

Music Connects Us

It's recital time! I drive up to the student's house, set up the video camera on the front porch, knock and step 6 feet back. As soon as the door opens, I can sense everyone's nerves and excitement. In a flash, parent and student disappear inside with the camera.

Then it's time for me to wait. The recital piece begins. I can hear faint whispers of their performance from outside. And, all of a sudden - even though we aren't in the same room - I don't feel so remote.

Yes, it's true that we have all been more remote from each other than we are used to - or want to be. But, when I sit listening to these talented students, and hear them play music that they have been working on for months ... I feel that you, and others who cherish music education, are right here with me.

Your continued support has kept the students at their pianos, learning and growing through these difficult times.

"Thank you thank you thank you so much to the Piano Santa Foundation, to all of you who have supported it... Since I received my first piano three years ago from the Piano Santa Foundation, it has just truly changed my musical life."

— Jesse, age 18

Now is the time to come together once again. I hope that you will join me and the Board of Directors by contributing to our annual Matching Gift Challenge. Make a donation by June 30th and it will be matched by our Board up to a total of \$2,000.

The PSF students have not stopped working on their music. Even though the pandemic has changed our lives in so many ways, they persevere. They continue their lessons online, track their practice time, talk with their mentors, and work on new music. And, of course, record themselves for our virtual recitals!

Claudine Elzey
Claudine Elzey
PSF Board President



Congratulations to Jesse for being selected as a winner in the 2021 Monday Musical Club of Portland Scholarship Contest!

P.S. Please consider a special gift during this matching challenge. There's never been a better time to give.



Will Zhang performing from home for the 2021 Virtual PSF Spring Recital

Ask Will Zhang, 16, about the most challenging piece of music he has learned so far, and he would probably answer Liszt's Sonetto 104. The use of contrasting sections, and dramatic, often unexpected harmonic shifts and cadenza-like passages makes this piece a challenge to even the most experienced pianist.

Describing it as "one of the biggest and hardest pieces I've ever learned," Will notes that the piece requires a performer to master not only Liszt's characteristic virtuosic sections, but also the lyrical, emotional middle section, which he describes as the "super calm between the storms."

It's the emotional contrast that seems to attract Will to certain pieces. In general, Romantic music is his favorite to play, with Chopin, Liszt, and Brahms topping the list of his favorite composers. But he credits his piano teacher, Kelli Stephens, for selecting great music to give him exposure to a wide variety of styles and techniques.

Will started playing piano at an early age but even he admits he didn't have the most auspicious beginning. "At five years old, I wasn't the one who decided that I wanted to learn how to play piano. It was my parents. And I'll

be real... To me, for a very long time, practicing piano was just a chore," Will remembers. "I think I first began actually enjoying music in general listening to classical music CDs during car rides with my family."

In spite of those early challenges, Will has developed into an accomplished musician; Stephens describes his performances as "polished, poised, and engaging." In recent years, he has distinguished himself in several competitions including the D. Suzanne Raines competition and the Eleanor East and Edward G. Michaels Piano Scholarship Competition, as well as winning the 2019 PSF Winter Grand Scholarship competition (offered in partnership with longtime PSF supporter Classic Pianos)!

In the most recent PSF virtual recital, Will again dazzled the audience with a performance of Scarlatti's beautiful Sonata in F Minor, K466. "It was an incredibly emotive performance from a composer best known for his harpsichord compositions... which don't usually allow for a lot of emotion," admires PSF Executive Director, Sandra Phadke. "It's the type of music selection I've come to expect from Will!"



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) Merit and Need-Based

Scholarships: placing pianos in students' homes,

(2) Community Placement Grants:

placing pianos with deserving community organizations,

(3) Music Lending Library: providing access to over 1,750 music books.

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.

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You can support PSF with a donation of any size at www.pianosanta.org

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Hard Work Pays Off

If you have attended a Piano Santa Foundation recital in the last few years, it is likely that you have heard Emely Vega Palafox perform. Emely's musical journey has taken her from playing songs like "What the Little Tulip Princess Says" in one of her first PSF recitals to performing a gorgeous Chopin Nocturne in one of the most recent virtual recitals.

