

For immediate release  
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THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary to Mrs. Ford

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Van Cliburn has been selected by the President and Mrs. Ford to entertain at the white tie dinner honoring the Emperor and Empress of Japan Thursday, Oct. 2.

Van Cliburn has performed for the past five Presidents and at State dinners for Presidents Nixon and Johnson. He performed at Inauguration ceremonies for President Johnson in 1965 and President Nixon in 1973.

He typically makes about 60 appearances in the United States and Canada each season, and his 1975-76 tour is currently sold out. He visited Japan this summer and returned since to perform at four of the major US festivals: the Robin Hood Dell in Philadelphia; the Beethoven Marathon at the Hollywood Bowl; The Meadow Brook Festival in Michigan; and the Cleveland Orchestra's Blossom Festival.

According to the Celebrity Register, Van Cliburn has one of the largest followings of any concert pianist on the circuit and is one of the biggest sellers in the field of classical recordings.

Although he had won many musical accolades and prizes prior to 1958, it was his triumph that year at the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow that gained Van Cliburn his reputation across the country. The Texan, then 24, was honored upon his return with the first ticker-tape parade New York had ever given to a classical musician. He went on to be the first foreigner to ever play in the Kremlin's Palace of Congresses.

Van Cliburn's first public appearance was at the age of four at Shreveport's Dodd College. Born in Shreveport to Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Levan Cliburn, he had learned to play the piano at age three. For 14 years, he studied only under his mother, a talented pianist (Rildia Bee O'Bryan Cliburn) who had been a student of Arthur Friedheim, a pupil of Franz Liszt.

The family moved to Kilgore, Tex. when Cliburn was six. When he was 12, he won the state-wide young pianists' competition and made his orchestral debut with the Houston Symphony. He made his Carnegie Hall debut as winner of the National Music Festival Award the following year.

He won a number of significant awards in the following years, most notably the Edgar M. Leventritt Award in 1954 at age 20. The competition is held annually, but no prizes awarded unless the judges feel there is a worthy recipient. Van Cliburn was the first winner in five years.

He established his international reputation in Moscow four years later and has been performing for audiences around the world since.

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