Dr. Jonathan Tsay Appointed Assistant Professor of Piano
To Begin Fall 2020

Pianist Jonathan Tsay, who has served as visiting assistant professor since fall 2019, will become assistant professor of piano at the University of Memphis Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music beginning in the fall semester of 2020.

Tsay described his experience at the School this year as having been met with warmth from both faculty and staff and said that he is excited for the upcoming fall semester to begin. “I am very excited to be joining such a wonderful group of faculty and students,” Tsay said. “Memphis is a city with incredible history. With the Scheidt Family Music Center opening soon and the wonderful, diverse personalities I see every day, I am thrilled to be here during this exciting time.”

As a soloist, collaborative pianist, chamber musician, producer and arts administrator, Tsay has a distinguished career in the musical arts. In a 2019 solo tour in Taiwan, he taught masterclasses at the Nation Taiwan University of Arts, Soochow University, National Sun Yet-Sen University and Kaohsiung Normal University. Tsay has had many other solo engagements, including performances for the Cliburn, Music at the Southminster in Ottawa, Blanco Performing Arts and Fine Arts Chamber Players.

Tsay is a professional collaborator, having performed with some of the world’s premier musicians, including Chee-Yun, David Cooper (Principal Horn, Chicago Symphony), Jing Wang (Concertmaster, Hong Kong Philharmonic), dramatic soprano Alessandra Marc, Chloe Trevor (“musical ambassador to Generation Z”), the Cezanne Quartet and Nathan Olson (Concertmaster, Dallas Symphony Orchestra). Tsay has also served as principal keyboard of the Las Colinas Symphony and the Dallas Chamber Symphony.
Tsay is also the Artistic Director of Ensemble75, a project that consists of a group of young professional musicians founded in 2010 that allows emerging classical musicians to collaborate, hone and share their skills. “The project taught me so much about what it takes to put classical music theories together,” Tsay said. His work with Ensemble75 inspired him to create a podcast in which he hosts interviews with classical musicians. The latest episode of “Between the Barlines” features the UofM Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) chapter.

Though Tsay is new to music education, he has developed a love for sharing his knowledge with students about classical music and piano. “I want to make sure that whenever the students finish the time we have together… they have not only the skill set to play the pieces that they have worked on, but the underlying principles that they can apply to pieces that they work on after they’re gone.”

“Jonathan Tsay is a dedicated colleague, innovative artist and consummate teacher,” said Dr. Artina McCain, chair of the piano search committee. “He has extensive experience as a collaborator and chamber musician having worked as artistic director for Ensemble75 and Artist/Presenter for Cliburn in the Classroom. We are excited he is joining our Memphis community!”

Tsay’s recordings can be found in Brahms - A Listener’s Guide: Unlocking the Masters Series, as well as in Chloe Trevor’s album Immortal. He released a solo CD in 2009 titled Portfolio, and a collaborative album in 2017 titled Harmonic Allusions, which was named a “Top 5 Classical Album” by TheaterJones.

In summer, Tsay works as head of piano for the Chloe Trevor Music Academy, a summer music intensive that draws over 100 students from over 20 countries annually. He has served on the screening jury for the Dallas International Piano Competition and as adjudicator for numerous competitions, including the Texas Music Teachers Association Solo Competition and Austin Youth Music Ambassadors.

“It is a tremendous privilege to welcome Dr. Jonathan Tsay to the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music,” said Dr. Kevin Sanders, director of the School of Music. “He is a performer of
superlative skill and excels in mentoring highly talented young musicians. Jonathan’s dedication to his craft and his generous collaborative spirit will serve as an inspiration to our students.”

Tsay was the only one in his family to pursue a professional music career after learning the piano as a child along with his two older sisters. To him, music is an abstract form of art that when executed properly can open a window to fantastic new thoughts and emotions. “That feeling of connection is one of those things that I feel that is strongest whenever music is done at its best, Tsay said. “I always try to ensure that students are able to make that connection.”