

MUSIC

Minneapolis pianist wins \$50K award – for a contest that hasn't happened yet

In an "act of immense generosity," the American Pianists Association offers a financial lifeline to Kenny Broberg and four other finalists.

By **Terry Blain** Special to the Star Tribune | JUNE 23, 2020 – 2:28PM

Just months ago, Minneapolis-born pianist Kenny Broberg (<https://kennybroberg.com/>) was eagerly anticipating competing for the \$100,000 first prize at the American Pianists Association classical finals, starting in October and culminating next spring.

Then coronavirus happened. Live concerts with an audience are part of the judging process, and social distancing protocols mean these cannot safely happen at present.

The APA, however, has not left its young finalists dangling. A decision has been made to start distributing the 2021 prize money evenly among Broberg and the four other pianists, to help support them through the COVID-19 crisis.

Each will receive \$50,000 in total, with an immediate payment of \$10,000, and two further installments in 2021.

For Broberg, 26, the payments come as something of a financial lifeline.

"Due to the pandemic, all of my live concerts have been canceled at least through the end of 2020, so I am currently without income," the Washburn High School graduate said. "For me, this help is not only an act of immense generosity. ... It also comes as a complete surprise in such a turbulent time, when funding for the arts and artists is nonexistent."

Broberg has already tasted success in prestigious piano competitions. Three years ago, he won a silver medal at the storied Van Cliburn Competition in Texas, and made an auspicious debut with the Minnesota Orchestra a few months later.

And Broberg should still get his opportunity to play for glory in a revamped 2021 competition. The live performances have been switched to a partly online format, with the final "Festival Celebration Weekend" pushed back from April to June.

"Presumably there will be more control of the virus then, and we can have public events," said APA President Joel Harrison. "That is our plan, but like everything else these days, it's subject to change."

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Kenny Broberg