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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **World-Renowned Jury Announced for *Virtu(al)oso* Piano Competition**

*Applications Open until June 15, 2020*

**CLEVELAND, OH – June 1, 2020** Piano Cleveland announces jurors and prize packages for *Virtu(al)oso*, the highly anticipated virtual competition set to broadcast worldwide July 30 – August 9, 2020. The six distinguished jurors bring their diverse backgrounds as Steinway artists, Grammy-nominated pianists, artistic directors, conductors, and artist managers to the competition space. The competition jurors are tasked with selecting the top rising artists from 30 musicians who will compete for over \$36,000 in prizes and artist consulting services.

These jurors bring a wealth of knowledge and exceptional artistry to *Virtu(al)oso* and hold integral positions that shape the landscape of classical music. The jury members are: Libby Abrahams (United Kingdom), Darrell Ang (Singapore), Adam Gatehouse (United Kingdom), Olga Kern (Russia/United States), Gabriela Montero (Venezuela), and Pierre van der Westhuizen (South Africa/United States). The assembled jury represents diverse and well-respected voices in the music world, many of whom are elated to be part of this innovative piano competition that responds to the current needs of developing artists.

“It is crucial to help guide and encourage young talented pianists during these uncertain times,” said Olga Kern, Steinway artist and *Virtu(al)oso* Jury Member. “*Virtu(al)oso* and the contestants selected to compete will help keep music alive with their artistry through the virtual presentation of music.”



## ABOUT THE JURORS

### **Libby Abrahams (United Kingdom)**

Founder of Keynote Artist Management, an agency defined by its passion for delivering innovative, refreshing and engaging projects, Libby Abrahams works with some of the leaders in the classical music world, including artists Hélène Grimaud, Teodor Currentzis, David Pountney and Kristjan Jarvi as well as touring orchestras Australian Youth Orchestra, musicAeterna, Camerata Salzburg and SWR Stuttgart. She has held positions with Van Walsum Management, British Association of Concert Agents and was the former Senior Vice President of Director of Conductors & Instrumentalists at IMG artists Ltd. Ms. Abrahams was on the Board of the International Artist Management Association from 2007 to 2012 and has been a Jury

Member of the International Telekom Beethoven Bonn Competition in 2015 and of the Royal Overseas League Young Artist Competition 2018.

### **Darrell Ang (Singapore)**

Artistic Director/Chief Conductor of The Sichuan Orchestra of China (Sichuan Symphony Orchestra) since December 2016, Darrell Ang is a Grammy-nominated conductor and regular guest with some of the world's major orchestras. Born in Singapore, Mr. Ang studied composition with Leong Yoon Pin before he went to St. Petersburg (Russia) where he continued in orchestral conducting with Leonid Korchmar, at Yale with Shinik Hahm. Winner of the 9th Antonio Pedrotti International Competition and the 8th Arturo Toscanini International Competition, he went on to covet all three top awards at the 50th Besançon International Conductors Competition, leading to the Music Directorship of the Orchestre Symphonique de Bretagne (2012-2015). Mr. Ang was selected to join the International Conductors' Academy of the Allianz Cultural Foundation, taking on residencies with the London Philharmonic and the Philharmonia Orchestra.

### **Adam Gatehouse (United Kingdom)**

Adam Gatehouse serves at the Artistic Director of the Leeds International Piano Competition, where he has worked to create a re-imagined version of the competition as well as innovate the Learning and Engagement program. As a conductor, Mr. Gatehouse has acted as music director with Ballet Rambert in the UK, the Dutch National Ballet and Dutch National Youth Orchestra. He subsequently worked at BBC Radio 3 as Executive Producer and later as Editor Live Music where he was responsible for launching and directing the Wigmore Hall Lunchtime Concert Series and the prestigious BBC New Generation Artists scheme. In 2006, he founded and directed the internationally acclaimed Festival de Valloires in Picardy, France.



