

Student Spotlight: Agnes Nguyen

**We're endlessly
inspired by our young
students, and Agnes
Nguyen is no
exception!**



For over a decade, Agnes Nguyen has been developing her musicianship on the piano. As she approaches her high school graduation, she has achieved many accomplishments - from regularly winning Gold Cup in local OMTA festivals to performances at Carnegie Hall! With college approaching, Agnes strives to continue developing as a pianist while also experiencing new hobbies and activities.

As a winner of Piano Santa's Grand Scholarship award in 2021, Agnes will tell you how having a grand piano has afforded her the opportunity to develop her technique and musicality, while also building her feel and ear for good piano playing. As she has matured as a person and musician, she has also refined her understanding of music to deliver meaningful and passionate performances.

Agnes regularly accompanies Westview High School's Concert Choir, and enjoys pop, Jazz and R&B. In addition to her dedication to piano, she has also been involved in varsity water polo and swimming for all 4 years of high school! Her strong commitment to the team has given her precious experiences and memories that she has found to balance her passion for classical piano performance.

The Piano Santa Foundation is grateful to have been able to support Agnes and her family since 2019, and we are excited to see what life has in store for her!



Meet Zack Frey, Executive Director

When Zack Frey saw the job posting for Executive Director at the Piano Santa Foundation, he knew it was the perfect fit. With years of experience in nonprofit and educational organizations—and a lifelong passion for music—he saw an opportunity to blend his professional expertise with a mission he deeply believes in. "I've been working in nonprofits and education for years, but I wanted to align my work more closely with my love of music," Zack says. "PSF gave me the opportunity to do both."

Music, for Zack, has always been a powerful force. He started playing guitar at age 12, a formative experience that gave him focus, connection, and opportunity. Since then, he has added bass, ukulele, drums, mandolin—and, most recently, piano—to his list of instruments. Music, for Zack, has always been a powerful force.

"My son started piano lessons this winter, which has been a great excuse for me to start learning too," he says. "I'm definitely not a pianist yet, but I'm working on it!"

In his spare time, Zack is constantly making music—practicing, recording, or playing with one of several projects. He's also finishing a master's degree in music history, enjoys baking, and loves to travel with his wife and son.

Now, as Executive Director, Zack is excited to build on PSF's legacy and expand its reach. "I want to get more pianos into the homes of young students interested in learning and growing through music," he says. "Access to quality instruments and music education can change lives."

With his blend of nonprofit leadership, personal passion, and commitment to access, Zack is ready to help lead the Piano Santa Foundation into its next chapter.

Board Member Profile: Rachel Brashear, Musician & Educator



What role did music have in your life when you were a student?

Music helped give me confidence, something to strive towards, and a sense of identity. My relationships with my music teachers were monumental in helping to develop my deeper understanding and love for music. I see a similar response from PSF students when they receive their piano – you can

see their relationship to music take off!

What skills have you gained that help you perform effectively as a musician? As a teacher?

One of my favorite things about music is the ability to experience the fruits of my labor - I can see and feel the direct results of regular and thoughtful practice. Developing good practice routines helps in all facets of life! This combination of problem-solving, pattern



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 more information.

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The Piano Santa Foundation

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recognition, and spontaneous creativity is something I feel like I only experience when making music - and I carry these skills into my teaching, communicating, and business endeavors.

What do you think is the role of music in our community?

In my life, music is not only the glue that holds it all together, but it is the *reason*. I believe that our young students also galvanize around this notion – that music can say the things we don't have the words to say. Music can give us purpose and hope when the world feels scary. Music has the ability to cross barriers and connect us in spite of our differences. Music is the great unifier as evident in the PSF recitals ... I love our musical community!

What's the best piece of advice another musician ever gave you, or that someone gave you about music?

"Just do the thing!" I pass along this advice to students - if you want to be a musician, at any level, just do it! Practice, play for others, play with friends, record, write - wherever it takes you. And do it as much as you can! Don't get caught up in not being good enough or fitting in to anyone else's idea of who you should be musically. Follow your passion and do the thing!

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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Enriching life through music



Upcoming 2025 Events

Fall Showcase

September 13, 2025

Winter Recital

December 6, 2025

Time and location details will be announced at a later date. Please check out our website or follow us on Facebook for updates.

PSF Students at 2015 Spring Recital