://www.saunalahti.fi/~stniekat/pccc/8rules.htm>, Stand März 2008:

15. Each judging country will allocate points to all sound compositions in the section which it has agreed to judge, except entries from the judging country itself, using a scale from 0 to 4 including half-points. The Tournament Director will calculate the average points gained by each composition by dividing the total points by 5 (or by 4 in the case of compositions from a judging country). In addition, any individual score (0, 1/2, 1, 1 1/2, .., 3 1/2, 4) may be allocated a suffix of either "+" (plus), or "-" (minus), or else it could remain without a suffix (e.g., a problem may get a score of 1+, 2, 2 1/2-, 3 1/2, 4+ etc). The number of pluses minus the number of minuses divided by the number of judgments will decide in the case of entries getting the same overall score.

¹⁰ The well known composer and judge Wieland Bruch informed me on December 12th 2007 by email: *This MAY be so, but subjectivity may as well almost exponentiate! Such a fiasco in a very big and important tournament occurred at the Olympics-1952: The best problems were 'unlucky' to be proposed for a high award by just only one of the three well-known judges Ahnes, Blikeng and Mansfield. So invariably those problems came in first, which NONE of the three judges would have wanted there (the average stuff, of course!)... This method of the judge panel has not proved to be sustainable.*

When did you ever see a study which carried on for fifteen moves with only one capture, and that even by the losing part? A special compliment must also go to the participants and prize judges, who were subjected to this double role for the first time.¹¹

Evaluation criteria

Evaluation criteria not measurable in numbers are a fundamental issue, which is also pertinent for other departments outside of art. Very common are the criteria of peculiarity, diversity and beauty, making up a firm framework of valuation, but as a rule, they can only be described in words. In the chess area these three elements could be termed originality, rich variety and surprise. For this complex, already several surveys exist. An extensive presentation of the evaluation of chess games is shown by Thomas Binder of the Schach-AG of the Herder Gymnasium Berlin-Charlottenburg, the details being available on the Internet^{12,13}. These different criteria almost easily carry over to the field of chess composition. However, they place an extremely large onus to the judges, and one can't escape the impression that these demands, in view of the mass of work to be assessed, are even more time-consuming than the demands to the composers, which only have to deal with their own work.

Concluding these considerations, all attempts - even the most well-intentioned - to formulate universally valid principles or wisdoms for the evaluation of chess compositions must be in vain because such a try borders on hubris. However, in this context, a notable exception exists. If a formal tourney is issued to honor the jubilee of a person, and the honored person himself does the award ceremony, he certainly can be granted to evaluate, by his own understanding, well-done art works, because he thereby discloses additional information about his own values, and thus indirectly contributes to the representation of his personality.

The "Zeitgeist" has a non-neglectable influence on the opinions on art in chess, as documented by the extreme example of Benjamin Glover Laws (1861 - 1931) from the year 1923 on chess problems. In his book „The Artistry of the Chess Problem“ from 1923 he reduced his assessment to difficulty, idea and setting.¹⁴ The judging problem of the art of composition is illustrated in a very current tourney. In the running competition "Riphey 2007" (the Oscar of chess composition), initiated by Andrey Selivanov in the journal "The Ural Problemist", a new way is tried to meet the one-sidedness of prize judges. One invited ten editors of chess magazines to assess the submitted works along a given scheme.¹⁵ But even here a backdoor was left open in the event that if the results should be subjective, the chairman of the jury has the right to reject them alone. This shows a certain lack of faith in the colleagues. It will be interesting to learn whether in this tourney a relatively close match of results is achieved and the margins are not too large. The author of these lines therefore tentatively submitted a study to gain new experiences on the work of judges.

As already mentioned before, only time will tell about the value of an artistic work. In the field of music, for example, it can be approximated by the number of performances over a reasonable large period of time. Especially clear, however, seems to be the value of paintings because these works are often auctioneered and thus will receive a monetary valuation, a clear measure of their spiritual value. Why has this step never been taken for chess compositions? The issue of copyright plays an important role here. Some top world chess players as Steinitz have even - albeit in vain - tried to protect their games, for getting fame and money.¹⁶ Chess composers also tried it: Samuel Loyd is known for an attempt to patent his "organ pipes". He too failed. Unarguably, however, is his first presentation of the organ pipes, and many other themes, i.e. the priority of the presentation. A legal protection was and is still not possible.

