

2026 Southwest Bach Piano Competition: Rules, Guidelines, and Agreement

Overview

The Seattle International Piano Festival (SIPF), in partnership with the Steinway Gallery of Arizona, is proud to present the inaugural Southwest Bach Piano Competition, a live piano competition devoted exclusively to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.

Created as an educational and artistic opportunity for young pianists, the Southwest Bach Piano Competition welcomes participants of all nationalities who wish to deepen their understanding and appreciation of Bach's timeless music through public performance, adjudication, and artistic exchange. Competitors will perform before a distinguished panel of performing artists and educators and will receive written evaluations, certificates, medals, and awards recognizing outstanding achievement.

The competition continues the artistic tradition established by the original Bach Festival founded by Jennifer Bowman. For more than fifteen years, the Bach Festival has provided meaningful educational opportunities to students throughout the United States and abroad. We are honored to expand that tradition through a live event serving the musical communities of Arizona and the greater Southwestern United States.

Hosted in the beautiful performance space of the Steinway Gallery of Arizona, the Southwest Bach Piano Competition seeks to inspire stylistically informed performances, artistic growth, and a lifelong appreciation for the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. Participants will compete within carefully defined age divisions to ensure fair and meaningful evaluation while providing generous opportunities for recognition and achievement.

In addition to medals and certificates, the competition will award \$800 in total prize money to the highest-ranked performers in each age division. Cash prizes will be awarded to the Gold and Silver Medalists in each category, with awards of \$50 in the 9 & Under Division, \$150 in the 10–13 Division, and \$200 in the 14–18 Division.

To further encourage artistic growth, all Gold Medalists will be invited to participate in an exclusive Southwest Bach Gold Medalist Masterclass on Sunday, October 25, 2026, at the Steinway Gallery of Arizona. This special educational event will provide laureates with the opportunity to perform and work directly with distinguished guest artists and pedagogues.

Participation is limited to 100 performers, and applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until all available places have been filled.

Applications must be submitted electronically through the official [competition application form](#).

Competition Day Details

The 2026 Southwest Bach Piano Competition will be held live on Saturday, October 24, 2026, at the Steinway Gallery of Arizona, located at:

14418 N Scottsdale Rd, Suite 184
Scottsdale, AZ 85254

Competition sessions will take place between 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Participants will be assigned to age-based performance groups and will receive a specific reporting window prior to the event.

Each participant should plan to attend a session lasting approximately 60–75 minutes. Similar to a recital format, participants are expected to arrive at the beginning of their assigned session and remain until all performers within their group have completed their performances. This

allows students to hear one another, fosters a sense of artistic community, and ensures a respectful and supportive performance environment.

A detailed schedule, including performance groups and reporting times, will be distributed to participants after the close of applications.

Competition results and medal recipients will be announced following adjudication. Written evaluations, certificates, and awards will be distributed after the close of each age-based competitive group.

The Southwest Bach Piano Competition is designed not only as a competition, but also as a shared educational and artistic experience. Participants are encouraged to listen attentively to the performances of their fellow competitors and celebrate the achievements of all performers.

Awards and Gold Medalist Masterclass

In addition to medals and certificates, the Southwest Bach Piano Competition will award \$800 in total prize money to the highest-ranked performers in each age division. Cash prizes will be awarded to the two (2) Gold Medalists in each category, with awards of \$50 in the 9 & Under Division, \$150 in the 10–13 Division, and \$200 in the 14–18 Division.

To further encourage artistic growth, all Gold Medalists will be invited to participate in the Southwest Bach Gold Medalist Masterclass, held on Sunday, October 25, 2026, from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Steinway Gallery of Arizona. This special educational event will provide laureates with the opportunity to perform and work directly with distinguished guest artists and pedagogues.

Because the Southwest Bach Piano Competition is designed as both a competitive and educational experience, recipients of cash prizes are expected to participate as active performers in the Gold Medalist Masterclass. Eligibility to receive prize money is contingent upon participation in the October 25 masterclass. Applicants should ensure that they are available to attend both the competition on October 24 and the masterclass on October 25 before applying.

Eligibility

The Southwest Bach Piano Competition is open to pianists of all nationalities.

Participants will compete in one of the following age divisions. A participant's age as of October 24, 2026 shall determine eligibility for a particular division.

