

PIANO CONCERTS SEPTEMBER 2016 - JANUARY 2017



Jon Nakamatsu



Fei-Fei Dong

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Vyacheslav Gryaznov



Klara Frei and Temirzhan Yerzhanov

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PIANO CONCERTS 2016–2017



Jon Nakamatsu

MOZART BRAHMS SCHUMANN CHOPIN

September 11, 2016, 7:00 p.m.

McAfee Performing Arts and Lecture Center, Saratoga



Fei-Fei Dong

GALUPPI SCHUMANN CHOPIN LEIBERMANN LISZT

October 15, 2016, 7:30 p.m.

Trianon Theatre, San Jose



Vyacheslav Gryaznov

BEETHOVEN DEBUSSY RAVEL PROKOFIEV RACHMANINOV

November 12, 2016, 7:30 p.m.

Trianon Theatre, San Jose



Klara Frei and Temirzhan Yerzhanov

SCHUBERT BRAHMS MENDELSSOHN SCHUMANN

January 21, 2017, 7:30 p.m.

Trianon Theatre, San Jose



Alessio Bax

MOZART SCHUBERT SCRIBAN RAVEL

February 5, 2017, 2:00 p.m.

Trianon Theatre, San Jose



Boris Giltburg

BEETHOVEN BRAHMS RACHMANINOV

March 11, 2017, 7:30 p.m.

Trianon Theatre, San Jose



Beatrice Rana

BACH DEBUSSY LUCA FRANCESCONI LISZT

April 8, 2017, 7:30 p.m.

Trianon Theatre, San Jose



Sofya Gulyak

CLEMENTI TCHAIKOVSKY SHOSTAKOVICH MEDTNER PROKOFIEV

May 7, 2017, 2:00 p.m.

Trianon Theatre, San Jose

Letter from the President



Dear Friends and Patrons,

Welcome to our exciting 2016 – 2017 Season. Thank you for supporting Steinway Society's internationally acclaimed pianists as they bring beloved masterworks to our community.

The season begins with local treasure **Jon Nakamatsu**, 1997 Van Cliburn Competition Gold Medalist, now celebrated worldwide. Our October concert presents the rising young Chinese pianist **Fei-Fei Dong** a finalist at the 2014 Van Cliburn competition.

Russian virtuoso **Vyacheslav Gryaznov**, winner of the Rubinstein and Rachmaninoff Competitions in Moscow joins us in November with a program that includes a premiere performance of his transcription of Prokofiev's "Sur la Borysthene." The celebrated piano duo **Frei and Yerzhanov** perform Romantic Period favorites in January, 2017. Exhilarating artist **Alessio Bax**, soloist with more than 100 orchestras since winning the Leeds International Piano Competition, will thrill in February. March presents the brilliant **Boris Giltburg**, who won First Prize at the 2013 Queen Elisabeth Competition (Brussels) and performs internationally with esteemed conductors. Italian pianist **Beatrice Rana**, Silver Medalist and Audience Favorite at the 2013 Van Cliburn Competition, lights up April. And, back in May by popular demand, the radiant Russian pianist **Sofya Gulyak**, the only woman awarded First Prize and Princess Mary Gold Medal at a Leeds International Piano Competition.

Steinway Society's mission is to nurture a love and appreciation for classical piano music. Visit our web site for more about our artists and programs or to subscribe and for information regarding donations. Your donations are tax-deductible and always appreciated. Friend us on Facebook to help spread the word about the world-class artists coming and the works of art that enrich our lives.

Sandra Wales

President, Board of Directors



Jon Nakamatsu

Jon Nakamatsu grew up in San Jose, graduated from Stanford University and his wife teaches at Saratoga High School. Though his busy touring schedule often keeps him away, he is immensely popular

with the Bay Area audiences. A true aristocrat of the keyboard, whose playing combines elegance, clarity, and electrifying power, Nakamatsu is noted for his continuously expanding career based on a deeply probing and illuminating musicality, as well as his quietly charismatic performing style.

