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PIANO CLEVELAND ANNOUNCES FIRST ROUND CONTESTANTS FOR 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION

CLEVELAND, OH – After receiving 265 applicants from 28 countries and regions, Piano Cleveland has announced the First Round contestants for the 2024 Cleveland International Piano Competition. The fifty-six contestants were selected by a diverse Preliminary Jury consisting of leading figures in the piano world, including concert pianists, renowned professors, and artist managers. From the field of fifty-six contestants, sixteen will advance to the second stage in the competition held in Cleveland from July 28 – August 10.

This year's competition is structured differently than any of the previous competitions in Piano Cleveland's fifty-year history. Past competitions selected thirty First Round contestants who played a mostly traditional classical piano repertoire. Contestants were eliminated through several rounds before a finalist was selected by the competition jury. As Piano Cleveland began planning for its fiftieth anniversary in 2024, the competition was reimagined to do more than select the best classical pianist. The goal, according to Piano Cleveland President Yaron Kohlberg, is to "identify and support the future leaders in the piano world." The competition encourages contestants to express their full selves as artists, with expanded guidelines for what they can play and opportunities to share their artistic vision.

"Many competitions ask for limited repertoire such as Bach and Beethoven or Chopin," explains Kohlberg. "We want to see each pianist as a complete artist, so we let them choose repertoire that expresses who they are and what they see as the future of piano. Our competition does more than examine skill; our competition prepares our contestants for the evolving piano world." According to Kohlberg, the fifty-six First Round contestants selected by Preliminary Jury with Cleveland International Piano Competition's criteria in mind, "demonstrated a breadth and depth of skill and personality that proves our competition is moving in the right direction. We are thrilled by the uniqueness and diversity of our First Round contestants."

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The fifty-six First Round contestants will either play at the Conservatory of Music at Baldwin Wallace University in Cleveland, Ohio at the end of March, or at Salle Cortot at École Normale de Musique in Paris, during the first week of April. The partnership with Salle Cortot, Kohlberg notes, also acknowledges the competition's French roots when it was founded as the Robert Casadesus International Piano Competition in 1974. "Having two locations for the First Round coincided with our goal to make the competition more accessible," he further explains. "Many pianists spend their own money on travel, so partnering with Salle Cortot to have a European venue eased the burden on many of our First Round contestants while honoring our Parisian roots."

Over the past fifty years, Cleveland International Piano Competition has become known as one of the premier competitions of its kind, in part because of its robust prize offerings. At \$75,000, the Mixon First Prize is amongst the most generous awards in the classical piano world. A partnership with Arabella Arts allows the First Prize winner to work with one of the leading artist management firms in the United States. The winner will also be guaranteed a recital at Carnegie Hall as well as Tonhalle Zürich—a premier European performance venue.

As the Cleveland International Piano Competition evolves, it places the careers of its Quarter-Finalists front and center with an Artist Development Program that includes residencies, mentorship opportunities, in addition to short courses on branding, marketing, and audience engagement. Partnerships secured with Cleveland Institute of Music, Kent State University College of the Arts, and University of Akron School of Music will provide contestants with masterclass training and an introduction to thinking about their artistic careers in terms of business. In the long term, the residencies mean the competition laureates will be returning to northeast Ohio as their careers continue developing. Contestants will also receive firsthand feedback and advice from acclaimed pianists Jonathan Biss, Angela Hewitt, and Hyung-ki Joo. As a concert pianist and Second Prize winner of the 2007 CIPC, Kohlberg can attest that the life of a professional pianist is more than piano performances. "Knowing how to engage with audiences, how to build a social media following, and explain your art to a variety of audiences is an essential skill," he says, "which is why we are offering artist development as part of our prize. Investing in the future of classical piano means fostering the growth of the artist."

For more information about the Cleveland International Piano Competition and Piano Cleveland, including its history, past and present contestants, competition dates, and performance venues, visit pianocleveland.org/.

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