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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Piano Cleveland's Highly Viewed Virtual Competition Concludes with Top Winners Announced at Awards Ceremony

After 12 days of brilliant performances and over \$62,000 raised for artists, Martin James Bartlett has been named First Prize Winner of Virtu(al)oso.

CLEVELAND, OH – August 10, 2020 After a total of 12 days, 36 performances, and 72 hours of streamed content, Martin James Bartlett has been named the First Prize Winner of *Virtu(al)oso*, Piano Cleveland's global competition for artist relief presented in artistic partnership with Steinway & Sons. The six-member jury of leaders in the piano world gathered virtually over the weekend to select the top three prize winners, and the announcement was broadcast during the Awards Ceremony on August 9, 2020.

The decision came after 30 contestants hailing from 18 different countries recorded two short programs of their choice with contrasting styles from Steinway locations in Cleveland, New York, London, Hamburg, and Beijing. Six pianists advanced to the Final Round where they performed 30-minute recitals, vetted by a remote jury of renowned artists including Libby Abrahams, Darrell Ang, Adam Gatehouse, Steinway Artist Olga Kern, Gabriela Montero, and Steinway Artist Pierre van der Westhuizen.

"What a thrill to be involved with this brave, unique venture!" said Adam Gatehouse, Competition Juror and Artistic Director of the Leeds International Piano Competition. "Performing and communicating to a live audience is our lifeblood, but in these challenging times when that possibility has been taken away, *Virtu(al)oso* brings hope and gives a group of aspirational pianists a chance to shine and a sense of purpose in a world that needs this more than ever."

As the First Prize Winner, Martin James Bartlett (United Kingdom) receives a minimum of \$2,500 USD, a recording on Steinway & Sons Label, recital in Cleveland, Ohio presented by Piano Cleveland, and comprehensive artist career consulting services from Jonathan Eifert Public Relations. Because Bartlett has an existing exclusive recording contract with Warner Classics, he has generously offered to partially distribute his prize package. *Virtu(al)oso's* jury and artistic partner, Steinway & Sons, fully support awarding the recording contract to the Second Prize Winner, Arseny Gusev (Russia).

Gusev, along with the Third Prize Winner, Byeol Kim (South Korea), receive a minimum of \$2,500 USD and artist consulting services. The *Virtu(al)oso* jury also decided to award additional artist consulting services to Lovre Marušić (Croatia), in recognition for his excellence in the Final Round. Marušić and the two remaining finalists - Madoka Fukami (Japan) and Tamila Salimdjanova (Uzbekistan) – receive a minimum of \$2,000 USD. In response to the dire situation that musicians are facing due to the pandemic, and in harmony with the organization’s mission to support the development of emerging artists, all participating musicians receive a minimum cash prize of \$1,000 USD.

“The *Virtu(al)oso* competition has been a beacon of light in an otherwise dark and tragic time. I’ve enjoyed every moment, and it’s been a great pleasure and privilege to meet all these wonderful musicians,” said First Prize Winner Martin James Bartlett. “The thing I love most about life is performing on stage, and I’m grateful to Piano Cleveland for giving me that opportunity.”

With over 36,000 live-stream views from over 70 countries, viewers of *Virtu(al)oso* were able to tune in as the competition intensified on pianocleveland.org, YouTube, and Facebook. Individual musical personalities shone across the screen, as each performance was introduced by self-recorded contestant narratives, all masterfully produced by Video Production Director, Mark Dumm. Each artist gave insight to the repertoire they chose, how the pandemic has impacted their livelihood, and what this competition has meant to them as a musician. Through these performances and interviews, audience members were able to get to know the contestants on a personal level – especially the finalists – and collectively voted Byeol Kim, Third Prize winner, to receive the Audience Prize of \$1,000 USD.

As a response to the lack of live performances and income for artists during the pandemic, Piano Cleveland not only equalized prize money to better impact all contestants, but established an online platform to allow audiences across the globe to donate to pianists throughout the competition - ultimately, leaving no cap to the amount of prize money participants could take home. Through this innovative structure, audience members and supporters donated over \$62,000 to support *Virtu(al)oso* contestants. The outpouring of generosity from viewers means each contestant will take home additional relief above and beyond the minimum prize money award by Piano Cleveland. Many of the musicians were graciously impacted by the structure of the competition, and several chose to extend relief by donating a percentage of their winnings to a charity of their choice.