Since his dramatic 1997 Van Cliburn Gold Medal triumph, Jon Nakamatsu's brilliant but unassuming musicianship and eclectic repertoire have made him a clear favorite throughout the world, both on the concert circuit and in the recording studio. He has performed widely in North America, Europe, and the Far East. He has been soloist with many leading orchestras, including those of Detroit, Los Angeles, Rochester, San Francisco, Seattle, Tokyo and Vancouver. Numerous festival engagements have included the Aspen, Tanglewood, Ravinia, Vail, and Britt festivals. In 1999, he performed at the White House for President and Mrs. Clinton.

Mr. Nakamatsu records exclusively for Harmonia Mundi USA, which has released 12 critically acclaimed CDs. His all-Gershwin recording featuring *Rhapsody in Blue* and the *Concerto in F* rose to number three on Billboard's classical music charts, earning extraordinary critical acclaim.

Jon Nakamatsu studied privately with the late Marina Derryberry from the age of six, and has worked with Karl Ulrich Schnabel, son of the great pianist Artur Schnabel.

Program

Mozart, *Piano Sonata No. 13 in B-flat Major, K. 333*

Allegro, Andante Cantabile, Allegretto grazioso

Brahms, *Piano Sonata No. 3 in F Minor, Op. 5*

Allegro maestoso, Andante espressivo, Scherzo, Intermezzo, Finale

Intermission

Schumann, *Papillons, Op. 2*

Chopin, *Scherzo No. 3 in C-sharp Minor, Op. 39*

Chopin, *Nocturne in F-sharp Major, Op. 15, No. 2*

Chopin, *Polonaise in A-flat Major, Op. 53*

Program Notes

Piano Sonata No. 13 in B-flat Major, K. 333

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Although the publication date of *Mozart's Piano Sonata No. 13* is 1784, a mystery surrounds the composition date, with various pieces of evidence, from the style to maturity to the paper on which the manuscript was written, all suggesting an earlier date. The first movement *Allegro* opens with a cheerfully charming tone and remains true to the sonata form, while still affording the pianist opportunities for personal flourishes and light touches through *tremolo* (rapid reiteration of a note). The *Andante* trades in the airy feeling for deep expression, with chromaticism to evoke slight dissonance. The opening theme returns for the third and final movement, but is now punctuated with broken chords and rapid movement that build to the finale and climax, where major and minor keys alternate in seconds and a pause signals the theme's final repeat.

Piano Sonata No. 3 in F Minor, Op. 5

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

One would easily be confused by seeing five movements listed for a sonata, a composition form usually limited to at most four, and indeed it is anomalous because Brahms included this sonata's *Intermezzo* as a bonus. This big piece certainly does not waste time - the entrance is drenched in *fortissimo* chords, which makes sense given Brahms' great respect for Beethoven. The "fate" motif from Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* can be heard throughout three of the five movements, with the bonus *Intermezzo "Ruckblick"* ("Looking Back" or "Retrospection") featuring

it heavily. At this time (1853), Brahms was only twenty years old and was more famous as a pianist than a composer, but his unique ability to contrast soft and bold themes within a single movement was apparent even to mature composers in his circle, such as Robert Schumann. That talent and tendency culminates in a finale that intertwines marches, lyrical melodies, sprightly steps and brilliant showiness.

Papillons, Op. 2

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Here we have another piece written by a budding, twenty-year-old composer. Schumann found himself so entranced by Jean Paul's unfinished novel *Fliegjahre* ("The Awkward Age") that he began composing on the piano to depict its final scene, which takes place at a masked ball. In *Papillons* ("Butterflies") each movement signifies a dance, with an essential *polonaise* in the eleventh movement to represent a confession of love in the Polish language by Wina, who has captured the hearts of the novel's two main characters, brothers Walt and Vult. In fact, only the last two movements were written after Schumann had finished reading the novel, and therefore contain direct references to its final chapter, a masked Ball at which Vult tricks Wina into confessing her love for Walt and then departs. Schumann was partial to these themes and this style of conveying story and emotion. The themes are reused and even explicitly acknowledged a few years later in one of his most prominent works, *Carnaval, Op. 9*.

