Professor of Music and Artist-in-Residence William DeVan is sharing the piano classics with children throughout the country.

Through his “Classics for Children” concerts offered at Steinway piano showrooms nationwide, DeVan is bringing to life classics that children are not being exposed to by other means.

“Children today can’t recognize the basic musical classics like Für Elise, Liebestraum, and Moonlight Sonata,” said DeVan, who was recently named one of only 12 Steinway presenters in the world.

So DeVan and Steinway Pianos have set out to do something about it. The Birmingham-Southern piano professor is making a hit with his children’s concerts from coast to coast. In some cities, such as Atlanta for example, as many as 200 show up for his 45-minute interactive recital, usually held on Saturday or Sunday when families can come together.

DeVan said he understands that children can’t sit still for very long and he welcomes their movement during the concerts. Usually, he says, the children gather around the piano as he plays. “The boys like to crowd behind the piano and look inside while the girls like to watch the keys,” he noted. During the concerts, DeVan talks to the children and explains the pieces he is playing and gives them information about the piano.

He began the “Classics for Children” concept three years ago with two annual concerts in Birmingham. At one of this year’s concerts, a Steinway representative in attendance took notice and now DeVan has performed more than 25 concerts nationwide.

DeVan says his mission is to revitalize classical concerts while playing the classics on a great instrument. He says that such concerts are “dying on the vine” because they’ve not kept up with what audiences today are looking for.

“People today can listen to a CD or watch and listen to a DVD … so what is there to make them come to a concert?” he explained. “It is the human connection with the performer. A CD or DVD usually renders perfection, but audiences are still interested in the human aspect of a performance … the connection with art.”

He said he’s trying to change the static nature of most concerts.

“If the audience wants to clap after a movement, then that’s great. I don’t want them to feel uncomfortable expressing themselves.”

DeVan seems to have found his niche—teaching children to appreciate the classics. He’s even learning Spanish so that he can perform concerts in Mexico and for Hispanic children in America.