

A Unique Piano for Jesse Nieman

"I just don't know what I would do without a piano and without music... I love music and I love performing," writes newest Dottie Lambertsen Merit Award winner Jesse Nieman, age 15. In 2016, Jesse was awarded the use of a special PSF grand piano after he delighted the PSF Scholarship Committee with his performance of excerpts from Beethoven's Concerto No. 2 in B-flat Major.



Jesse Nieman with the Charles Frederick Stein piano.

The piano that PSF placed with Jesse is a Charles Frederick Stein, the only one of its kind that Piano Santa has in its fleet, and one of the finest examples of the once-iconic American-made Stein pianos remaining on the west coast. "The Stein is such a special piano and we knew immediately that Jesse was just the right musician to play it," says PSF Executive Director Sandra Phadke, "Jesse's lyrical playing really compliments the warm tone of the instrument."

Jesse's first piano teacher was his mom, Mira. "When Jesse was six, I started to teach him the basics of piano playing," she explains. But by the end of just a year, he had exceeded her ability to teach him. "We wished to find [a] piano teacher for him but we couldn't afford it yet."

When the Niemans moved to Korea a year later, to learn the language and be with family, Jesse was able to start group piano lessons at a Korean music academy. Mira

observes, "[He] practiced so, so diligently and he improved so much in reading music and memorizing."

When the family moved back to the U.S. in 2014, Jesse began taking lessons with Pauline Eidemiller with the help of the MusicLink Foundation. Studying with Mrs. Eidemiller, Jesse really blossomed: he flew through 6 levels of OMTA Syllabus in the first 4 months they worked together! "I've found

him to be completely self motivated and eager to learn all he can about music," Mrs. Eidemiller says. "He's a quick learner, and always ready for the next step."

The next step for Jesse was finding a piano that suited his playing style and abilities. "Getting the grand piano inspired me to play more," he reports. "I really hear a big difference. The PSF piano has a much warmer and fuller tone, better key action, and is more responsive to what I want it to do."

And though he has his hands full between school, music practice, and playing violin in PYCO (Portland Youth Conservatory Orchestra), Jesse has started taking on piano students of his own. He is currently teaching two students and is planning to start working with two more very soon. "One of the accomplishments I am most proud of is the ability to share my knowledge I have learned throughout the years about piano."

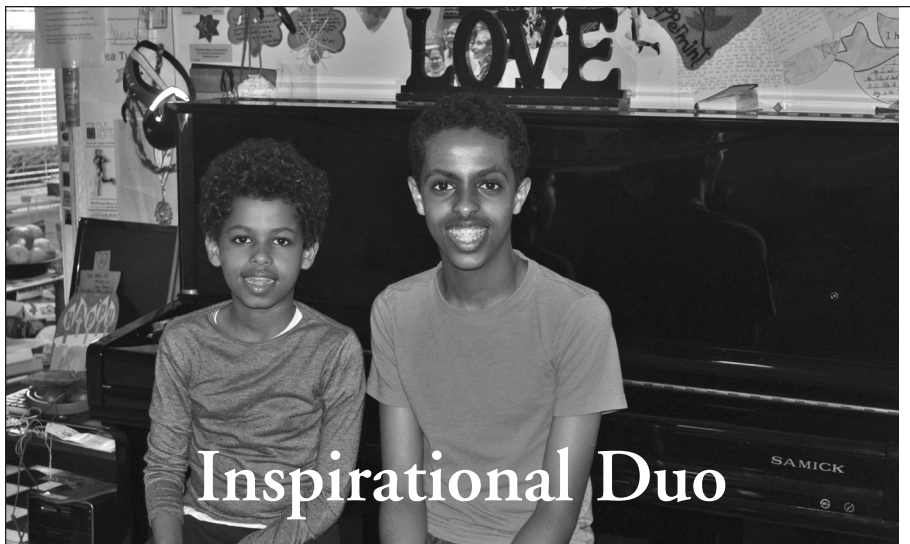
PSF Grants Two Pianos to Local Nonprofit

In late 2017, Piano Santa partnered with Rose Community Development ("RCD") to place two pianos in their facilities. RCD builds affordable housing and creates neighborhood opportunities for residents to thrive. Overall, they have 430 affordable homes in SE Portland. They had identified music as one of their residents' significant

interests, but were prevented from moving forward by a lack of resources.