Scherzo No. 3 in C-sharp Minor, Op. 39

Nocturne in F-sharp Major, Op. 15, No. 2

Polonaise in A-flat Major, Op. 53

Frederic Chopin (1810-1849)

These three selections, composed by Chopin between 1832 and 1842, are all famous for being difficult to perform. The *Scherzo No. 3* overflows with energy that builds throughout its octave chords, delicate arpeggios, precise figures and lyrical melodies. These fast patterns, especially during the climax, occupy the pianist fully. The *Nocturne in F-sharp Major* feels slower and calmer, with its 2/4 time signature, but the ornamentation and the eighths and dotted eighths in the bass present a challenge to the pianist. The *Polonaise in A-flat Major* needs no introduction; this triumphant and transformative work, famously referred to as the "Heroic Polonaise," has been a concert favorite since its introduction. From the opening chromatic fourths to the main dance theme with pounding left hand octaves to a momentous march, the pianist journeys across the piano's entire vocal range before signaling the end with resounding chords.



Fei-Fei Dong

Born in Shenzhen, China, Fei-Fei Dong began piano lessons at the age of five. She moved to New York to study at The Juilliard School, where she earned her Bachelor and Master of Music degrees.

Praised for her "bountiful gifts and passionate immersion into the music she touches" (*The Plain Dealer*), Fei-Fei was a top finalist at the 14th (2013) Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. She is noted for her poetic interpretations, charming audiences with her "passion, piquancy and tenderness" and "winning stage presence" (*Dallas Morning News*).

Fei-Fei has performed in recital at Alice Tully Hall as the winner of Juilliard's William Petschek Recital Award, in Carnegie Hall and the Cliburn's Spring 2015 Chopin Festival, as well as in Europe at Warsaw Philharmonic Concert Hall and the Louvre.

She was showcased prominently in the documentary film, *Virtuosity*, about the 2013 Cliburn Competition, and has been featured many times on New York's WQXR radio.

Deeply committed to sharing her joy for music, Fei-Fei engages students and community audiences through frequent school and outreach concerts as well as master classes.

Program

Galuppi, *Sonata in C Major, T. 27*

Schumann, *Papillons, Op. 2*

Chopin, *Waltz in A-flat Major, Op. 42*

Liebermann, *Gargoyles, Op. 29*

Intermission

Liszt, *Sonata in B Minor, S. 178*

Lento assai - Allegro energico, Grandioso - Recitativo,
Andante sostenuto - Quasi adagio, Allegro energico

Program Notes

Sonata in C Major, T. 27

Baldassari Galuppi (1706 -1785)

B. Galuppi was an Italian composer who belonged to a generation of composers, including Gluck, Domenico Scarlatti and CPE Bach, whose works are emblematic of the galant style that prevailed in Europe throughout the 18th century. He was highly regarded as a virtuoso performer on and composer for keyboard instruments. Napoleon's invasion of Venice in 1797 resulted in Galuppi's manuscripts being scattered around Western Europe, and in many cases, destroyed or lost. In the latter half of the 19th century, his music was largely forgotten outside of Italy. Some of Galuppi's works were occasionally performed in the 200 years after his death, but not until the last years of the 20th century were his compositions extensively revived in live performance and recordings.

Papillons, Op. 2

Robert Schumann (1810 -1856)

This delightful cycle was the first of Schumann's piano cycles rooted in literature. At this early stage of his career – he was 19 – music and literature were inseparable for him. His principal literary model was the novelist Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, pen name Jean Paul. Schumann's favorite novel was his *Flegeljahre*, the tale of a poetic soul in search of life's meaning. Its penultimate chapter takes place at a masked ball. Schumann's original concept was a linked series of ten small pieces inspired in part by the masked ball. The chiming clock at the end supports this interpretation. Eventually he expanded the work to twelve movements, adding an allusion to the opening waltz in the finale. In a letter to his mother, Schumann declared that he had brought Jean-Paul's novel to life in sounds. Much of the music is reworked from earlier pieces composed in the salon tradition. Schubert's influence manifests itself in the preponderance of waltz and polonaise rhythms and the music's lighthearted, pleasing quality. In Jean-Paul's writings, butterflies usually symbolize the soul, capable of transfiguration and transformation. This concept resonated with Schumann, who transferred it to musical metamorphosis. He also took advantage of the more literal metaphor - *Papillons* celebrates its departure from a traditional plan, as unpredictable as a butterfly's flight. Sudden shifts in mood are common, ranging from carefree and humorous to profound, emotional depth. Schumann frequently changes key and varies movement lengths. This unpredictability lends an aphoristic quality to each segment and underscores a sense of impetuosity.

