Stanford



Stephen Sano

Professor Harold C. Schmidt Director in Choral Studies and Professor (Teaching) of Music

Curriculum Vitae available Online

Bio

BIO

Stephen M. Sano, Professor at Stanford University's Department of Music, assumed the position of Director of Choral Studies in 1993. At Stanford, Dr. Sano directs the Stanford Chamber Chorale and Symphonic Chorus, where he has been described in the press as "a gifted conductor," and his work as "Wonderful music making! ... evident in an intense engagement with his charges: the musicians responded to this attention with wide-eyed musical acuity." Other reviews have lauded, "It is difficult to believe that any choral group anywhere is capable of performing better than the Stanford chorus under the direction of Stephen M. Sano."

Dr. Sano has appeared as guest conductor with many of the world's leading choral organizations, including in collaborative concerts with the Choirs of Trinity College and St John's College, Cambridge; the Joyful Company of Singers (London); the Choir of Royal Holloway, University of London; the Kammerchor der Universität der Künste Berlin; and the Kammerchor der Universität Wien (Vienna). He often appears as guest conductor of the Peninsula Symphony Orchestra in its collaborative concerts with the Stanford Symphonic Chorus, and has served on the conducting faculty of the Wilkes University Encore Music Festival of Pennsylvania. He has studied at the Tanglewood Music Center and is in frequent demand as a master class teacher, conductor, and adjudicator in choral music. To date, he has taught master classes and conducted festival, honor, municipal, and collegiate choirs from over twenty states, as well as from England, Austria, Germany, Canada, Australia, and Japan.

On Stanford's campus, Dr. Sano's accomplishments as a leader and educator have been recognized through his appointments as the inaugural chair holder of the Professor Harold C. Schmidt Directorship of Choral Studies and as the Rachford and Carlota A. Harris University Fellow in Undergraduate Education at Stanford University. He was also the recipient of the 2005 Dean's Award for Distinguished Teaching. Dr. Sano's recordings with the Stanford Chamber Chorale have appeared three times on the Grammy Awards preliminary ballot in the category "Best Choral Album." His choral recordings can be heard on the ARSIS Audio, Pictoria, and Daniel Ho Creations labels.

Outside of the choral world, Dr. Sano is a scholar and performer of kī hōʻalu (Hawaiian slack key guitar), and an avid supporter of North American taiko (Japanese American drumming). As a slack key artist, his recordings have been nominated as finalists for the prestigious Nā Hōkū Hanohano Award and the Hawaiian Music Award. His recording, "Songs from the Taro Patch," was on the preliminary ballot for the 2008 Grammy Award. Dr. Sano's slack key recordings can be heard on the Daniel Ho Creations and Ward Records labels.

A native of Palo Alto, California, Dr. Sano holds Master's and Doctoral degrees in both orchestral and choral conducting from Stanford, and a Bachelor's degree in piano performance and theory from San José State University. He has studied at Tanglewood Music Center and with Mitchell Sardou Klein, William Ramsey, Aiko Onishi, Alfred Kanwischer, Fernando Valenti, and Ozzie Kotani.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Professor-Teaching, Music

ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

- Faculty Director, Asian American Studies, (2021- present)
- Professor, Stanford University, (2010- present)
- Chair, Department of Music, Stanford University, (2006-2016)
- Associate Professor, Stanford University, (1999-2010)
- Visiting Researcher, University of Hawaii at Manoa, (1999-2008)
- Assistant Professor, Stanford University, (1996-1999)
- Affiliated Faculty, Asian American Studies, Stanford University, (1995- present)
- Affiliated Faculty, Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity, Stanford University, (1995- present)
- Affiliated Faculty, Center for East Asian Studies,Stanford University, (1995- present)
- Conducting Faculty, Wilkes University Encore Music Festival, (1995-1995)
- Lecturer, Stanford University, (1993-1996)
- Teaching Fellow and Graduate Special Instructor, Stanford University, (1989-1993)
- University Fellowship, Stanford University, (1989-1993)
- Instructor, Foothill College, (1987-1989)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Grammy Award first-round ballot nomination (Duruflé: Requiem. Daniel Ho Creations), National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) (2020)
- Grammy Award first-round ballot nomination (Haydn: Nelsonmesse. Daniel Ho Creations), National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) (2015)
- Grammy Award first-round ballot nomination (Illumine: Christmas at Stanford. Daniel Ho Creations, National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) (2012)
- Grammy Award first-round ballot nomination (Songs from the Taro Patch. Daniel Ho Creations), National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) (2007)
- Dean's Award for Distinguished Teaching, School of Humanities and Sciences, Stanford University (2005)
- Hawaiian Music Award finalist, Daniel Ho Creations (2004)
- Hawaiian Music Award finalist (Omoide: Remembrance, w/Ozzie Kotani. Daniel Ho Creations), Music Foundation of Hawai'i (2003)
- Na Hoku Hanohano Award fianlist, Daniel Ho Creations (2002)
- Faculty Award, Stanford Asian American Awards, Stanford University (2001)
- Nā Hōkū Hanohano finalist (A Taro Patch Christmas, w/Ozzie Kotani. Daniel Ho Creations), Hawai'i Academy of Recording Arts (2001)
- Finalist, American Symphony Orchestra League Orchestra Management Fellowship Program. (1987)
- 2nd Place, Music Teachers' Association of California Solo Piano Competition. (1981)
- 3rd Place, American Matthay Association Clara Wells International Piano Competition (1981)
- 1st Place, San Jose State University Chairman's Challenge Recital (1980)
- 1st Place, Music Teachers' Association of California Evelyn Heath Piano Scholarship (1977)