A more promising way to determine the value of a chess composition seems to be the dedication of a work that could be done - as with paintings - also through auctions and would have to be initiated by the author during his lifetime. Dedications in this area are rare, but they already exist and are therefore no new ground waiting to be explored. In this context, this refers to dedications which are made only after the publication. Possibly this path offers an opportunity to

¹¹ Wieland Bruch (see fn. 10): *The new method isn't entirely new: You shouldn't hide Grasemanns tournaments in SCHACH, in which he always (in all departments!) put up the SOLVER as judge panel instead of 'professional' capacities. This had an enormous publicity impact and for the solver also a clear "educational effect". The judgments (presented fully in clear tabular form) shone with a most striking unanimity, were certainly not more challengeable than comparable judgments by a SINGLE price judge.*

¹² François Le Lionnais (http://www.avancement-sciences.org/fichiers/2006_4_Senechaud.pdf): Les prix de beauté aux échecs (1939) mentions these characteristics for beauty in chess: la correction ; la difficulté ; l'originalité ; la richesse ; l'unité logique ; la perfection ; le génie créateur.

¹³ Against that David Friedgood and Jonathan Levitt in their book „Secrets of spectacular chess“ (1995) consider four basic elements for beauty in chess: paradox, depth, geometry and flow.

¹⁴ B. G. Laws, *The Artistry of the Chess Problem, 1923: In considering the Chess Problem with a view to appreciating its qualities, three essentials must be borne in mind: difficulty, idea and construction. Each of these is complementary of the others.*

¹⁵ See <http://www.selivanov.ru/riphey/riphey2007/>, as at March 2008. Excerpt from the announcement: *The following types of chess composition which were published in 2006 may participate: 1. Twomovers, 2. Threemovers, 3. Moremovers, 4. Studies, 5. Helpmate problems, 6. Selfmate problems, 7. Fairy problems, 8. Problems of retro analysis. All composers may participate who can send one of their best compositions of any type which was composed individually or collectively. It is possible to participate both in one of the types or in several of them. In case of sending more than two compositions in one and the same type the application for participating in this type will be cancelled. For participating in the awarding we invite editors of chess composition magazines, editors of chess composition sections in other editions, editors of separate sections, leading masters of chess composition (international grandmasters, international masters, FIDE masters, international arbiters on chess composition).*

¹⁶ Wilhelm Steinitz in *International Chess Magazine*, November 1886, p. 336: *There is hardly any first-class professional who, on the average, has earned more than the wages of a common laborer and, on the other hand, there are thousands of occupations in which thousands of times more money is made with thousands of times less expenditure of real intellect ... It is gravely preached that men of talent and genius, who happen to be born without a golden spoon in their mouth, should enter the public chess arena in a starving condition merely for the entertainment of thousands of rich people all over the world who only ought to pay their money to incapable critical chess pirates and their publishers.*

evaluate the lasting value of a chess composition. After all, an attempt by the author of these lines showed that this path is possible, even if it became evident that the interest in the auction of a study on the Internet was fairly low and the generated revenue should be swept under the rug.

Profits and disadvantages of awards

Concluding, one has to answer the question implied by the headline: Who profits of awards for chess compositions? Beneficiaries are:

- the organizer of a tourney because he is compliant with other organizers and doesn't have to play a special role, but can increase the incentive for participation,
- someone honored by a jubilee tourney,
- the winners of a competition, being awarded in front of the other participants, occasionally even with a book or cash prize added,
- the judge himself, because his duty dignifies him, and
- the afterworld, getting a first indication for a subsequent assessment, even if influenced by the "Zeitgeist".

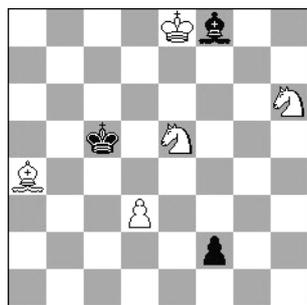
This benefit is also contrasted by potential drawbacks:

- the subjectivity of the prize judge, possibly mitigated by multiple assessment,
- the introduction of an element of struggle to art,
- possible national or personal preferences of prize judges,
- the often very long waiting times for prize reports and
- potential hostile confrontations over the award ceremony.

However, a presentation of chess compositions remains desirable, which - similar to the role of a museum - is just devoted to edification, joy, information or tribute, for example by completely abandoning prize judges and awards in an informal tourney. In one particular area, fortunately the FIDE gives a good example. Its triennial FIDE album includes, without special awarding, compositions selected by a committee, the inclusion as such being the ultimate tribute to the composer. Art must not constantly end in competition, if we overlook in this case that an application to the album can be seen as a competition. Timeless works may stay forever even without such honors. Famous composers such as Alois Wotawa, who composed more than 350 studies, and Hans Johner, who created more than 200 problems, were very restraintful participating in tourneys, although they were masters of their profession. The publishing opportunities outside of tourneys available at their time hardly exist today, alas, because the multitude of newspaper chess columns vanished almost completely.