Waltz in A-flat Major, Op. 42

Frederic Chopin (1810-1849)

This waltz begins with a trill on the dominant (E-flat) before breaking into a delightful melody. To distinguished Chopin interpreter, Moritz Rosenthal, the music evoked a brilliant Parisian Ball, full of elegance and coquetry. The second theme, in the bass register, suggests an aristocratic couple focused on each other, ignoring the passionate other dancers. After multiple repetitions of the initial theme and interludes the dance comes to a triumphant close.

Gargoyles, Op. 29

Lowell Liebermann (b. 1961)

Gargoyles is a four-movement suite written in 1989. The score exemplifies Liebermann's accessible yet technically rigorous, intellectually challenging style, in which traditional harmonies and expressive gestures coexist with avant-garde procedures. Cathedral gargoyles often portray grotesque faces with great humor. The opening movement begins with a three-note "signal" and careens forward with obsessive perpetual motion rhythms, studded with shock-effects. The *Adagio semplice* is deeply introverted, presenting melancholy melodizing over patterns based on two alternating chords. Later, a still slower melody unfolds against repetitions of a single note. Crystalline sonorities mark the third Gargoyle, which floats a songful theme over luminous liquid swirls. Mordancy and menace return in the finale, which is dominated by demonic galloping rhythms, as textures grow steadily denser and virtuoso gestures more flamboyant.

Sonata in B Minor, S. 178

Franz Liszt (1811 – 1886)

Liszt's *Sonata in B Minor* is one of the 19th century's great masterpieces. Alan Walker, noted Liszt biographer, believes that "if Liszt had written nothing else, he would have to be ranked as a master on the strength of this work alone." Liszt dedicated it to Schumann, who never heard it. Clara Schumann did hear it, but failed to appreciate it: "merely a blind noise - no healthy ideas anymore, everything confused, one cannot find a single, clear harmonic progression - and yet I must thank him for it [i.e., the dedication to Robert]. It really is too awful." Wagner, on the other hand, rejoiced, finding the work "deep and noble." The single movement *Sonata* unfolds in approximately 30 minutes of unbroken music and is built almost entirely from four continually altered and developed motifs.



Vyacheslav Gryaznov

Vyacheslav Gryaznov (born 1982), Russian classical pianist, transcriber and composer studied at the Moscow Conservatory and is now an assistant professor in the Conservatory's Piano Department. He has

won numerous prestigious competitions including the 1997 Rubinstein International Competition in Moscow (1st Prize) and the 1998 Italian "To the Memory of Rachmaninov" Competition (1st Prize).

He has performed throughout Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Asia and Europe, both in solo recitals and with chamber groups and orchestras, including the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra. He has cooperated with such major companies as the NHK Japanese Broadcasting Corporation (in a project comprising some 30 recitals, and CD and video recordings).

Mr. Gryaznov is also known as the composer of numerous concert transcriptions for piano solo, piano four-hands, and chamber groups that have become popular all over the world. In 2014 he signed a contract with Schott Music, GmbH & Co., a leading classical and contemporary music publisher. He records for the Melodiya label.

Program

Beethoven, *12 Variations on the Russian Dance from Das Waldmadchen*

Debussy, *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune*

Ravel, *Gaspard de la Nuit*

Intermission

Prokofiev (tr. Gryaznov), *Suite from Sur la Borysthene*

Rachmaninoff, *Sonata No. 2, Op. 36*

Allegro agitato, Non allegro, Allegro molto

Program Notes

12 Variations on the Russian Dance from Das Waldmadchen

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Beethoven composed this set of variations on a *Russian Dance* from Carl Maria von Weber's opera *Das Waldmadchen* during the year of its premiere in Vienna, 1796. It was dedicated, like the *Piano Sonata Op. 10* and other variations, to Countess Anna Margarete von Browne, whose husband was an early patron. Most of the variations are written in the key of A Major, with only three in A minor. Each variation follows the pattern of a short opening theme first in the dominant key (E Major) and then the tonic, before moving to a contrasting idea and repeat of the main theme.

Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune

Claude Debussy (1862-1918), (tr. Gryaznov)

Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* is a symphonic poem steeped in artistic expression, with the composer taking inspiration from a poem of the same name by Stéphane Mallarmé and in turn providing inspiration for the ballet *Afternoon for a Faun*, choreographed by the wildly celebrated *Ballets Russes* dancer, Nijinsky. Debussy scored the work for a more modern set of orchestral instruments: flutes (for the faun), oboes, bassoons, harps, horns and more, in addition to strings. While the beautifully and theatrically intertwined melodies depict a natural scene that seems effortless and free-form, the organization of motifs and their instruments are well structured. Where Debussy utilized orchestral tonality and harmony to paint his picture, the piano transcription relies on the instrument's vocal range to achieve similarly broad effects.

Gaspard de la Nuit

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Ravel composed *Gaspard de la Nuit* in 1908 to go further in writing a difficult solo piano piece. Each movement is based on a 19th century poem by Aloysius Bertrand and depicts the written scene precisely. *Ondine* tells of a nymph beckoning people to her lake bottom kingdom, and, therefore, the enticing murmurs of her call and the rolling of the waters are heard. *Le Gibet* transports listeners to the desert, where maintaining the *ostinato* (persistent) bass signifying a tolling bell is the pianist's challenge. Finally, *Scarbo* is the virtuosic moment the pianist has

been waiting for and possibly dreading, much like the poem's narrator, who dreads the evil dwarf Scarbo. Staccato bass and frantic rhythms depict the creature's strange idiosyncrasies, and even the calmer middle section is only a slower version of the main theme. The infamous difficulties are not just precision and technique, but also adaptability and agility. In composing this music, Ravel wrote a legendary piece that is still talked about and analyzed today.

Suite from Sur la Borysthene

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953), (tr. Gryaznov)

The orchestral suite for Sergei Prokofiev's failed 1930 ballet, *Sur la Borysthene*, ("On the Dnieper" [river]) focuses on six ballet numbers. The story follows Sergei, who has returned home from the First World War and finds he is no longer in love with his betrothed, Natasha, but instead with Olga. Olga is engaged to another man, and a fight ensues in which Sergei falls but is saved by Natasha. She then compassionately helps Sergei and Olga run away from the village. Another enchanting and evocative transcription by this evening's artist, this composition transforms a ballet turned orchestral suite into a wondrous piano suite.

Sonata No. 2, Op. 36

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Sergei Rachmaninoff composed his *Sonata No. 2* in 1913, but revised and shortened it in 1931, and this is the version most often performed today. The exquisiteness of this work lies not in its perfect sonata form or in any one of its lovely melodies, but rather in the seamless melding of the three movements, with their differing powers and expression, into a piece experienced as one continuous unit. No longer are themes relegated to a movement, nor do they reappear as exact repetitions. Both the second and third movements contain references to earlier themes, but the listener is too captured in the moment to recall the sonata's cyclic nature. Immediately gratifying moments pervade the music, making this piece a delightful journey from start to end.



Klara Frei & Temirzhan Yerzhanov

Klara Frei studied at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory and earned her Master's Degree at Switzerland's Basel Music Academy. She has performed to acclaim as a soloist and chamber musician in Europe and Russia. She and her husband, Temirzhan Yerzhanov, now frequently perform together. She taught piano in Switzerland, France and the UK before locating to the Bay Area, and her students were regularly accepted at top musical institutions, e.g., the UK's Royal College of Music

Temirzhan Yerzhanov launched his career in 1993 by winning the First Prize and Gold Medal at Germany's XIth International Robert Schumann Piano Competition. He also conducts opera and symphonic music. Mr. Yerzhanov has toured widely in Europe, Russia, France, the U.S, China and India, and performed with distinguished orchestras including the Moscow Radio Tchaikovsky Symphony. He has appeared in prestigious venues such as the Moscow and St. Petersburg Philharmonic Halls, Berlin's Konzerthaus, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Salle Gaveau in Paris and Carnegie Weill Recital Hall in New York. He records for Con Brio Recordings and Classical Assembly.