Age Divisions (repertoire requirements below)

Junior Division I (\$78)

Ages 9 and under

Junior Division II (\$89)

Ages 10–13

Senior Division (\$89)

Ages 14–18

Participants must perform from memory and must be present in person at the Steinway Gallery of Arizona on October 24, 2026 and plan to participate in the masterclass on October 25.

The competition is limited to 100 participants. Applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until all available places have been filled.

Repertoire Categories

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| <p>A — Anna Magdalena Notebook & Early Keyboard Pieces; BWV Anh. 113–130, 132; BWV 822; BWV 841–843</p> <p>B — Little Preludes; BWV 924–931, 933–943, 999</p> <p>C — Two-Part Inventions; BWV 772–786</p> <p>D — Three-Part Inventions (Sinfonias); BWV 787–801</p> <p>E — French Suites; BWV 812–817</p> <p>F — English Suites; BWV 806–811</p> <p>G — Partitas; BWV 825–830</p> | <p>H — Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I; BWV 846–869</p> <p>I — Well-Tempered Clavier, Book II; BWV 870–893</p> <p>J — Toccatas; BWV 910–916</p> <p>K — Concerto Transcriptions (Vivaldi, Marcello, et al); BWV 972–987</p> <p>L — Miscellaneous Keyboard Works; Any authentic solo keyboard work by Johann Sebastian Bach not specifically included in Categories A–K.</p> |
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Division Requirements

Junior Division I (Ages 9 and Under)

- Eligible Categories: A, B, C, L
- Program Requirements:
- Perform **two** selections chosen from Categories A–C.

Max performance time: 5 minutes.
Cost: \$78

Junior Division II (Ages 10–13)

- Eligible Categories: C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L
- Program Requirements:
- A combination of **two** or more works from Categories C, D, and L; **or**
 - **Three** or more movements from Categories E, F, or G (opening movement is obligatory); **or**
 - A work from Categories H, I, J, or K (Well-Tempered Clavier selections must contain both the Prelude and Fugue).

Max performance time: 10 minutes.
Cost: \$89

Senior Division (Ages 14–18)

- Eligible Categories: D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L
- Program Requirements:
- A combination of **two** or more works from Categories D, and L; **or**
 - **Three** or more movements from Categories E, F, or G (opening movement is obligatory); **or**
 - A work from Categories H, I, J, or K (Well-Tempered Clavier selections must contain both the Prelude and Fugue).

Max performance time: 10 minutes.
Cost: \$89

To qualify within a given age category, participants must be the defined age as of October 24, 2026. There is no set limit regarding the number of students that a single teacher may submit. Likewise, teachers are in no way required to provide any volunteer assistance or pay any fee in order to submit students. Participants may also apply for participation in the 2026 Bach Festival International online competitive festival.

Applications

Applications are available online on the electronic [application form](#). In order to be considered for participation, applications must be filled out correctly and completely and electronic payment successfully made with a valid credit card. Incomplete applications may be assessed an additional \$10 fee. Please refer frequently to the SIPF website for updates, errata, adjudicator information, as well as results.

The application process begins in July and closes Saturday, October 10 at 11:59 PM Pacific Daylight Time (UTC/GMT-7) or earlier should the maximum participant number be met. Participants will be informed of their live performance time by noon on Tuesday, October 20.

The SIFP may extend the deadline at its sole discretion, and reserves the right to divide large groups into smaller ones based on age, works, or any other criteria to preserve the equitable nature of the festival.

Scores and Music Requirements

Participants must bring a score of all repertoire performed for use by the adjudicators.

Only professionally published printed editions are permitted. Photocopies, home-printed PDF files, digital tablet displays, and other reproduced copies will not be accepted, regardless of copyright status or method of acquisition.

To facilitate efficient adjudication and commentary, all scores must have measure numbers clearly indicated in the left margin at the beginning of each system throughout the performance edition. Participants and teachers are responsible for ensuring that measure numbers are legible and correspond accurately to the printed music.

Failure to provide an acceptable score may result in delays to adjudication and may affect eligibility for awards at the discretion of the competition committee.

Accompaniment

For the 2026 Southwest Bach Piano Competition edition, keyboard concerti participants are exempt from arranging a pianist or collaborator for any obligato accompaniment and may present an excerpts-only format, skipping orchestral tuttis. Accompaniment, however, is strongly encouraged.