### **Olga Kern (Russia/United States)**

A Russian-American pianist, Olga Kern jumpstarted her U.S. career with a historic Gold Medal win at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition as the first woman to do so in over thirty years. Olga holds the title of Artistic Director of the Olga Kern International Piano Competition and served as a Jury Chairman of the Seventh Cliburn International Amateur Piano Competition. Since 2017, she has served on the piano faculty of the prestigious Manhattan School of Music and has been chosen as the Virginia Arts Festival's new Connie & Marc Jacobson Director of Chamber Music, beginning with the 2019 season. Ms. Kern's discography includes her Grammy Nominated recording of Rachmaninoff's Corelli Variations and other transcriptions (2004), Brahms Variations (2007) and Chopin Piano Sonatas No. 2 and 3 (2010).

### **Gabriela Montero (Venezuela)**

Gabriela Montero's visionary interpretations and unique compositional gifts have garnered her critical acclaim and a devoted following on the world stage. Ms. Montero is a graduate and Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in London and has performed with the world's leading orchestras and given concerts at many of the most distinguished venues in the world. Ms. Montero is an award-winning and bestselling recording artist, recipient of the prestigious 2018 Heidelberger Frühling Music Prize, and winner of the 4th International Beethoven Award. Ms. Montero is a committed advocate for human rights and was named an Honorary Consul by Amnesty International in 2015 and recognized with Outstanding Work in the Field of Human Rights by the Human Rights Foundation for her ongoing commitment to human rights advocacy in Venezuela.

### **Pierre van der Westhuizen (South Africa/United States)**

Pierre van der Westhuizen is the Director of The Gilmore International Keyboard Festival and Awards and past President & CEO of the Cleveland International Piano Competition. He received a Doctor of Musical Arts in piano performance at the College-Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati, and since has established himself as an accomplished and versatile musician, with critically acclaimed performances across South Africa, the U.S., and Europe. Dr. van der Westhuizen is part of the Westhuizen Piano Duo with his wife Sophié, whose recent highlights including a New York debut at Steinway Hall and being named international Steinway Artists. Van der Westhuizen has served as juror for several international competitions, including the Cleveland, Scriabin (Italy), MozArte (Germany), and UNISA (South Africa) international piano competitions. He also serves on the boards of the Yun Foundation (Philadelphia) and Magistera Soloists (Canada), as well as the Honorary Committee for Astral Artists (Philadelphia), GetClassical in Schools (NYC), and the Advisory Board for the Avery Fisher Career Grants in New York.



## PRIZES

As part of the organizations promise to help provide global relief to artists, monetary prizes of over \$36,000 USD will be dispersed to provide greater impact all 30 contestants. Each musician will be guaranteed a minimum cash prize of \$1,000 USD, with finalists receiving \$2,000 USD and the top three winners receiving \$2,500 USD. Finalists will also be eligible for the \$1,000 USD Audience Prize, which will be voted on by viewers through the Piano Cleveland mobile app. All contestants may receive additional prize funds from audience members who can donate to their artist of choice, a feature that is new to the competition world.

The pianists that place in the top three will receive artist career consulting services at various levels through the organization's partner agency, Jonathan Eifert Public Relations. The first prize winner of *Virtu(al)oso* will also be awarded a minimum of \$2,500 USD, a professional recording on the Steinway & Sons label, a recital in Cleveland, Ohio presented by Piano Cleveland, and an artist consulting services package created to help develop strategies to succeed in the current performing arts world.

Competition performances will be broadcast on Piano Cleveland's website and social pages. Content will also be available on various Steinway & Sons social platforms. Applications are open to any pianist (ages 18 to 32) located near the five partner Steinway locations in Cleveland, New York, London, Hamburg, and Beijing. Information on how to apply and application requirements can be found at [pianocleveland.org](http://pianocleveland.org).

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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](http://pianocleveland.org).