



THE young musicians in the photo at the top of this page have every reason to feel happy, even if some of them don't look it. They are the prize-winners in one of the most exacting musical competitions of the present day. Many of them, if they wish it, will have a brilliant future before them as virtuosos. The competition, which is known as "The Queen Elisabeth International Musical Competition," is held annually in Brussels, one year for pianists and the other for violinists. It began in 1937, and the idea came from Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, wife of the late King Albert. Queen Elisabeth has always been interested in music and the arts. She is a sculptor, a very good violinist who studied under Eugene Ysaÿe, and among her friends are many famous poets, writers and scientists. She has often helped young composers and musicians, and she was directly responsible for starting this great international competition. Today, at the age of 80, her interest in it is still active, and she attends the concerts and presents the prizes.

Part of the attraction for competitors lies in the generous prize money available—this comes from various sources, such as the Belgian Government, the City of Brussels and the Count de Lannoit. More important than this, however, is the international prestige gained by the prize-winners. Each prize-winner is bound to receive concert engagements as a direct result of his success, and he is expected to give concerts in Belgium.

Competitors, who must be under thirty, come from all over the world—

this year there were 55 of them, and they were judged by a jury which included the great pianists Rubinstein, Brailowsky, Gilels, Casadesu, and Cor de Groot. As in any contest there are several eliminating rounds, and after these, twelve finalists remain. Each one is assured of a prize, but to decide on whom the victor's laurel will eventually fall each must undergo a further strenuous test.

The pianists retire for eight days to "La Chapelle Reine Elisabeth," which is pleasantly situated in the surroundings of Brussels, and while there they learn a new and unpublished concerto by a Belgian composer—a prize-winner in a separate competition. The conductor of the orchestra with whom they will play the concerto is there to help them. Then comes the final test. Before the international jury each competitor performs the set concerto, followed by two works of his own choice, one of which must be another piano concerto. The orchestra is the Belgian National, with Fritz André as conductor.

The qualities needed by the competitors are high technical and musical ability and, most important of all, great physical and nervous strength. In the first two competitions, in 1937 and 1938, the Russian pianist Emil Gilels, and the Russian violinist David Oistrakh were the prize-winners, both great artists today.

The first prize-winner this year was another Russian, Wladimir Askenazy, who won £1070. John Browning, of the United States, came second (£700), and Andrej Czajkowski, of Poland, third (£540). Seven of this year's prize-winners, including Askenazy and Browning, can be heard playing one of their



★ **TOP OF PAGE**—Prize-winners in the 1956 Queen Elisabeth Music Competition photographed with Queen Elisabeth and the official party: From left, Banhalmi, Hungary (10th), Vasary, Hungary (6th), Kashu, Japan (10th), Browning, U.S.A. (2nd), Graf, Austria (11th), Ousset, France (4th), ex-Queen Marie-José of Italy, Czajkowski, Poland (3rd), The Comte de Launoit, Queen Elisabeth, M. Cuvelier (president of the jury), Askenazy, U.S.S.R. (1st), Knor, Czechoslovakia (7th), Berman, U.S.S.R. (5th), Coppens, Belgium (8th). Absent, Peter Frankl, Hungary (12th).
BELOW: Queen Elisabeth congratulates the winner, Askenazy

final test concertos in a series of programmes made available to the NZBS through the courtesy of the Belgian Legation. They will be broadcast at 2.0 p.m. in the main National programme, starting on Sunday, August 19, with the Brahms Piano Concerto No. 2, played by the American John Browning. The

following week the soloist will be Cecile Ousset, of France, playing the Chopin Piano Concerto No. 2. The winner, Askenazy, can be heard in the fourth programme (September 9), playing the First Piano Concerto of René Defossez, which won the composers' competition, and also Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1.