- 1st Place, San Jose State University John B. Gustavson Piano Scholarship (1976)
- 1st Place, Music Teachers' Association of California Piano Scholarship (1976)

BOARDS, ADVISORY COMMITTEES, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Member, Search Committee: Stanford Live McMurtry Family Director, Stanford University (2023 - present)
- Member, Search Committee: Stanford Jazz Workshop Executive Director, Stanford Jazz Workshop (2023 - present)
- Member, Board of Directors, Stanford Jazz Workshop (2021 - present)
- Member, Advisory Council, Taiko Community Alliance (2019 - present)
- Member, Provost's Budget Group, Stanford University (2017 - present)
- Member, Stanford Live Advisory Council, Stanford University (2014 - present)
- Member, College Music Society
- Member, Japanese American National Museum
- Member, Japanese American Museum of San Jose
- Member, Conductors' Guild
- Member, Association for Asian American Studies
- Member, Association of California Symphony Orchestras
- Member, National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences
- Member, American Choral Directors' Association
- Member, American Friends of Sarum College
- Chair, Search Committee: Director of Keyboard Studies, Stanford University (2022 - present)
- Member, Search Committee: Asian American Activities Center Director, Stanford University (2022 - 2022)
- Guest Conductor, Madrigalchor Kiel (2019 - 2019)
- Guest Conductor, The Queen's College Choir, Oxford University (2019 - 2019)
- Guest Conductor, The Queen's College Choir, Oxford University (2018 - 2018)
- Member, Board on Judicial Affairs, Stanford University (2016 - 2017)
- Guest Conductor, St John's College Choir, Cambridge University (2016 - 2016)
- Board Member, Taiko Community Alliance (2013 - 2015)
- Arts Initiative Planning Committee, Stanford University (2011 - 2016)
- Faculty Lecturer, Kansai Stanford Club, Kyoto, Japan (2011 - 2011)
- Guest Conductor, Elizabeth University (2011 - 2011)
- Guest Conductor, Kobe Joshi Daigaku, Kobe, Japan (2011 - 2011)
- Conductor, Schola Cantorum Summer Sing, Mountain View, California (2010 - 2010)
- Guest Conductor, George Mason University University Singers (2010 - 2010)
- Guest Conductor, Chatham Baroque & National Gallery of Art Chamber Players, Washington, DC (2010 - 2010)
- Conductor, Schola Cantorum Summer Sing, Mountain View, California (2009 - 2009)
- Alumni Association, Chamber Chorale appearance at Alumni Association reception in Seattle, Stanford University (2007 - 2007)
- Guest Conductor, Romsey Abbey, Hampshire, England (2007 - 2007)
- Guest Conductor, Choir of Trinity College (2007 - 2007)
- Guest Conductor, Exultate Singers. Bristol, Gloucestershire, England (2007 - 2007)
- Chair, Music Department, Stanford University (2006 - 2016)

