

School of Music faculty showcase new piano
at Homecoming Concert

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BRANDON – When a trio of talented pianists perform at the *pro series* Homecoming Concert on Thursday, Oct. 13, they’ll be joined in the spotlight by the Brandon University (BU) School of Music’s newest star.

Megumi Masaki, Alexander Tselyakov and Everett Hopfner will share their talent as the School of Music’s new Steinway Model D piano makes its concert debut at the Lorne Watson Recital Hall, beginning at 7:30 p.m. The new nine-foot concert grand piano, made possible by the generosity of a wonderful community member, replaces the venerable Steinway that has wowed performers and audiences alike on the Lorne Watson stage since the mid-1980s.

School of Music Professors Masaki and Tselyakov were joined by Hopfner, who is the Director of the Eckhardt-Gramatté Conservatory of Music, and BU Piano Technician Mark Cramer on a recent trip to New York to hand select the new piano from the Steinway factory.

The group toured the factory, from the lumberyard to the show room, before sitting down with five identical new Steinways and carefully tested each one, trying each key to hear the piano’s voice, and then playing to get a feel for the instrument. They finally settled on one that will be perfect for the Lorne Watson and the Westman audiences.

“Obviously the most discerning concert-artist would be thrilled to own any one of these instruments, sight-unseen. However, being made of wood and still crafted largely by hand, every Steinway takes on its own unique musical personality during the yearlong process of seasoning and construction,” said Cramer, who draws raves for his work from visiting artists, who have loved to visit Brandon and perform on the previous piano over the years. “I think our traditional concert-going audience will notice immediately that this is a much more powerful instrument. Power isn’t always about volume, however our new Steinway projects even the softest passages with more presence and clarity, and avid listeners will be able to appreciate the artistry and subtlety of a fine performance, with a much wider range of musical expression.”

Masaki believes the new piano will stoke the imagination and creativity of students and artists.

“A concert grand piano is a core part of our School of Music. It is a world of colours that creates growth and experiential possibilities to launch students to perform professionally, lean in to listen and collaborate with one another,” Masaki said. “Now we have a gorgeous instrument that puts our concert hall, our university, on par with top performance spaces in the world. Although we are three completely different styles of pianists, when we played the five majestic Steinway concert grand pianos, standing side-by-side, one shone above the others and we are thrilled and honoured to bring it home.”

Hopfner said that the Conservatory is booming this fall with many students eager to return to their lessons or take up an instrument after two years heavily affected by the pandemic. He said that over decades of service the new Steinway will resonate with countless musicians and music lovers.

“We found a beauty. It’s a fabulous instrument, very exciting to play, with such a glorious sound,” Hopfner said. “These pianos in our building become part of our community for our local musicians, for our audiences, and for the visiting musicians that perform here. It’s an investment in the future of music in Brandon. There’s such a rich tradition of piano instruction in the School of Music and Conservatory, and it's thrilling to think of the opportunities this instrument will give to our students.”

Masaki, who was recently invested into the Order of Manitoba and is returning from Japan shortly before the concert, Tselyakov and Hopfner will each perform solo selections at the concert, and they will share the keyboard for duet ant trio performances.

“Our previous Steinway concert grand piano was the centrepiece for many transcendent concerts at Brandon University and a significant attraction for the world-class pianists who have graced the Lorne Watson Recital Hall with their performances. That tradition will continue to grow with the addition of this magnificent instrument,” Tselyakov said. “We have planned a dynamic and eclectic program that will allow us to truly showcase the subtleties and versatility of our new piano. I believe the audience will be delighted to experience the same feelings that we had when we chose this piano, transferred to our very own stage.”

Brandon University Dean of Music Greg Gatien is excited to share the talents of the community and the sound of the new piano with the alumni and community members in attendance.

“We have such brilliant faculty, and to listen to them perform on this fantastic new instrument is going to be a unique and magical experience,” Gatien said. “Homecoming is about welcoming people back and I can’t think of a better way to welcome back our students, faculty and alumni to in-person music than with this remarkable concert.”

Tickets for adults are $20 and available at the door. There is no charge for Conservatory or School of Music students.

The School of Music gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Manitoba Arts Council.

Please note that seating in the Lorne Watson Recital Hall is limited and that programs are subject to change. For an up-to-date listing of pro series and student performances, please visit [Events.BrandonU.ca/Events/Category/Music](https://events.brandonu.ca/events/category/music/).

Please contact the School of Music at Music@BrandonU.ca with any accessibility considerations.

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