

American Pianists Association Awards 50K To Five Awards Finalists

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In response to the dire situation that musicians are living in, and in accordance with its mission to support and promote young American pianists, American Pianists Association's (APA's) President/CEO and Artistic Director Joel Harrison and its board of directors have awarded each of the five 2021 American Pianists Awards finalists—Dominic Cheli, Kenny Broberg, Mackenzie Melemed, Michael Davidman and Sahun Sam Hong—a cash prize of \$50,000 before they even begin the Awards public adjudication process.

Each pianist will travel separately over a period of weeks in Spring of 2021 for solo recitals to be professionally produced and livestreamed in HD, with no-in person audience. The competition will culminate June 25-27, 2021 with solo, chamber music with the Dover Quartet and concerto performances. The winner will receive the Christel DeHaan Classical Fellowship, consisting of career assistance for two years, publicity, performance engagements, an Artist-in-Residence post, and a recording contract with Steinway & Sons record label.

"As we struggled to face the challenges for artists and audiences brought about by the pandemic, it became clear that our normal competition process, which spans an entire concert season, was not viable," said APA President/CEO and Artistic Director Joel Harrison. "As a competition it is important that all opportunities for our finalists be equal. Under the circumstances, we could not guarantee that all performances could take place or welcome an audience. Together with the Board, we considered alternatives to our traditional format that would retain the artistic core of our process and have a reasonable chance of succeeding. Out of that conversation came the idea of doing as much as possible to support these brilliant young artists in meaningful ways with substantial cash awards as a way to sustain the artists throughout the year. APA will award them \$10,000 now, \$10,000 in early 2021, and the remaining \$30,000 at the June 2021 Celebration."

"The American Pianists Association continues to show its dedication to furthering the careers of young American pianists," said Ron Losby, President & CEO of Steinway & Sons. "In a time when budgets are being cut and live musical performance opportunities are essentially non-existent, these awards will mean that much more to these talented young artists."

2021 finalists for the American Pianists Awards were selected via blind audition from more than 40 nominations during the preliminary round, which was held from March 6-8, 2020.

2021 Finalists:

Dominic Cheli (26) won first prize at the Concert Artists Guild Competition and was named winner at Music Academy of the West Concerto Competition in 2017. Dominic has performed with symphonies including San Diego, Columbus, Princeton, and Virginia as well as Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Manhattan School of Music, a Master of Music degree from Yale University and an Artist Diploma from Colburn School. His past teachers include Zena Ilyashov, Peter Frankl, André-Michel Schub, Sylvia Rosenberg and Fabio Bidini.

Kenny Broberg (26) is a Minneapolis native who won the silver medal at the 2017 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition and was received the bronze medal at the 2019 International Tchaikovsky Competition; he has also won prizes at the Hastings, Sydney, Seattle, and New Orleans International Piano Competitions. Kenny has appeared with the Royal Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, and the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestras, among others. He has been featured on NPR, WQXR, APM's Performance Today, MPR and ABC (Australia) radio. His solo debut album was released in August 2017 on the Decca Gold label. Kenny studied for nine years with Dr. Joseph Zins before entering the University of Houston's Moores School of Music, where he earned a Bachelor of Music degree in 2016. He currently resides in Parkville, Missouri, under the guidance of 2001 Cliburn Gold Medalist Stanislav Loudenitch at Park University.

Mackenzie Melemed's (25) international career continues to flourish on the heels of winning the Juilliard School's 2019 Leo B. Ruiz Carnegie Hall Recital Prize, the 2018 Arthur Rubinstein Piano Prize, the 2018 Paris Recital Prize from Poland's Prix de Tarnów Competition, and Third Prize in the first China International Music Competition. Mackenzie has performed throughout the U.S., Asia and Europe. He recently joined the roster of Young Artists at the Centre for Musical Excellence. In 2018, Mackenzie's recording of Avner Dorman's "Three Etudes" was released on the Steinway and Sons label. Mackenzie holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees from The Juilliard School and is currently in the school's Artist Diploma program with Robert McDonald and Emanuel Ax. He is fluent in French and Finnish.

Michael Davidman (23) placed first in the Pre-College Concerto Competition in all three age categories (10, 12 and 16) as a pre-college student at Manhattan School of Music. At 13, he was chosen by Lang Lang's management to perform in the 2010 Lang Lang masterclass at Manhattan School of Music. In 2018, Michael won first prize at the New York International Piano Competition (chamber ensemble). As soloist, he has performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Monterey Symphony, Manhattan School of Music Philharmonic Orchestra, New York Concerti Sinfonietta, the NY Chamber Orchestra and more. Michael has also performed on WHYY "Curtis On Stage," WQXR McGraw Hill Young Artist Showcase, WSKG-FM Expressions Series, and NPR's "From the Top." Michael studied piano with Efrem Briskin at Manhattan School of Music and completed his Bachelor of Music degree under the guidance of Robert McDonald at the Curtis Institute of Music. He is currently pursuing his Master of Music degree at The Juilliard School with Jerome Lowenthal and Stephen Hough.

Sahun Sam Hong (25) was the winner of the 2017 Vendome Prize at Verbier and received second prize at the 2017 International Beethoven Competition in Vienna; he was a finalist in the 2018 International German Piano Award and 2017 American Pianists Awards. On the roster of Young Steinway Artists since 2010, Sam has been featured as a guest soloist with the ORF-Vienna, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Camerata New York and Waco Symphony Orchestras. At the age of 16, Sam graduated magna cum laude from Texas Christian University (TCU) with a Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Performance, having studied with John Owings. He is currently a student of Leon Fleisher in the Doctor of Musical Arts program at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University.

About the American Pianists Association

The American Pianists Association has been supporting aspiring young artists for over 40 years and has been based in Indianapolis since 1982. It has a professional staff of seven, headed by Dr. Joel M. Harrison. The American Pianists Awards, held for both classical and jazz artists, offer significant opportunities for American pianists, ages 18-30, to advance their careers. Each winner receives a two-year fellowship, valued at over \$100,000 including cash awards, fees, publicity and recording opportunities. All American Pianists Awards events are produced as public recitals and feature the finalists in a variety of settings. The organization greatly values the individual artistic sensibilities of each pianist, nurtures such individuality and does not impose any repertoire requirements during the competitions other than those necessary for the different genres. It is the intent of the American Pianists Awards to focus on artistic expression and not on competitive prowess. Further, the organization makes an effort to tailor its career assistance to suit the particular needs of the winner, offering an array of opportunities appropriate to the winner's current career development and status. American Pianists Association strives to be the bridge between professional training and a full-fledged professional career.