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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Piano Cleveland announces First Round contestants for its 2026 Cleveland International Piano Competition for Young Artists

CLEVELAND, OH – Piano Cleveland, host of the Cleveland International Piano Competition for Young Artists, has announced the 50 contestants, ages 10-18, who will play during its First Round this March. The Preliminary Jury, a diverse panel of leading figures in the piano world comprised of concert pianists and renowned professors, reviewed the applications and audition videos of 311 contestants to select the 50 young pianists who will compete in the competition's three age divisions: Rising Stars (ages 10-12), Juniors (ages 13-15), and Seniors (ages 16-18).

“The Cleveland International Piano Competition for Young Artists showcases the best emerging artists in the classical piano world,” says Piano Cleveland Artistic Director, Yaron Kohlberg. “Our competition allows audiences to see tomorrow’s pianists today.”

Indeed, past Cleveland International Piano Competition for Young Artists medalists include Yunchan Lim, Eva Gevorgyan, and Ryan Wang—each of whom is now a known world-class pianist. Piano Cleveland also maintains close ties to its laureates. For example, this May, Cleveland International Piano Competition for Young Artists 2015 medalist Chaeyoung Park will return to Cleveland as part of the organization’s music series, Piano Cleveland Live. According to Kohlberg, it’s one of the many ways the competition has a lasting impact on the careers of its contestants.

First Round contestants will record a solo recital in one of three locations: Cleveland, Ohio; Hamburg, Germany; and Beijing, China. The First Round recordings will be broadcast on the Piano Cleveland website, pianocleveland.org, and its YouTube channel from March 26-29. Thirteen young artists will advance to the Semi-Final Round held in Cleveland this July: three contestants from the Rising Star division and five pianists from each of the Junior and Senior divisions. All Semi-Finalists will have the unique opportunity to perform solo recitals and collaborate with professional chamber musicians.

Competition innovation has become the hallmark of Piano Cleveland’s competitions. “Our audiences expect us to offer new competition practices,” says Kohlberg. “We’re excited to offer a Final Masterclass Round with Jean Yves-Thibaudet—a first in the piano competition sphere.” Thibaudet, one of the world’s leading classical piano luminaries, has his competition roots in Cleveland, winning second prize at the Robert Casadesus International Piano Competition (later rebranded as the Cleveland International Piano Competition) in 1979.



Six finalists – three from the Junior Division and three from the Senior Division – will participate in the one-of-a-kind Masterclass with Jean-Yves Thibaudet on July 29, as well as perform concerto movements with The Canton Symphony Orchestra on July 31. The Final Round with Orchestra will be broadcast on Amadeus.tv as well as pianocleveland.org.

The First Round contestants are as follows:

Rising Stars

Winnie (Weitong) Geng, 12, Canada
Miyabi Haseo, 12, Japan
Wilson Liu, 12, United States
Lanxi Mao, 11, China
Chenghong Wang, 12, China
Ethan Wang, 11, Canada
Natalie Wang, 12, United States
Khloe Wu, 11, Canada
Yimeng Xu, 10, China
Wenqian Zheng, 10, China

Junior

HyeonSeo Cho, 14, South Korea
Jeffrey Dong, 15, Australia
Ken Hu, 13, United States
Junye Huang, 14, China
Ryan Huang, 15, Canada / United States
Haram Jeon, 14, South Korea
Pei-Heng Jiang, 15, China
Dana Kim, 15, South Korea
Jueon Lee, 14, South Korea
Yusuke Nagayoshi, 14, Japan
Yixin Shen, 15, China
Yong-En Teng, 14, China Taiwan
Adriana Vasilski, 14, Germany
Eva Wang, 15, Austria
Tian Xia, 14, China
Haozhe Yang, 13, China
Yuri Yasui, 15, Japan
Zirui Yin, 13, China
Wenbo Zheng, 13, China
Xiaotong Zhou, 15, China



Senior

Kenneth Chen, 17, Canada
JiYuan DengHou, 16, China
Chenxu Han, 17, China
Guillermo Hernández Barrocal, 18, Spain
Minwoo Hong, 18, South Korea
Yurim Kim, 17, South Korea
Evelina Kleczek, 17, United States / Poland
Deni Kokhanovskii, 16, Russia
Jeremy (Zhehao) Li, 17, China
Zongxuan Li, 16, China
Ian Lin, 17, United States
YiCai Liu, 16, China
Yuqin Lu, 17, China
Deva Mira Sperandio, 18, Spain
Hiroki Nakayama, 16, Japan
Ye seo Nam, 16, South Korea
Christina D. Sung, 16, United States / South Korea
Sizhe Wang, 17, China
Yenfei Wang, 18, China Taiwan
Tianlang Xu, 17, Canada

Contestant biographical information, First Round repertoire, and a full timeline of the Semi-Final and Final Rounds taking place from July 24 – August 1, in Cleveland, Ohio, is available on pianocleveland.org/.

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About Piano Cleveland

Piano Cleveland promotes Cleveland as a premier piano destination by presenting world-class programming, community engagement, and education initiatives. The organization's four major programs and events include the Cleveland International Piano Competition, the CIPC for Young Artists, a mixed-genre piano festival, and year-round education and community engagement programming.