- Member, Committee on Undergraduate Admissions, Financial Aid (C-UAFA), Stanford University (2006 - 2009)
- Member, Search Committee: Lecturer in Voice, Stanford University (2006 - 2006)
- Panel member, Office of Judicial Affairs, Stanford University (2005 - 2007)
- Faculty Lecturer, Stanford University (2005 - 2005)
- Guest Conductor, Kammerchor der Universität der Künste Berlin (2005 - 2005)
- Guest Conductor, Kammerchor der Universität Wien (2005 - 2005)
- Member, University Search Committee, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions and Financial Aid, Stanford University (2005 - 2005)
- Conductor, Oakland Symphony Chorus Sing-In, Oakland, California (2004 - 2004)
- Chair, Search Committee: Director of Orchestral Studies, Stanford University (2003 - 2003)
- Conductor, Wells Cathedral School Chapel Choir (2003 - 2003)
- Guest Conductor, Wells Cathedral Brass and Percussion Ensemble, Somerset, England (2003 - 2003)
- Prep Conductor, Stanford University (2002 - 2002)
- Conductor, Oakland Symphony Chorus Sing-In, Oakland, California (2001 - 2001)
- Conductor, Schola Cantorum Summer Sing, Mountain View, California (2001 - 2001)
- Conductor, The Joyful Company of Singers, Stanford Chamber Chorale (2001 - 2001)
- Invited Sideman (piano), Honolulu Symphony Orchestra (2001 - 2001)
- Chair, Stanford University (2000 - 2002)
- Conductor, Schola Cantorum Summer Sing, Mountain View, California (2000 - 2000)
- Conductor, Inauguration of President John Hennessy, Stanford University (2000 - 2000)
- Guest Conductor, Wells Cathedral Brass and Percussion Ensemble, Somerset, England (2000 - 2000)
- Visiting Artist Host, Stanford University (2000 - 2000)
- Visiting Artist Host, Stanford University (2000 - 2000)
- Office of Undergraduate Admissions, Annual Faculty Lecturer for Academic Expo program, Stanford University (1999 - 2010)
- Member, Committee on Public Events, Stanford University (1999 - 2002)
- Visiting Artist Host, Stanford University (1999 - 1999)
- Chorusmaster, Stanford University (1998 - 1998)
- Conductor, Schola Cantorum Summer Sing, Mountain View, California (1998 - 1998)
- Faculty Lecturer, Stanford Alumni Association, Stanford University (1997 - present)
- Chair, Music Department, Stanford University (1997 - 2000)
- Member, University Search Committee, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions and Financial Aid, Stanford University (1997 - 1997)
- Member, Academic Council Teaching Faculty, Stanford University (1996 - present)
- Member, Search Committee, Orchestral Studies, Stanford University (1996 - 1997)
- Conductor, Schola Cantorum Summer Sing, Mountain View, California (1996 - 1996)
- Guest Conductor, Highlands Chamber Orchestra. San Bruno, California (1996 - 1996)
- Faculty Marshall, Commencement Exercises, Stanford University (1995 - present)
- Member, Curriculum Committee: Arts. Education and Culture, Stanford University (1995 - 1996)
- Music Director and Conductor, Wilkes University Encore Chorus. Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (1995 - 1995)
- Music Director and Conductor, Wilkes University Encore Early Music Ensemble. Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (1995 - 1995)
- Music Director and Conductor, Wilkes University Encore Chamber Singers. Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (1995 - 1995)

- Visiting Artist Host, Stanford University (1995 - 1995)
- Faculty Advisor, Stanford University (1994 - present)
- Freshman Auditions Evaluator, Stanford University (1994 - present)
- Graduate Admissions Examination Evaluator, Stanford University (1994 - present)
- Member, Ear-Training Concil, Music Department, Stanford University (1994 - 1996)
- Conductor, Schola Cantorum Summer Sing, Mountain View, California (1994 - 1994)
- Conductor, Baccalaureate Service and Commencement Exercises, Stanford University (1994 - 1994)
- Director of Choral Studies, Stanford University (1993 - present)
- Pianist, Lou Henry Hoover House (President's residence) for official events, Stanford University (1993 - 2000)
- Conductor, Baccalaureate Service and Commencement Exercises, Stanford University (1993 - 1993)
- Conductor, Stanford University Messiah Sing, Stanford University (1992 - present)
- Member, Performance Committee, Stanford University (1992 - present)
- Music Director, Stanford University (1992 - 1993)
- President, Stanford Music Students' Association, Stanford University (1992 - 1993)
- Director of Music and Conductor, Stanford University (1992 - 1992)
- Music Director and Conductor, Stanford University (1992 - 1992)
- Guest Conductor, Peninsula Symphony Orchestra. San Mateo, California (1991 - present)
- Assistant Director, Stanford University (1991 - 1992)
- Conductor, Stanford Symphony Orchestra, Stanford Viennese Ball, Stanford University (1991 - 1992)
- Member, Music Guild Committee, Music Department, Stanford University (1991 - 1992)
- Conductor, Stanford University (1991 - 1991)
- Music Director and Conductor, Stanford University (1990 - 2001)
- Director of Music and Conductor, Stanford University (1990 - 1990)
- Music Director and Conductor, Stanford University (1990 - 1990)
- Assistant Director, Stanford University (1989 - 1993)
- Staff Accompanist, Stanford University (1989 - 1993)
- Harpsichordist, International Chamber Orchestral of Rome (1989 - 1989)
- Executive Director, Peninsula Symphony Orchestra, San Mateo, California (1987 - 1989)
- Staff Accompanist, Peninsula Symphony Orchestra, San Mateo, California (1987 - 1989)
- Staff Accompanist, Vocal, Instrumental, and Chamber Music Coach (1987 - 1989)
- Director of Purchasing and Division Manager, Sierra Designs, Berkeley, California (1981 - 1986)
- Director, First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto Chamber Choir, Palo Alto, California (1978 - 1981)
- Director of Music and Conductor, Theatreworks, Palo Alto, California (1977 - 1982)
- Staff Accompanist, Vocal Coach, Theatreworks, Palo Alto, California (1977 - 1982)
- Freelance Collaborative Pianist, San Francisco Bay Area (1972 - 1993)
- Director's Assistant, West Bay Opera, Palo Alto, California (1972 - 1975)
- Staff Accompanist, West Bay Opera, Palo Alto, California (1972 - 1975)

