

## MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

# Indy organization is awarding \$50,000 to 5 young star pianists whose concerts were upended

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In a world without the coronavirus, the lead-up to the 2021 American Pianists Awards would have proceeded as it has in previous years.

Five promising classical pianists would be chosen from a blind audition pool of more than 40 participants. One by one, each of the finalists would visit Indianapolis over a number of months to perform for audiences and give masterclasses at schools.

After a final round June 25-27, 2021, the winner would receive \$50,000, career assistance, publicity, concert dates, the artist-in-residence post at the University of Indianapolis and a recording contract with the Steinway & Sons label. The other four finalists would get \$20,000 apiece.

But this is a world where the coronavirus is very much present. So while the first part of the competition went off as usual in early March, the rest will be different. Namely, the American Pianists Association's president and board of directors are awarding each finalist \$50,000 before the winner is chosen.

Given the uncertainty surrounding live performances for at least the near future, the association, which is based in Indianapolis, found it couldn't continue with its original plans but still wanted to support the artists.

"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," said Joel Harrison, president, CEO and artistic director, in a release.

The finalists — Dominic Cheli, Kenny Broberg, Mackenzie Melemed, Michael Davidman and Sahun Sam Hong — will receive \$10,000 now, \$10,000 in early 2021 and \$30,000 in June

2021.

For now, plans are to bring in the soloists next spring for solo recitals, likely without audiences, and share them via livestream or recording, according to Director of Marketing Lee Clifford.

## **More about the five finalists**

Every two years, the American Pianists Awards' top prize goes to a jazz or classical winner. In 2019, jazz pianist Emmet Cohen won. Drew Petersen won the 2017 classical competition. In 2021, one of the following classical finalists will receive top honors.

**Dominic Cheli**, who's from St. Louis, was a co-first prize winner at the 2017 Concert Artists Guild Competition and winner of the 2017 Music Academy of the West Concerto Competition. He earned a bachelor's degree from the Manhattan School of Music, a master's from Yale University and an Artist Diploma from Colburn School.

**Kenny Broberg** won the silver medal at the 2017 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition and a bronze medal at the 2019 International Tchaikovsky Competition. The pianist, who's from Minneapolis, earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Houston's Moores School of Music and is studying with 2001 Cliburn gold medalist Stanislav Ioudenitch at Park University in Parkville, Missouri.

**Mackenzie Melemed** won The Juilliard School's 2019 Leo B. Ruiz Carnegie Hall Recital Prize, 2018 Arthur Rubinstein Piano Prize and the 2018 Paris Recital Prize from Poland's Prix de Tarnów Competition. The pianist, who lives in New York, attended The Juilliard School, where he earned bachelor's and master's degrees, and is now in the Artist Diploma program.

**Sahun Sam Hong** was a joint second-prize winner at the 2017 Vendome Prize at Verbier, second prize at the 2017 International Beethoven Competition and was a 2017 American Pianists Awards finalist. He holds a bachelor's degree from Texas Christian University and is in the Doctor of Musical Arts program at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University.

**Michael Davidman** won first prize in a one-piano four-hands ensemble at the 2018 New York International Piano Competition and was co-winner of the 2019 Juilliard Gina Bachauer Competition. He earned his bachelor's degree from the Curtis Institute of Music and is working on his master's at The Juilliard School.

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