An example

The most simple form of a competition-free presentation of the art of composition is offered - in addition to the aforementioned named anniversary tourney - by a "prize-free" memory tournament such as the ceremony for a deceased composer, or a "prize-free" Festschrift, because here the need of judging the contributions stands back behind the intention of the ceremony, if even opposing it. The organizers of the Bent Composing Memorial Tourney in honor of the English composer Charles Michael Bent (1919 - 2004) should have taken this to heart, when - in the preliminary prize report in the September 2007 issue of the journal "The Problemist" - awarded this study of Yuri Bazlov with the 1st Prize:



Yuri Bazlov, The Problemist, Sept. 2007

Win

Solution:

1.Nf5 [1.Kxf8? f1Q+ 2.Nhf7 KQ4 3.Ke7 Qc1 4.Kf6 (4.Be8 Qc8 =; 4.BQ7 Qc7 =)
 4...Qf1+ 5.Ke6 Qb1 =] [1.BQ7? Bxh6 2.Bh3 KQ4 3.Ng4 KxQ3 4.Nxh6 Ke2
 5.Nf5 f1N =] 1...f1Q 2.BQ7 BQ6 [2...Bg7 3.Q4+ KQ5 4.Bc6+ Ke6 5.Nxg7+ Kf6
 6.Kf8 +-] [2...Bh6 3.Q4+ KQ5 4.Bc6+ Ke6 5.Nxh6 Qa1 6.BQ7+ KQ5 7.Nf5 +-]
 3.Q4+ KQ5 4.Bc6+ Ke6 5.Ng4 Qxf5 [5...Kxf5 6.Ne3+ +-] [5...Bf4 6.BQ7+ KQ5
 7.Nge3+ +-] 6.Q5+ QxQ5 7.BQ7#

Here the judges overlooked the following serious error in the composition: After the continuation 2... Bh6 3.d4 + Kd5 4.Bc6 + Ke6 5.Nxh6 Qf4 6.Bd7 + Kf6 White remains only with a draw. This regrettable slip of the judges was not the only one, because even more awarded studies proved to be incorrect. Also, the time factor played a role. After all, with the publication of the preliminary prize report already much more than a year after the closing date 30.6.2006 had passed and a final prize report is announced for July 2008. Another feature is characterizing the tournament: From the jury triumvirat one of the judges retired because of unbridgeable differences. Furthermore this example shows that the publication of a ranking report inevitably calls the competitors which diligently search for errors to increase their own ranking. A subsequent competition of the losers should really not be the idea of memorial tourneys which should, above all, just honor. Thus, this tourney serves as a prototype of the imponderability of awards, and this latest case, because of its wealth of inconsistencies, confirms again the questionable nature of some prize awards. Charles Michael Bent would turn in his grave if he ever knew - he hasn't deserved any dispute!

Conclusions

So, it would be high time to refrain from awards in composition tournaments especially if the judge is not at the same time the one to be honored, because they testify for the judge himself, rather than for the composer. Art can't be evaluated consistently, and therefore the author of these lines several times declined to act as a judge in a tourney. In December 2007, an inspection of running tourneys showed that from more than 50 current announcements, only one was found without a jury and awards. Are awards in the field of chess composition only a here-to-stay leftover, now quite out of fashion on the area of its invention - namely, in the chess game? There still is a fight going on for ranks and



Marcel Duchamp,
Portrait of chess players, 1911

Elo points, but the awarding of beauty prizes is found only very rarely now. Will the spectacle of awarding, invented at the games, forever stay with chess compositions, because the composers and prize judges in the "contest" direly miss the clear outcome of a game? It seems experience teaches that the last question has to be answered in the affirmative. Even Pablo Picasso once said: *You expect me that I tell you, that I'll define for you: what is art? If I knew, I would keep it for myself.*

The example of the aforementioned painter and chess player Marcel Duchamp makes clear that the assessment of art is constantly evolving. Only a year after his above impressionist work from 1910, he created the adjacent surrealistic painting. Nothing is more stable than change! This ancient wisdom is also true for the evaluation of chess compositions. Art remains immeasurable, and therefore awards, more than in the past, should be cut down to a sensible size and hierarchies should be largely shunned.

Gerhard Josten (Translation Hauke Reddmann)