PROGRAM AFFILIATIONS

- Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity (CCSRE)

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- D.M.A., Stanford University , Choral and Orchestral Conducting/Historical Performance Practice (1994)
- A.M., Stanford University , Choral and Orchestral Conducting (1991)
- B.A., San Jose State University , Piano Performance/Music Theory (1981)

Teaching

COURSES

2026-27

- Advanced Choral Conducting: MUSIC 231 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Behind the Big Drums: Exploring Taiko: ASNAMST 31N, MUSIC 31N (Spr)
- Chamber Chorale: MUSIC 165 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Chamber Chorale: MUSIC 165Z (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Stanford Taiko: MUSIC 169 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Stanford Taiko: MUSIC 169Z (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Symphonic Chorus: MUSIC 162 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Symphonic Chorus: MUSIC 162Z (Aut, Win, Spr)

2025-26

- Advanced Choral Conducting: MUSIC 231 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Behind the Big Drums: Exploring Taiko: ASNAMST 31N, MUSIC 31N (Spr)
- Chamber Chorale: MUSIC 165 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Chamber Chorale: MUSIC 165Z (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Stanford Taiko: MUSIC 169 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Stanford Taiko: MUSIC 169Z (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Symphonic Chorus: MUSIC 162 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Symphonic Chorus: MUSIC 162Z (Aut, Win, Spr)

2024-25

- Advanced Choral Conducting: MUSIC 231 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Behind the Big Drums: Exploring Taiko: ASNAMST 31N, MUSIC 31N (Spr)
- Chamber Chorale: MUSIC 165 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Chamber Chorale: MUSIC 165Z (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Stanford Taiko: MUSIC 169 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Stanford Taiko: MUSIC 169Z (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Symphonic Chorus: MUSIC 162 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Symphonic Chorus: MUSIC 162Z (Aut, Win, Spr)

2023-24

- Advanced Choral Conducting: MUSIC 231 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Behind the Big Drums: Exploring Taiko: ASNAMST 31N, MUSIC 31N (Spr)
- Chamber Chorale: MUSIC 165 (Aut, Win, Spr)

- Chamber Chorale: MUSIC 165Z (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Stanford Taiko: MUSIC 169 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Stanford Taiko: MUSIC 169Z (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Symphonic Chorus: MUSIC 162 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Symphonic Chorus: MUSIC 162Z (Aut, Win, Spr)

STANFORD ADVISEES

Orals Chair

Toby Bell

Publications

PUBLICATIONS

- **'Ukulele at School, Vol. 1 (Student Edition)**
  Sano, S., Ho, D.
  Daniel Ho Creations.2014
- **'Ukulele at School, Vol. 2 (Teacher Edition)**
  Sano, S., Ho, D.
  Daniel Ho Creations.2014
- **'Ukulele at School, Vol. 2 (Student Edition)**
  Sano, S., Ho, D.
  Daniel Ho Creations.2014
- **'Ukulele at School, Vol. 1 (Teacher Edition)**
  Sano, S., Ho, D.
  Daniel Ho Creations.2014
- **Secrets of Contemporary Slack Key Guitar**
  Sano, S. M., Ho, D.
  MMI Alfred Publishing Co. Inc.2001