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### **Spivey Hall Finds a Mate for “Clara”**

#### ***“Robert” Arrives as Newest Addition to Superior Pianos Available to Spivey Artists***

**MORROW GA (January 3, 2018)** – At the end of 2016, Clayton State University’s [Spivey Hall](#) began the search for a “soul mate” for its prized Hamburg Steinway Model D-274 concert grand piano, and launched a fund-raising campaign to find and acquire the perfect match for “Clara.” That search ended in the last week of 2017 with the delivery to Spivey Hall of “Robert,” another Steinway & Sons D-274 concert grand piano made in Hamburg, Germany and until recently residing in London among the collection of instruments maintained by Steinway & Sons London and loaned to venues and concert pianists. The acquisition of Robert marks the successful conclusion of the Spivey Hall Friends “Clara Seeks Robert” Piano Campaign, chaired by Spivey Hall Friends Council Advisor, Dr. Michael Koch.

“I am immensely grateful to all who have made this possible,” said Sam Dixon, executive and artistic director of Spivey Hall. “With the deeply appreciated generosity of the Spivey Hall Friends, the leadership of Dr. Michael Koch, assistance from distinguished pianists who have performed at Spivey Hall and have assessed pianos on both sides of the Atlantic for us, and the special cooperation of Steinway & Sons in London, we are delighted to declare a successful conclusion to our search for ‘Robert.’ “

Spivey Hall acquired Clara in 2012, adding her to “Walter” and “Emilie,” the Hall’s pair of New York-built Steinway concert grands named after local real estate developer couple and Spivey Hall founders Emilie and Walter Spivey. Clara’s name was chosen both for the instrument’s clarity of sound and in honor of distinguished 19th-century pianist Clara Wieck Schumann, wife of composer Robert Schumann.

Clara made an immediate impression on renowned guest pianists performing in the annual Spivey Series. “This is...one of the best Hamburg Steinways I’ve ever played,” said acclaimed Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes, in an interview with *ArtsAtlanta* reviewer Mark Gresham. “It’s just heaven to play - the action, the evenness, the color.” Andsnes was the first artist to play Clara in a scheduled

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performance, and immediately fell in love with the instrument. "With this piano in this hall, I almost cannot imagine a better situation for a pianist playing a recital."

But Clara was all by herself, and no one piano can fully satisfy the varying needs and preferences of the world's finest pianists. Every musician has a special connection with their instrument, but while most play their own on stage, with pianists this is rarely the case. Transporting their instruments from venue to venue is costly and just impractical, so pianists must rely on the concert hall to provide an instrument of the highest quality that allows for a brilliant performance. And just as every artist is different, so are pianos, which is why superlative venues like Spivey Hall provide several choices of instruments to visiting artists.

In selecting a second concert grand to complement Clara, Spivey Hall sought a piano of equally outstanding quality, but with differences that artistically were significant and valuable to a range of pianists with diverse techniques and preferences, and who perform a wide range of repertoire. Robert was identified as a potential partner for Clara early on in the search process by Ulrich Gerhartz, director of concerts and artists services at Steinway & Sons London. Gerhartz is Clara's technician and "godfather," someone who knew her personality and Spivey Hall's acoustics extremely well. Robert had been in use in London for about a year for performances by professional concert pianists there. It often takes a year of being played before a new piano's character emerges; during his break-in phase in the U.K, Robert was carefully maintained by Steinway.

Robert has met with favor by several pianists who have appeared at Spivey Hall, including Stephen Hough, who with Koch and Gerhartz, evaluated several pianos for Spivey Hall. In the judgement of people who have heard them both, Clara and Robert are both superior pianos with beautiful tone. Robert has a somewhat lighter touch and an especially attractive treble range (where many melodies written for piano are supposed to 'sing'). He is by nature a bit brighter than Clara, who by comparison possesses a somewhat richer core of sound.

Robert will be customized to Spivey Hall's superb and extremely sensitive acoustics when, in April, Gerhartz makes final adjustments to his hammers through a painstaking process called voicing. However, as Andsnes's response to the arrival of Clara demonstrated, a new piano is an enticing option to pianists. Russian-American pianist [Kirill Gerstein](#) is the first solo pianist scheduled at Spivey after Robert's delivery, and he will be the first artist to be offered his choice of Clara or Robert when he makes his Atlanta recital debut at Spivey Hall on [Sunday, January 21, 2018 at 3:00 p.m.](#) This may or may not be Robert's Spivey Hall recital debut; as always, what matters most is that whichever piano is chosen will best serve the needs of any particular pianist and the music the pianist will perform.

"We are pleased that Clara now has her soul-mate," said Dixon. "Robert is a piano of equally outstanding quality with a contrasting personality and complementary character. As an attractive pair, Clara and Robert will ensure that the future of beautiful piano music at Spivey Hall is a rosy one for pianists and audiences alike."

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## About Spivey Hall

Now celebrating its 27<sup>th</sup> season, [Spivey Hall](#) is the South's most acoustically superior recital hall, presenting the best in classical, jazz and world music. Located on the picturesque campus of Clayton State University in Morrow, Georgia, just fifteen miles southeast of Atlanta, the Hall has been praised by artists, patrons and journalists alike.

An intimate venue with just 392 seats, Spivey Hall promotes for the concert-goer a personal connection with the artist both during and after the performance. Spivey's extraordinary acoustics and reputation for distinguished programming attract outstanding international musicians who regularly perform at the nation's major concert venues such as Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall. For more information, visit [spiveyhall.org](http://spiveyhall.org).

Clayton State University's Spivey Hall gratefully acknowledges the support of [The Walter and Emilie Spivey Foundation](#) and the [Spivey Hall Friends](#).



Alan Morrison holds the McGehee Family Organist Residency at Spivey Hall.



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## About Clayton State University

A unit of the University System of Georgia, Clayton State University is an outstanding comprehensive metropolitan university located 15 miles southeast of downtown Atlanta. For more information, visit [clayton.edu](http://clayton.edu).

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