Performance Procedures

The Southwest Bach Piano Competition is designed to simulate a professional performance environment while providing participants with a supportive educational experience. Competitors are asked to observe the following procedures:

- No formal check-in is required. Participants should simply arrive ten minutes before the commencement of their assigned performance block with sufficient time to be seated and prepared to perform.
- No warm-up opportunities are offered at Steinway Gallery of Arizona. All participants must refrain from the use of any showroom pianos outside the performance spaces.
- Bring your music score. Participants must have their score ready before the beginning of the session and should ensure that it complies with all competition score requirements (see above).
- Professional concert attire is expected. Participants should dress appropriately for a high-level recital, examination, or competition performance.
- All performances must be presented from memory.
- When called to perform, participants should approach the adjudicator and quietly present their score, already opened to the appropriate page and arranged in the order of performance.
- Participants may then approach the stage, acknowledge the audience, and bow in a manner consistent with standard classical concert practice.
- Performers may or may not execute repetitions at their discretion, but must adhere to the timing indicated on their application forms and not amend to include them when their timing estimates did not account for such repeats.

- Unless directly addressed by an adjudicator, participants and any guests or accompanying teachers and/or family members must refrain from engaging in conversation or commentary before or after the performance.
- Following the performance, the adjudicator may take a few additional moments to complete their written feedback. Participants are encouraged to listen attentively and respectfully.
- After the adjudicator has concluded all remarks, participants should quietly retrieve their score and return to their seat.
- Participants are expected to remain for the entirety of their assigned performance block. As a courtesy to fellow competitors and in keeping with the educational mission of the competition, participants should listen attentively to the performances and comments of others within their session.

The competition is intended not only as an opportunity for adjudication and awards, but also as a shared artistic and educational experience. Participants are encouraged to support one another and contribute to a respectful and inspiring atmosphere throughout the day.

Performance order is arranged by random selection. A printed program will be provided to attendees.

Results, Awards, and Masterclass Participation

All results will be announced at 5:45 pm on Saturday afternoon in the showroom of Steinway Gallery of Arizona.

Each participant will receive written commentary from the adjudicators. Medals and diplomas will be distributed during the awards presentation.

Gold Medalist Masterclass

All participating families are strongly encouraged to reserve Sunday, October 25, 2026, from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM for the Southwest Bach Gold Medalist Masterclass at the Steinway Gallery of Arizona.

Gold Medalists will be invited to participate as performers in this public educational masterclass and may be asked to perform all or a portion of their competition repertoire for further instruction and commentary.

Gold medalist recipients of cash prizes must be present and participate as active performers in the Masterclass in order to receive their cash awards. Gold Medalists who are unable to attend may retain their title, medal, diploma, and all associated honors, but shall forfeit any cash prize connected with their award.

Finality of Results

All results are final and unappealable.

Note that the SIPF advisory board reserves the right to divide exceptionally large groups of participants into smaller ones according to any method.

Each participant, his or her family members, friends, guests, teacher, and coach must accept the decisions of the adjudicators as final and unappealable. Attendees may not approach, engage with, question, debate, challenge, or otherwise discuss any adjudicative decision, ranking, award, or commentary with a juror, either before, during, or after the competition.

Participants, families, teachers, and guests must likewise treat all competition volunteers, staff members, and organizers with courtesy and respect and may not debate or challenge adjudicative decisions through competition personnel.

Failure to comply with these policies may result in immediate removal from the event and may result in permanent disqualification from future festivals, competitions, and programs administered by the Seattle International Piano Festival.

Contacting an adjudicator directly regarding competition results, rankings, awards, or commentary is strictly prohibited unless the adjudicator initiates such communication.

Application Checklist

Before filling out the application:

- Read all rules, guidelines, and agreement found on the following page thoroughly
- Understand and identify the appropriate age division (participants must be of given age on October 24, 2026) and performance category (see 'Repertoire Categories', above)
- Ensure that the participant's instructor (if applicable) is aware of one's intent to participate, and obtain his or her verbal or written consent
- Collect the information of the selection(s) one wishes to perform (with complete title, composer first and last name, movement title or tempo indication, and BWV or other catalogue numbers when available)
- Note the fee for your performance category and have a valid credit card ready
- Prepare your professionally published musical scores for compliance with measure numbers and bookmarks, if needed

After these steps have been secured, proceed to the [application form](#), found on the SIPF website.

