



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Flower Piano

Twelve Days, Twelve Pianos, One Garden & You

Now in its third year, Sunset Piano's public piano project at San Francisco Botanical Garden is a highly anticipated annual event

July 13 - 24, 2017

SAN FRANCISCO – This summer, music, community, and nature join forces once again in the heart of the city during the twelve-day, outdoor extravaganza known as *Flower Piano*. Now in its third year, *Flower Piano* once again transforms San Francisco Botanical Garden (SFBG) into the city's own alfresco concert hall, and everyone is invited to play and listen. From July 13 – 24 only, visitors will find twelve pianos tucked among the many flower-filled gardens within SFBG's 55 acres and are encouraged to play what they like, from chopsticks to Tchaikovsky. On weekend days, event partner Sunset Piano has invited professional pianists and a whole host of other musicians to perform throughout the Garden as well, and the public is welcome to pack a picnic and enjoy the shows.

One of those performers is *Flower Piano* veteran Holly Mead, who, like many of the other pianists, will be bringing an ensemble of musicians along with her this year. "As a composer, much of what I write is inspired by natural beauty," says Mead. "Having the opportunity to play my nature-inspired compositions on an acoustic piano in a beautiful botanical garden is a dream come true. This will be my third year performing at *Flower Piano*, and in honor of *Flower Piano 2017*, I will premiere an original cycle of songs for piano, cello, and bass. This year, the addition of two string players feels akin to adding fresh spice to a dish."

Mead is among the dozens of performers who take over all twelve pianos on the two Saturdays, July 15 and July 22, from 12-2pm. Many visitors make this a musical treasure hunt, strolling from one performer to the next to take each in. In addition to the wide ranging diversity of repertoire, from bossa nova to Brahms, visitors can expect poetry and music collaborations in the new Beatnik's Corner this year; eight-hand performances on dual pianos; and even a live painting performance in concert with well-known pianist Allison Lovejoy. Performances are also scheduled in various locations throughout the day on the Sundays, July 16 and July 23.

Other highlights this year include the first appearance of the San Francisco Symphony's Chorus Group and alumni from their Youth Orchestra, as well as youth performers from Oakland School for the Arts and the Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts. The Community Music Center hosts a Summer of Love sing-along of hits from 1967, and families can enjoy special family friendly theater activities by The Rabbit Hole Theatre Company and special music making materials in the Children's Garden.

New this year, NightGarden Piano is a special evening event on Saturday, July 22 from 7:30-10:30pm. Beautifully lit pathways guide visitors to pianos aglow with performances by Sunset Piano all-stars and open pianos to play. Food and drink available for purchase. Tickets are \$40 each. All proceeds help to fund *Flower Piano*.

There will also be a ticketed screening of the documentary film *Twelve Pianos*, followed by a Q&A with Dean Mermell and Mauro Fortissimo, co-directors of Sunset Piano, on Saturday, July 15 at 7pm with proceeds benefiting *Flower Piano* as well.

A full schedule of performances and events with links for ticket purchase to some events is available at sfbotanicalgarden.org/flowerpiano.

But, of course, at the heart of Flower Piano, are the hundreds of Bay Area residents who show up, often with sheet music in hand, and just play for the sheer delight of it.

"Flower Piano provides something that you can't find in San Francisco so much any more," says Mermell. "It's so accessible and welcoming to everyone and blurs the line between audience and performer in such a simple and profound way, giving us all a chance to celebrate the unexpected brilliance of strangers and neighbors. I hear from so many people about how much they look forward to it every year. It's truly a San Francisco institution now."

All twelve pianos will be available for the public to play between 9am and 6pm each day, except during performances. *Flower Piano* is free following regular admission to the Garden (free for members and San Francisco residents with proof of residency).

"Each year, we hear from visitors how meaningful the experience of *Flower Piano* is," says Sue Ann Schiff, Executive Director, San Francisco Botanical Garden Society. "The sense of community it engenders within our oasis of beauty and diversity is an antidote to the stresses and discord of our times. Over 40,000 people were delighted and moved by *Flower Piano* last year. We hope they and all of their friends and family will join us again this year to celebrate the transformative power of music in nature."

TIP: Garden members enjoy an exclusive members-only *Flower Piano* evening on Thursday, July 20 from 6-8pm and express lines for entry on weekends. Become a member online at SFBotanicalGarden.org or at the Garden on your next visit.

Flower Piano is funded privately and sponsored by Kaiser Permanente, the John & Marcia Goldman Foundation, O'Melveny & Myers LLP, and a generous anonymous donor. Additional support is provided by Garden donors, members, foundations, and through the money raised by NightGarden Piano and the film screening.

Media sponsors include FunCheap SF, KDFC Classical Radio, KQED Public Broadcasting, Red Tricycle, San Francisco Chronicle, and San Francisco Magazine.

SUNSET PIANO BACKGROUND

Mauro ffortissimo and Dean Mermell together launched Sunset Piano in 2013 when ffortissimo covertly rolled an old grand piano onto the bluffs over Half Moon Bay. As word spread through social media, the crowds grew way beyond the occasional dog walker. Thousands came to hear the music before the county ordered the piano removed. Since then, Sunset Piano has expanded this impromptu musical and social experiment, temporarily placing pianos in a wide variety of unexpected natural and urban settings around the Bay Area every year, from the top of Montara Mountain to Market Street. *Flower Piano*, a collaboration with San Francisco Botanical Garden, is Sunset Piano's largest and most ambitious undertaking. Mermell's documentary about Sunset Piano is entitled *Twelve Pianos*. For more information visit TwelvePianos.com.

San Francisco Botanical Garden, located in Golden Gate Park with entrances on 9th Ave at Lincoln Way and on Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive off the Music Concourse, is open 365 days a year at 7:30 AM. Last entry changes with the seasons as follows: 6 PM 2nd Sunday in March – September; 5 PM October – early November; 4 PM 1st Sunday in November – January; 5 PM February – early March. Admission for San Francisco residents (with proof of residence, e.g., CA ID with SF address, or photo ID and utility bill) is FREE. Admission for non-residents is \$8 general, \$6 youth 12-17 and seniors; \$2 children 5-11; children 4 and under FREE. Families of 2 adults and one or more child pay just \$17. Admission is FREE to all visitors from 7:30 to 9 AM. SFBG members receive free admission and discounts on fee-based programs. The public should call (415) 661-1316 or visit www.sfbotanicalgarden.org for more information.

About San Francisco Botanical Garden

San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum is a living museum within Golden Gate Park, offering 55 acres of beautiful gardens displaying over 8,500 different kinds of plants from around the world. Highlights include the California Native Garden and the century old Redwood Grove; the unique Mesoamerican, Andean, and Southeast Asian Cloud Forest collections; and

the magnificent Magnolia collection, the most significant for conservation purposes outside China.

Established in 1940 originally as Strybing Arboretum, San Francisco Botanical Garden is a partnership of the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department and the non-profit San Francisco Botanical Garden Society.

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