



Contact: Ryan Ireland  
Communications and Marketing Manager  
Piano Cleveland  
216-707-5397  
[Ryan.Ireland@pianocleveland.org](mailto:Ryan.Ireland@pianocleveland.org)

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## Piano Cleveland Announces the 2027 Cleveland International Piano Competition

Innovative format, expanded artist development programs, and new initiatives for inclusivity highlight the next edition of the renowned international competition

CLEVELAND, OH – Piano Cleveland has announced details for the 2027 Cleveland International Piano Competition (CIPC), widely recognized as one of the leading classical piano competitions in the world. Taking place in Cleveland during summer 2027 with preliminary rounds beginning earlier in the year, the competition seeks out future leaders of the piano world with a format designed not only to identify exceptional performers, but also support them as artistic leaders in their field. As the host organization for the competition, Piano Cleveland is currently accepting applications for pianists ages 18–32 until December 4, 2026.

The competition will culminate in Cleveland from July 25–August 8, 2027, featuring performances across the city and a Final Concerto Round with the world-renowned Cleveland Orchestra.

“Competitions can sometimes focus solely on technical achievement,” said Yaron Kohlberg, Artistic Director of Piano Cleveland. “The Cleveland International Piano Competition is different. We want to understand who these artists are—their ideas, their creativity, and their vision for the future of classical music. Our format gives them the space to express themselves as complete artists.”

### A Competition Designed for Artistic Expression

The 2027 CIPC continues Piano Cleveland’s commitment to innovative performance formats that allow contestants to demonstrate artistry beyond traditional competition structures. The Final Concerto Round with The Cleveland Orchestra has long been a hallmark of the competition. In 2027, the competition deepens its connection with The Cleveland Orchestra by allowing Semi-Finalists to collaborate with orchestra members during chamber music performances.

20600 CHAGRIN BOULEVARD, SUITE 610  
SHAKER HEIGHTS, OHIO 44122  
216-707-5397

[WWW.PIANOCLEVELAND.ORG](http://WWW.PIANOCLEVELAND.ORG)



Another distinctive element is the Salon Round. First introduced during the 2024 CIPC as a first-ever competition element, the Salon Round allows contestants to weave performance with spoken interpretation of music during a recital designed to share their artistic vision. True to the innovative spirit of the competition, 2027 will feature another first-ever competition element: the Final Four(hand) Challenge—an innovative collaborative performance in which Finalists perform both a solo virtuoso work and two four-hand piano pieces with fellow competitors.

“Our goal is to find the next leaders of the piano world,” Kohlberg says. “By including chamber music, interactive recital formats, and collaborative challenges, the competition reflects how modern pianists actually engage with audiences today.”

### Investing in the Future of Classical Piano

The competition’s new Rankin First Prize funded by Immediate Past Chair of Piano Cleveland Board of Directors, Beth Rankin and her husband, Clay Rankin, increases the prize to \$100,000 with a portion earmarked for professional development. The Rankin First Prize puts the CIPC on even footing with the most prestigious first prizes in the world, including the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. In addition to \$100,000, the Rankin First Prize package includes a debut recital at Carnegie Hall, professional management and mentorship provided by Arabella Arts in partnership with Piano Cleveland, and a recording with Steinway & Sons in New York.

The competition will also present several unique prizes recognizing artistic individuality, leadership, and innovation:

New for 2027 is the **Cynthia Reece Prize**, valued at \$20,000, awarded to the woman pianist who advances the furthest in the competition that year. The prize includes both a cash award and funding for artistic development initiatives proposed by the recipient in consultation with Piano Cleveland.

The **Larry and Lynn Schmelzer Leadership and Alumni Relations Prize**, valued at \$5,000, will recognize a contestant who fosters community and collaboration among fellow competitors. The prize includes a cash award and a return performance engagement in Cleveland.

Beyond prize money, the competition places a strong emphasis on long-term career development through Piano Cleveland’s **Artist Development Program**, open to Quarter-Finalists through Finalists.



## Expanding Access and Inclusivity

The 2027 CIPC introduces new initiatives aimed at making the international competition landscape more equitable and accessible. “Our mission at Piano Cleveland is to build a better world through the transformative power of piano,” says Kohlberg. “Creating a more inclusive competition—one that supports artists from every background and encourages diverse musical voices—is essential to the future of our field.”

The most notable addition to the competition’s commitment to access is the Roe Green Travel Fund, which will cover travel costs and housing for contestants participating in the summer rounds of the competition in Cleveland. Additional travel stipends will support pianists during the First Round, ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent talented musicians from participating. The Roe Green Travel Fund reaches beyond the competition to bring competition laureates back to Cleveland for performance opportunities to further enrich the city’s classical music scene.

The competition also maintains flexible repertoire guidelines encouraging contestants to program works by composers from underrepresented backgrounds, including composers from their own cultural heritage.

## Applying for the Competition

Applications for the 2027 Cleveland International Piano Competition are open to pianists ages 18–32. The early application deadline is November 4, 2026, with a final deadline of December 4, 2026. Details about the submission process can be found on Piano Cleveland’s website.

A distinguished international jury will evaluate contestants throughout the competition, including renowned pianists and educators such as Melvin Chen, Simone Dinnerstein, Claire-Marie Le Guay, Anne-Marie McDermott, Sergio Tiempo, Danwen Wei, and Maike Fuchs.

More information about the competition structure, application process, and prizes can be found at Piano Cleveland’s website, [pianocleveland.org/](http://pianocleveland.org/).