Emely started playing piano when she was six years old, practicing on an electric keyboard which had been given to her family as a gift. "No one in our family had ever had the chance to play the piano," recalls her mother, Ruby.

Since being awarded her first PSF piano in 2013, Emely has continued to make amazing progress. She shares her love of piano with others, performing for friends and family, as well as in retirement homes and assisted living facilities along with the other students in her piano teacher's studio.

She won her first piano duet competition in 2016 playing "Reminiscence" by Melody Bober. "I remember struggling with it [at first]," Emely explains. "It was a hard piece at the time, but in the end, we were able to play it through... It's all just in how much time and effort you put into your practicing that makes it all work out."



Emely has worked all the way up from OMTA Syllabus Level 1 to Level 10 (the highest of the OMTA test levels). Next year she plans to perform Level 10 repertoire at her final OMTA exam.

"Over the years," observes her teacher, Susan Marandas, "Emely has gone from just discovering music to becoming someone who loves everything about it."

When asked what makes her the proudest out of everything she has accomplished so far, Emely responds, "With each song, I've stuck with it and was able to learn it. It makes me feel proud because I feel like I'm able to learn anything I want... it all just requires a lot of practice."

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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Special thanks to CHORDination for all your support! Chordination-Harmony in Music Education, Chordination.us, offers at home lessons in drums, guitar, voice and piano.

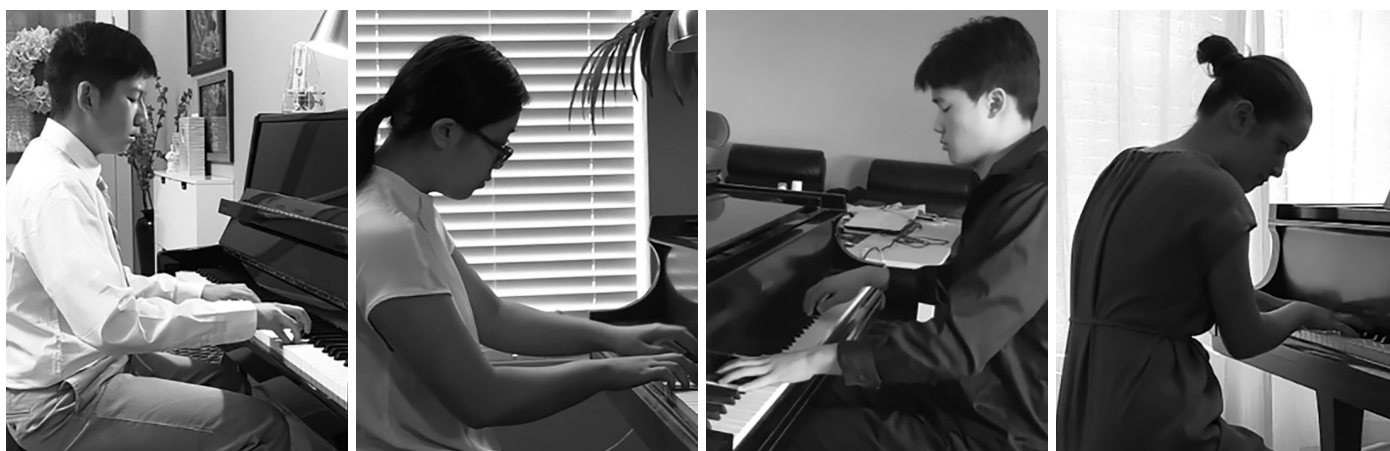


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PSF students performing at the 2021 PSF Virtual Spring Recital

Upcoming 2021 Events

Fall Showcase
September 18, 2021*

Winter Recital
December 4, 2021*

* Due to the pandemic, time and location details will be announced at a later date. Please check www.pianosanta.org or follow us on Facebook for updates.