AGREEMENT

Agreement

I, the PARTICIPANT or the PARENT or LEGAL GUARDIAN of the AGE 17 OR YOUNGER PARTICIPANT (hereinafter collectively referred to as "PARTICIPANT"), hereby comply fully and in good faith with all regulations, rules, and procedures as outlined in the 2026 Southwest Bach Piano Competition Rules, Guidelines, and Agreement. I understand that the Seattle International Piano Festival (hereinafter referred to as "SIPF") reserves the right to prohibit from future activities any PARTICIPANT and/or the teacher or coach of the PARTICIPANT for failure to adhere to said rules. The participant agrees to treat the organizers, volunteers, and adjudicators of the 2026 Southwest Bach Piano Competition with respect, and promises not to harass or malign any such individuals connected with or about the event's activities, including, but not limited to, its guest adjudicators. Furthermore, the participant hereby affirms that all information entered in conjunction with the participant's application is true and accurate. The participant also promises to adhere to the rules and guidelines set forth in the 2026 Southwest Bach Piano Competition Rules, Guidelines, and Agreement.

Release

The PARTICIPANT hereby waives, releases, and grants to and for the benefit of the Seattle International Piano Festival (hereinafter referred to as "SIPF") and/or its assignees any and all rights the participant may have to any recordings, videography, and/or photographs made by or for the SIPF of any performance or event organized or sponsored by it. The participant understands and agrees that by virtue of this waiver, release, and grant of rights, the SIPF shall have the right to make full and unrestricted use of such recordings, videography, and/or photographs, including without limitation in advertisements, commercial ventures, promotions, and for the sale or lease thereof, without any fee or other compensation owed to the participant.

Waiver

The PARTICIPANT, fully and in good faith intending to be bound thereby, does hereby promise not to initiate any claim, lawsuit, or other legal action pertaining to any action or omission by the SIPF relating directly or indirectly to the Southwest Bach Piano Competition for which application is herewith being made. This promise is made as a condition of the application, and in consideration for the SIPF's processing and evaluation of the application. This promise constitutes an acceptance and agreement by the participant that, for example, decisions by competition judges are final and unappealable, and the physical spaces of the competition and festival venues are reasonably safe and appropriate for their intended purposes. (However, this promise is not in any respect limited to the above two examples.) The participant intends that this promise be fully binding upon the participant, as well as upon the participant's heirs, successors, and assigns. This promise applies to the application process, the competition, and all events under the purview of the 2026 Southwest Bach Piano Competition and its associated activities and events.

Sworn Statement

The PARTICIPANT hereby certifies that all selections performed in connection with the 2026 Southwest Bach Piano Competition shall be performed entirely from memory, without the use of musical scores, notes, or auxiliary musical notation of any kind, unless an exemption as outlined in the 2026 Southwest Bach Piano Competition Rules, Guidelines, and Agreement specifically permits otherwise. The participant agrees to treat the organizers, volunteers, and adjudicators of the 2026 Southwest Bach Piano Competition with respect, and promises not to harass or malign any such individuals connected with or about the event's activities. Furthermore, the participant hereby affirms that all information entered in conjunction with the participant's application is true and accurate. The participant also promises to adhere to the rules and guidelines set forth in the 2026 Southwest Bach Piano Competition Rules, Guidelines, and Agreement.

Furthermore, the Participant agrees to the following:

- 1) This Agreement supersedes any prior written or oral Agreement, contains the entire Agreement, and there are no other promises or conditions in any other Agreement whether oral or written;
- 2) This Agreement may be modified or amended by the SIPF;
- 3) In the event that the SIPF requires the services of an attorney in connection with enforcement of this Agreement, or in the event that litigation is commenced, the prevailing party shall be entitled to reasonable attorney's fees;
- 4) If any provisions of this Agreement are held to be invalid or unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall continue to be valid and enforceable. If a court finds that any provision of this Agreement is invalid or unenforceable, but that by limiting such provision it would become valid and enforceable, then such provision shall be deemed to be written, construed, and enforced as so limited;
- 5) Failure of the SIPF to enforce any provision of this Agreement shall not be construed as a waiver or limitation of the SIPF's rights to subsequently enforce this Agreement;
- 6) This Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the state of Arizona and venue shall lie in Maricopa County; and
- 7) This Agreement may be executed in any number of counterparts, all of which shall be deemed to be an original and constitute a single Agreement. An electronic transmission bearing any person's acceptance of the terms and conditions shall have the same force and effect as the original of this Agreement bearing such person's signature.

By clicking the "I agree to the terms and conditions below" selection on the electronic application for the 2026 Southwest Bach Piano Competition, the participant fully affirms that the above statements in this agreement are true, and legally binding upon the participant.