**What is a Piano Monster Festival?**

It's not about spooky piano music. 'Monster' here simply means BIG! A Piano Monster Festival is a large, multiple piano event—an ensemble of pianos rather than band or orchestral instruments. Combining more than two pianos in a concert was a concept of the Industrial Revolutionists who believed that bigger was better and more was merrier. Thus, the "monster concert" was born.

In Vienna in 1830, Beethoven's pupil Carl Czerny transcribed Rossini's *Semiramide* Overture for a charity monster concert that aided the victims of the Danube floods. Johann Strauss Jr. conducted 18 monster concerts in Boston and New York during his American tour in 1872.

Louis Moreau Gottschalk, an American pianist born in New Orleans, was a vigorous promoter of Monster concerts. In 1860 his musical extravaganzas in Havana and Rio de Janeiro “excited the musical populace to frenzied demonstrations.” In the early 1970’s, the late Eugene List, a concert pianist, revived the idea of piano monster concerts. Today, many universities and teacher groups throughout the US sponsor piano monster concerts around the country.

The PSU Piano Monster Festivals evolved from PSU's biennial, one-day piano monster concerts, which were designed as recruiting events for the PSU department of music. These biennial concerts brought hundreds of student pianists from around New England every other year to participate in the event. As many as 15 pianos were on stage accommodating up to 45 pianists per piece. A conductor was employed to help the ensemble stay together.

The summer Piano Monster Festivals are four-day, residential “camps” held on campus every June. Groups of a dozen students or more are organized by skill level and utilize 8-10 pianos per piece under the direction of a conductor. Since piano students typically study and perform alone, the premise of both the Junior (grades 5-8) and Senior (grades 8-12) Piano Monster Festivals (camps) is to offer piano students the opportunity to participate in a collaborative experience. The Festivals are primarily based on an ensemble concept with all activities designed to provide for maximum interactive participation and to help young pianists better appreciate the power of music through a unique concept of experiences.

See festival brochures to gain more insight and information on last year's music and camp activities.