Program

Schubert, *Rondo in A Major, D. 951*

Brahms, *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Op. 23*

Mendelssohn, *Andante and Allegro brillante, Op. 92*

Intermission

Schubert, *Rondo in D Major, D. 608*

Schumann, *Ballszenen, Op. 109*

Program Notes

Rondo in A Major, D. 951

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Written in the last months of Schubert's life, the *Rondo in A Major D. 951* is the composer's last work for piano four hands. The piece opens softly and sweetly, and flows gently from one melody to another. Towards the piece's middle section, the harmonies begin to shift, as Schubert plays with different keys. At the end, the rondo theme returns with heavy articulation, a shift from the opening serenity.

Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Op. 23

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

For this set of variations, Brahms utilizes themes from Schumann's last piano work, the 1854 *Ghost Variations*, composed just before Schumann was admitted to a mental institution. The composition of the original work was fraught by Schumann's mental conflict between angelic voices and beckoning demons, which led him to attempt suicide after having completed only half the variations. Schumann believed the ghosts of Mendelssohn and Schubert had directed him to undertake the work. Brahms' 1861 *Variations* maintained the dark melodic elements throughout, while referencing aspects of Schumann's music and life. Schumann saw the manuscript in the asylum and had high praise for the piece. The original theme is heard at its clearest in the end, but is lost to the darkness of the piano's lowest register.

Andante and Allegro brillante, Op. 92

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Written in 1841, the *Andante and Allegro brillante* is one of the few pieces Mendelssohn composed for four hands during the later part of his career. Although the piece seems to flow with a charming lightness throughout, its fast rush of scales makes it one of the most challenging in the repertoire. There is never too much competition between the two pianos, because the main melodic line is passed from one to another without overlap. As a result, the audience hears a succinct musical delight from start to finish.

Rondo in D Major, D. 60

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

A charming rondo that exhibits the feel of the salon recital for which it was composed, Schubert's *Rondo in D Major* is a light-hearted piece that skips along amusingly. The piece was written in 1818, during a happy time in the composer's life when he was enjoying playing music in the company of friends and family. When the *Rondo* was finally published a few years after Schubert's death, the publisher added a note, "Our friendship is constant," which calls out the fact that the two pianists cross hands very often towards the Rondo's end. And indeed, this makes for a great spectacle in live performance.

Ballszenen, Op. 109

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Written between 1849 and 1851, *Ballszenen*, ("Ball Scenes"), is a collection of nine dances, each with a different style and country of origin. Schumann was always open to unconventional music and therefore experiments with tonal harmony throughout these dances. For example, the fourth movement, *Ungarisch*, explores the style *hongrois* of the Hungarian gypsies of his time, incorporating lively tempos and unique harmonies that stand out from the work's more classical dances. From here, the dances turn from a generally bright tone to something more pulsating and driven. In the last movement, with its *Promenade*, the piece climaxes with heavy, rising sets of chords, triumphant and bold.

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Since its rebirth in 2013, our educational outreach committee has:

- Produced free school and community concerts by professional artists including the Anderson and Roe Duo, Grammy-nominated ZOFO Duet, solo pianists Sandra Wright-Shen and Natalya Lundtvedt, and percussionist Gregory Messa, and dozens of San Jose State University music students
- Given free Steinway Society concert tickets to teachers, students and families from schools in financially challenged districts
- Produced Young Artist Salon Concerts and Master Classes in private homes
- Continued to grow! During each of the 2013-2015 seasons, we served 1,500 community members; in 2015-2016, we served more than 2,000!

Steinway Society is now partnering with Starting Arts, a non-profit arts education organization that provides hands-on arts education by professional artists in over 100 schools, with more than 30,000 students.

We invite you to help Steinway Society and Starting Arts sustain and grow these crucial educational activities. Please be as generous as you can.



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