

FOREFRONT

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ROLAND RENEWS MUSIC ED AID THROUGH LANG LANG FOUNDATION



International pianist sensation Lang Lang performing with 100 young musicians at a 101 Pianists concert in New York.

IN 2008 INTERNATIONAL CELEBRITY pianist Lang Lang launched the Lang Lang International Music Foundation in response to the impact of budget cuts on school music education. “Our goal is to inspire and educate as many kids as possible,” said Lang Lang International Music Foundation CEO Lukas Barwinski. “Lang Lang wants every child to have access to music experiences that ignite something wonderful inside of them. Our hope is that the Foundation will capture music’s potential to provide inspiration to kids around the world in a meaningful way.”

Lang Lang’s celebrity within his native China is popularly credited with inspiring millions of Chinese children to take up the piano, and his Foundation is having an impact on children and com-

munities worldwide. Roland Corporation is a longtime supporter of the Foundation’s mission and activities.

Starting in the fall of 2013, the organization set out to create free group piano lesson programs in public schools throughout the United States. Thanks to successful fundraising and a partnership with Roland Corporation U.S., which donated two piano labs, the first Keys of Inspiration programs were launched in Boston, Massachusetts at the award-winning Boston Arts Academy and Orchard Gardens K-8 School. The schools were chosen, in large part, because of their rich history in developing students’ music appreciation. In 2015 the program will expand into additional U.S. schools.

In 2009, the Foundation unveiled another groundbreaking concept in its “101 Pianists” events, which pair up 100 young pianists with Lang Lang himself in various cities around the world for an inspirational experience that culminates in a masterclass and concert for an audience comprising educators, parents, and community members. Last fall, the program returned to the U.S. and featured Lang Lang plus 100 young student pianists performing on 50 Roland HP-504 Digital Pianos. Students ranging in age from 7 to 17 were selected from more than 200 applicants throughout the northeast and were initially paired with a partner to practice four-hand arrangements of two popular classical pieces. After months of individual practice and guidance from their private teachers, the 50 duos came together to rehearse and perform at the Tilles Performing Arts Center on the campus of Long Island University Post in New York.

Since its inception the Foundation has staged similar events in Paris, Berlin, London, Hong Kong, Rome, Chicago, New York, and Washington DC, thrilling more than 100,000 audience members and providing a once-in-a-lifetime inspiration to more than 1,200 young musicians. Another 101 Pianists concert will be held at Sonoma State University in California.

“Playing piano used to be something kids did by themselves or in one-on-one lessons with a piano teacher drilling scales over and over,” said Barwinski. “The Foundation is working to bring a collaborative, social aspect into piano playing because more children are encouraged to play when they see their peers doing it. Our programs let them get a glimpse of what it’s like to perform on a stage.”