“The donations raised for our artists speaks volumes to the impact this competition has had on the contestants and community,” said Yaron Kohlberg, President of Piano Cleveland. “We are humbled by the support we’ve seen from around the globe and grateful to viewers who have left indelible impressions on our musicians during a time of uncertainty.”

Donations can still be made to contestants through August 24, 2020. For more information on *Virtu(al)oso*, prize winners, or to view the full broadcasts, visit pianocleveland.org.

ABOUT THE WINNERS

Martin James Bartlett (United Kingdom)

Martin’s early public success was as the winner of the BBC Young Musician of the Year in 2014. This led to engagements with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as recitals across the country. Bartlett currently studies with Professor Vanessa Latche as a Foundation Scholar Masters student at the Royal College of Music.

He made his BBC Proms debut in 2015, performing Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In the following year, he performed at Her Majesty The Queen’s 90th Birthday thanksgiving service, which was broadcast live on BBC One.

In 2017, Bartlett was a quarter-finalist in The Cliburn Competition, attracting a considerable following online on Medici TV. He is now in the final year of his master’s degree at The Royal College of Music in London as a Foundation Scholar.

During the past season, Bartlett made his debut with the BBC Philharmonic, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Philharmonia Orchestra and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in 'Classic FM Live' at The Royal Albert Hall playing Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 2. He also competed in the Kissingen Piano Olympics, winning both second prize and the audience prize and has played recitals at the Klavier-Festival Ruhr and The Riga Jurmala Music Festival, The Biarritz Festival, and returned to play at the BBC Proms.

Arseny Gusev (Russia)

Arseny Gusev, a young pianist and composer, was born in St. Petersburg in 1998 and has been studying music since the age of five. Gusev's playing has been described "as a blend of superb technical proficiency and lyrical romanticism seldom found in equal measure, especially in one so young" (Newburyport Current).

In 2017-2018 he studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory with A.M. Sandler as a pianist and with S.V. Nesterova as a composer. He has been studying at the Cleveland Institute of Music since 2018, where he works with Sergei Babayan (piano) and Keith Fitch (composition).

Gusev actively performs in Russia and abroad, having given solo concerts in Austria, Belgium, Italy, Slovakia, USA, and Germany. He has participated in masterclasses with Garrick Ohlsson, Samuel Adler, Andrew Norman, Dmitry Bashkirov, Grigory Gruzman, Jerome Rose, Alexander Mndoyants, Nina Lelchuk, and others.

Gusev is a laureate of many International and all-Russian competitions, such as the Dorothy McKenzie Artist Award, Three Arts Piano Competition, Cleveland Composers Guild Contest, "Another Space" Composition Competition, International Youth Gavrilin Competition, the International Youth Competition "Performer-Composer," and the All-Russian Open Andrei Petrov Composition Competition.

Byeol Kim (South Korea)

Byeol Kim, an Astral Pianist, is rapidly earning a reputation for her interpretations, which "impress with energy and freshness" (The Women's Philharmonic Advocacy). She has performed around the world, including Carnegie Hall, Teatro Civico in Italy, Petit Palau Hall in Spain. Kim has appeared as a soloist with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Paderewski Pomeranian Philharmonic, Dallas Chamber Symphony, and many others.

Kim is the First Prize Winner of the Dallas International Piano Competition and the Rochester Philharmonic Competition, Second Prize Winner of the Washington International Competition and Louisiana International Piano Competition, and a recipient of special prizes at the San Antonio International Competition, New Orleans International Competition, and the Paderewski International Competition.

Kim is a sought-after chamber music artist and received invitations to perform with Cho-Liang Lin. She also performed chamber music and vocal music in the summer of 2018 at the La Jolla Music Society's Summerfest.

Ms. Kim holds a Master of Music from the Eastman School of Music, where she studied with Enrico Elisi. She received an Artist Diploma from Glenn Gould School with Marietta Orlov and from Rice University under Jon Kimura Parker. Kim is currently pursuing her Doctorate degree at Northwestern University with James Giles.

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About Piano Cleveland

Established in 1974, Piano Cleveland promotes Cleveland as a premier piano destination by presenting world-class programming and community engagement and education initiatives. The organization's four major programs and events include the quadrennial Cleveland International Piano Competition, CIPC for Young Artists, Concert Series, and year-round education and community outreach programming. For more information, visit pianocleveland.org.