Piano Santa's first grant to RCD was at the Lents Village senior living facility. Many residents there have mobility or transportation challenges, and RCD felt that a piano would

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Desi and Yanek Mandefro with their PSF piano.

For being so young, brothers Desiderata (“Desi”) and Yanek Mandefro are already versatile musicians and incredibly well-rounded young men. Both have been involved with music for several years, playing violin with Portland’s Metropolitan Youth Symphony and singing with the Pacific Youth Choir – Desi also plays flute. And the brothers began taking piano lessons two years ago, even though the family didn’t actually have a piano yet!

“They used to wait one whole week [until they saw their teacher] to play on the piano,” explain their parents, Essayas and Martha. The boys applied for and received a Piano Santa Foundation Standard Scholarship in December 2016. Martha observes, “Now they have a piano, the first thing they do when they get home from school [is] go directly to the piano and play something.”

Aside from music, their parents are most proud of the boys’ commitment to serving their community. Desi, age 12, is currently working on a project for school that he named “Painting for a Cause,” helping to raise money to fund a school scholarship by auctioning his own paintings. He was able to create 30 paintings and already has many potential buyers lined up. Yanek, age 9, formed his own neighborhood

basketball team, the PDX Swishers, by recruiting friends, interviewing coaches, serving as captain, and finally registering the team with Portland Parks & Recreation.



In one of their first performances with PSF, Desi and Yanek played a duet, something which requires close cooperation and understanding between both performers. But that is typical for the Mandefros. Yanek writes “I am so fortunate, I have a big brother who loves music like I do...”

Even though it can be tough, parents Essayas and Martha are committed to having music in their family’s life. “We both believe love of music and playing music is one of the most important assets parents let their kids have,” Martha explains. “We really feel so fortunate beyond words for this opportunity PSF is giving to our children.”



PSF Program Basics

PSF was created in 1994 to provide music education opportunities for children, particularly in underserved populations, in the Portland metropolitan area. The three main focuses of our programming are

- (1) **Scholarships:** placing pianos in students’ homes,
- (2) **First Step and Second Step Keyboard Programs:** offering group piano lessons to elementary-aged children, and
- (3) **Community Placement Grants:** placing pianos with deserving community organizations.

In support of these programs, we provide in-home piano tunings and maintenance, offer educational opportunities, and sponsor student recitals throughout the year. Please see our website for information.

PSF Board & Staff

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help build a sense of community within the complex. Many residents at Lents Village have musical experience and they will eventually offer sing-a-longs and music during their lunch service.

Step Up Southeast, the second placement, is an RCD-wide youth music program. They have started offering piano lessons and are making plans to offer lessons on other instruments such as drums, voice and possibly even ukulele; the PSF piano gives them a centerpiece, a core around which they can build their program.

Community involvement is one of the key goals of Step Up Southeast. "We want to ensure that our very diverse population of young people engage with local musical artists from many different backgrounds and disciplines," Rose Community Development's Resident Asset Coordinator Mark Ellsworth says. In addition to local artist-led lessons and practice, they plan to offer a workshop on songwriting, introduce the youth to digital recording technology, and create a music video.



A student taking lessons at Step Up Southeast.

"Our piano grant program transforms community spaces like Rose Community Development. A community piano welcomes participation and makes music accessible regardless of ability or audience," says PSF President Claudine Elzey. "This is just one example of how placing pianos in community spaces enriches the space and brings people together."



GRACE NOTES

Our heartfelt thanks go to the following individuals, businesses, and foundations for their support of PSF programs, as well as to the many anonymous donors who have made generous contributions. Your support makes all the difference! If your name is missing from this list (and you wish to be added), please call our office, and we will be sure to make the correction in our next edition.

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A-440 Tuning
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Special thanks to CHORDination for inviting PSF to present at their fall recital. Chordination-Harmony in Music Education, Chordination.us, offers at home lessons in drums, guitar, voice and piano.



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September 15, 2018, 10:30am
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3003 SE Milwaukie Ave.

Holiday Recital
December 1, 2018, 10:30am
Classic Pianos
3003 SE Milwaukie Ave.