Music department acquires new Steinway pianos

Amber Frias, Staff Writer | Posted: Monday, November 24, 2014 2:46 pm

Cal Poly Pomona is on its way to becoming an All-Steinway campus.

CPP has purchased 21 new Steinway and Sons pianos this year and plans to purchase three more. Steinway and Sons is an American and German manufacturer of handmade pianos.

The department was able to purchase the pianos directly from Steinway and Sons through the university’s Steinway Initiative. University donors have contributed to the fundraising effort.

“These gifts came from students, faculty and staff, community supporters and friends of Cal Poly Pomona,” said Nadia Shpachenko-Gottesman, associate professor of music at CPP.

Shpachenko-Gottesman leads the Piano Performance program in the department and teaches Studio Piano, Piano Seminar, Piano Ensemble, Piano Accompaniment and many other piano classes at CPP. She is very excited about the new project.

The music department plans to have a piano in every rehearsal room, teaching studio and practice room. A piano will also be set up at the Kellogg House Pomona.

Turning the university into an All-Steinway campus is an all university initiative.

The pianos that were purchased were models B and D of Steinway Grands, Steinway upright and Boston upright pianos. Boston pianos are also made by Steinway and Sons. The pianos that the department formerly used were traded in to the company.

To be able to purchase the remaining three pianos the department needs for the distinction, they will need to raise $270,000. The department plans to raise the funds through events and donor participation.

Their first event was last week. As means of fundraising, the department held a celebration on Sunday along with a recital for world-renowned pianist Tai-Cheng Chen. Chen has given numerous international performances, including venues such as Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Carnegie Recital Hall and the Grosser Musikverein Saal.
Shpachenko-Gottesman claims that the university has provided much support for the purchase of the pianos and the fundraising.

“We have the support of the dean, provost and president on this initiative,” said Shpachenko-Gottesman. “Mrs. [Betty] Ortiz has been a tremendous support in making Cal Poly Pomona an All-Steinway School.”

By becoming an All-Steinway campus, CPP will become part of an elite group in which fewer than 160 universities and schools of music worldwide belong. The music department will provide students with a premiere education with the finest musical equipment, attract elite musicians and educators, inspire future generations in the pursuit of an education in music and enrich the cultural community of CPP and its surroundings.

“There are going to be no limitations when practicing and performing in terms of the instrument itself, which is going to allow the students to completely immerse themselves in the various emotions and characters within the music,” said piano performance alumnus Michael Jung.

Jung remains involved in the music department at CPP.

“I still have a lot of friends in the music department,” said Jung. “Also, I come often to practice and I try to attend various concerts.”

Jung was greatly involved in the Steinway Initiative being that he was the “poster child” of the campaign. He performed in a benefit concert for the fundraising effort.

“[Playing on Steinway pianos] is certainly something I would have liked to have while I attended Cal Poly,” said Jung. “I performed on the brand new Steinway concert grand piano this past Thursday, and it was an absolutely amazing experience.”

Jung claims Steinway pianos bring out different emotions and feelings in the music. DeVante Carpenter, a music student and a student ambassador for the Steinway Initiative, agrees.

“It feels like heaven: how the keys feel, how the tone sounds,” said Carpenter. “It just makes everything you play sound that much better.”

The excitement towards the new initiative runs across the music department.

“Everyone is really excited,” said Carpenter. “I haven’t been able to find a practice room since then [the delivery of the pianos]. People are really excited to see our school moving forward.”

Since the arrival of the pianos, the music department has caught the attention of music professionals who have come in to be a part of the new initiative.
“It is certainly going to attract more musicians and help the department grow,” said Jung.