

4th Ponce Project International Piano Competition 2026

Música Clásica Latinoamericana

Ponce Project Music Foundation (PPMF) invites pianists of all nationalities to participate in its 4th Ponce Project International Piano Competition 2026.

The Competition aims at establishing the world's premier piano competition featuring exclusively the Mexican and Latinoamerican repertoire. Its mission is to provide an opportunity to pianists, especially young artists, to learn, perform and love this extraordinary body of music.

In fostering a supportive and inspiring competitive environment that elevates both performers and music to the highest artistic level, the Competition seeks to spotlight Mexican and Latinamerican piano music, ensuring it is recognized and celebrated worldwide.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Pianists can compete in either the LIVE or VIRTUAL modality, each with its own winners and prizes.
- Each modality, LIVE & VIRTUAL, include four Jóvenes Artistas Divisions organized by age from 6 to 18 years, plus one División Libre with an age limit of 35.
- The Concierto Competition, with an age limit of 35 is a new division offered in the LIVE modality only. Besides the cash prize it offers an orchestra performance in Mexico.
- The LIVE Competition will take place on Saturday, August 15, 2026, in Houston, Texas, at Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts (HSPVA), starting at 9:00 a.m.
- The VIRTUAL Competition requires a video submission by August 1, 2026.
- Previous First Prize winners may compete again only with new repertoire and may not repeat previously performed works.
- Competition Chairs: Rodolfo Morales & Omar Herrera Arizmendi
- Questions: contacto@theponceproject.org

JUDGES 2026

- Claudia Corona
- Rodrigo González Barragán
- Robert Aust
- Ilonka Rus
- Antonio Manzo D'nes
- Edgar Herrera Arizmendi
- Xuefei Liu

REQUIRED REPERTOIRE

Complete list by divisions and music scores available at ThePonceProject.org

- Participants LIVE & VIRTUAL in Jóvenes Artistas Division 1 (up to age 8) perform only one work by any composer selected from the options provided.
- Participants LIVE & VIRTUAL in Jóvenes Artistas Divisions 2 (ages 9-11), 3 (ages 12-14), 4 (ages 15-18), and Division Libre (up to age 35), must perform two works:
 - One by Manuel M. Ponce, and
 - One by another composer, selected from the options provided.
- Participants of the Concierto Competition, LIVE only (up to age 35), must perform one of the following works by Manuel M. Ponce
 - Concierto para piano No. 1
 - Balada mexicana para piano & orquesta

* The Concierto Competition is presented using an orchestral reduction performed on a second piano. For participants residing outside Houston, an accompanist can be provided for the day of the competition at no additional cost. To request an accompanist and coordinate rehearsals, please write to contacto@theponceproject.org.

*Participants in Jóvenes Artistas Division 1 will perform their entire piece without interruptions. In all other divisions, judges may ask to stop or skip to a different section to stay on schedule. The allotted time and schedule will depend on the number of participants and will be communicated a week before the contest.

AGE DIVISIONS & CASH PRIZES (USD)

Age as of August 15, 2026

- Jóvenes Artistas Division 1: up to age 8
1st \$100 | 2nd \$75 | 3rd \$50
- Jóvenes Artistas Division 2: ages 9–11
1st \$200 | 2nd \$100 | 3rd \$75
- Jóvenes Artistas Division 3: ages 12–14
1st \$300 | 2nd \$150 | 3rd \$100
- Jóvenes Artistas Division 4: ages 15–18
1st \$400 | 2nd \$200 | 3rd \$100
- Division Libre: up to age 35
1st \$1,500 | 2nd \$750 | 3rd \$300
- Concierto Competition: up to age 35
1st \$1,500 | 2nd \$750 | 3rd \$300

*Participants may choose to compete in a division higher than their age category.

*PPMF may request proof of age if needed.

*Prize payments will be issued between Aug 24 and Oct 31, 2026. Recipients are responsible for providing an electronic payment method, as PPMF does not issue checks. If a winner is invited to perform at a PPMF event, payment will be issued upon completion of the performance; otherwise, the prize payment may be canceled.

ADDITIONAL PRIZES

- Selected winners from the Jóvenes Artistas Divisions and Division Libre will be invited to perform with professional musicians at one or more events of the Ponce Project Music Foundation's annual concert series, *Latinoamérica Viva! 2026*, in Houston and/or Mexico City.

*All travel expenses to Houston or Mexico City are responsibility of the participant. In case of participation in a ticketed event, the winner will receive two complementary tickets if a minor (up to age 18), and one if over age 18.

- The First Prize Winner of the Concierto Competition will be invited to perform with the Orquesta Sinfónica de la Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas (OSUAT) during its 2026–27 season, conducted by Mtra. Irydia Inés Rodríguez Pedraza.

*Prize includes three orchestra rehearsals, one or two performances as a soloist with the orchestra, hotel in Tampico, and round-trip flight for one person from Houston. If the winner travels from a different city the prize only covers the equivalent cost of the trip from Houston. All other expenses are responsibility of the participant.

APPLICATION FEES (USD)

Forms and payments at ThePonceProject.org

- Jóvenes Artistas Divisions 1, 2, 3, 4: \$75
- Libre Division: \$90
- Concierto Competition: \$90
- Libre Division + Concierto Division: \$150
*applies only if participating in both divisions

*If the application fee presents a financial hardship, a partial or full waiver may be requested by emailing contacto@theponceproject.org

*Ponce Project Music Foundation is a nonprofit organization; a 100% of the income generated by entree fees are used for administrative and production costs.

APPLICATION DEADLINES

Forms and payments at ThePonceProject.org

- January 15 to March 31: 20% discount period
- April 1 to May 31: 10% discount period
- August 1: application deadline

*VIRTUAL applicants may apply early to receive discounts and submit their videos to contacto@theponceproject.org by application deadline.

*LIVE applicants residing outside Houston are responsible for their own travel expenses. International applicants are responsible for securing any required visas; support letters may be provided upon request.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- A complete repertoire list by division, with downloadable PDFs, is available at ThePonceProject.org. The repertoire is the same for both LIVE & VIRTUAL modalities.
- Music must be performed from memory.
- There is one round only.
- Performances will be judged according to the official editions provided and to the highest artistic and technical standards.
- Younger participants may use pedal extenders.
- The jury can declare no winners or ties, in which case cash prizes will be divided equally.
- Jury decisions are irrevocable.
- All winners LIVE & VIRTUAL are announced via livestream on the day of the LIVE competition (15 Aug, 2026) following jury deliberations.
- Formal attire is required for all competitors LIVE & VIRTUAL. Jeans, T-shirts, sneakers, and casual/athletic attire are not permitted. Long hair must be styled so as not to obscure the face. Suits and long dresses are recommended.

VIDEO SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

(VIRTUAL competitors only)

- Video must be uploaded to YouTube as unlisted.
- Submit video link to contacto@theponceproject.org by August 1, 2026.
- Performers may not speak to the camera.
- Written video description must include full name, age, division, country, titles of works, composers, school and teacher.
- Piano must be in tune.
- Piano can be an acoustic or hybrid, upright or grand of any size.
- Electronic keyboards of any kind are not accepted.
- Video must be recorded in high definition; minimum 720p.
- Audio must be clear with minimal background noise; external microphones recommended.
- Lighting must be adequate.
- The entire keyboard, hands, face, and upper body must always be visible.
- Recording must be one continuous, unedited take.
- Recording must be made within 60 days of submission.

Questions: contacto@theponceproject.org