

# Meet the 2026 International Piano Competition Judges

**Hyeyoung Song** is an internationally acclaimed pianist and educator who has concertized extensively across the United States, Europe, and Asia. Celebrated for her “exquisite sensitivity and beautiful tone,” and praised as an artist who “captures the audience’s ears and hearts,” she leads a vibrant career as a performer, teacher, and arts leader. In 2016, Song embarked on an international tour with performances in France, Spain, and Korea, culminating in a sold-out recital at Carnegie Hall, which the New York Piano Group hailed as “warm, expressive, yet powerful.” Her recent appearances include Carnegie Weill Recital Hall, the American Church in Paris, the Gijón International Piano Festival, Pennsylvania State University, Southwestern University, Elizabethtown College, Texas Woman’s University, Steinway Hall, Eisemann Center of Performing Arts and the Alkek Performing Arts Center.

A passionate educator, Song has presented recitals and masterclasses at institutions and festivals such as the Stony Brook International Piano Festival, Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing Arts, Ewha Womans University, and Myeongji University. She is also a highly sought-after adjudicator, serving on juries of competitions including the Piano Texas International Piano Festival, the Southern Methodist University Concerto Competition, the Texas Christian University Concerto Competition, and the Music Teachers National Association Competition.

Her artistry has been recognized with top prizes at the Janice K. Hodges Piano Competition, the Chopin International Piano Competition in Corpus Christi, and the Sydney Wright Piano Competition. She also received the Teaching Excellence Award from the University of Texas at Austin Keyboard Department.

Song is Director of Piano Studies and Artist-in-Residence at Weatherford College, where she



founded both the WC International Piano Competition and the WC Chamber Music Ensemble—initiatives that reflect her commitment to artistic excellence, education, and community engagement. In 2019, the college honored her with the title of Master Pianist in recognition of her artistic and institutional contributions.

In 2023, she was inducted into the Steinway & Sons Teacher Hall of Fame, a distinction honoring North America’s most influential piano educators—her name now permanently displayed at the Steinway Factory in New York City. In 2025, Song was selected as the college’s nominee for the prestigious Minnie Stevens Piper Professor Award, celebrating her ongoing excellence in teaching and service.

**Pianist Mikhail Berestnev** has been described as having “...flawless technique and constant inspiration...superb sonority...” (Belgian La Libre Magazine) and “... an astonishingly gifted pianist...equally at home as a soloist and collaborative pianist” (Theater Jones, U.S.).

He has been featured as a soloist with the Sydney Symphony, Brazilian Symphony, Royal Chamber Orchestra of Wallonia, Fort Worth, San Angelo, Irving, Plano, and Corpus Christi Symphonies, among others.

Mikhail has performed as a soloist and collaborative pianist at the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory named after Tchaikovsky, Moscow`s International Music House, English Hall at the Saint-Petersburg Music House, National Concert Hall in Dublin, Flagey Theater in Brussels, Sydney Opera House, Palau de la Musica in Barcelona, Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, Winspear Opera House, Moody Performance Hall and Charles W. Eisemann Center for Performing Arts in Dallas, US.

Mikhail frequently performs with violinist Grace Kang Wollet and clarinetist Danny Goldman as a member of MAKE, classical music ensemble based in Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. He has collaborated with the Dallas Opera, Avant Chamber Ballet, Texas Ballet Theater, the Van Cliburn Foundation, and members of the Fort Worth and Dallas Symphony Orchestras, and has been featured as a guest artist at the PianoTexas International Academy & Festival, the Basically Beethoven Festival, and the International Keyboard Odysiad & Festival, among others.

He is a prize-winner of the Sydney International Piano Competition of Australia, Rio de Janeiro International Piano Competition (BNDES), Stanislav Neuhaus International Piano Competition, International Competition named



after Gnessins, and the Washington International Piano Festival.

Mikhail graduated from the Gnessins Russian Academy of Music in Moscow, Texas Christian University College of Fine Arts in Fort Worth, TX, and Meadows School of Arts at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. He studied piano with Irina Grebyonkina, Andrei Khitruk, Alexei Skavronski, Vladimir Tropp, Tamas Ungar and Joaquin Achúcarro.

In addition to his performance career Mikhail is a guest artist and collaborative pianist at the "Musica Nova" chamber orchestra and advanced chamber ensemble at the School of Arts and Technology at the University of Texas at Dallas.