First 8 Contestants Perform In Van Cliburn Piano Competition

By Ed Johnson
September 25, 1962

THE INTERNATIONAL flavor was marked by the contestant's home flags flanking the Stars and Stripes on stage—France's Tricolor, Japan's Rising Sun, Britain's Union Jack, the Soviet Union's Hammer and Sickle, and others.

Serge Saxe of Fort Worth, chairman and organizer of the jury, used French, Russian and Spanish as well as English in directing various pianists to play selections from the masters.

A "thank you" and a "Will you be kind enough to play..." switched each pianist to another test in a matter of moments.

The few words over the mike from the jury section halfway back on the left side of the auditorium must have sounded like imperious commands couched in polite phrases and a cultured voice.