



Dallas attorney Gerrit Pronske is an amateur pianist, who practices piano about 20 hours a week. Pronske, shown with his 9-foot Steinway concert grand piano, has performed at piano competitions in Germany, Texas, and California. Photo by Lujenna Shumaker.

## ♪♪♪ THE KEYS MASTER ♪♪♪

Seven years of piano lessons didn't inspire a then-15-year-old **Gerrit Pronske** to love the piano. It was Elton John. "My brother and I had to take piano lessons when I was 8 and I pretty much hated it," Pronske explains. "As I got older, stuff like Elton John was a lot more fun to play than what the piano teachers gave us."

Not long after, Pronske's interest in classical music was piqued (his favorite composers to play are Beethoven, Chopin, and Rachmaninoff). Soon he was practicing piano about eight hours a day. He continued to practice long hours in college, and then while attending Texas Tech University School of Law. Having graduated early from college, Pronske entered law school at 20 and hated it. Taking solace in playing the piano, he dropped out of law school and enrolled in a master's program in piano performance. "Then I realized that that wasn't a really smart thing to do," he laughs. "There's that problem with feeding yourself and paying bills." He later headed back to Texas Tech and finished his law degree.

A partner in Pronske & Patel, P.C. in Dallas, he focuses his practice on bankruptcy law, but still finds plenty of time to play the piano.

He practices on his 9-foot Steinway concert grand piano about 20 hours a week and for the last 10 years has studied with Krassimira Jordan, Artist in Residence and professor of piano at Baylor University School of Music, who Pronske calls a "gift."

In 2008, Pronske was able to perform the First Movement of the Mozart Piano Concerto No. 20 with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra after winning the concerto competition of the Piano Texas International Academy & Festival. Performing in front of people has been quite an accomplishment for Pronske, who says he did not perform for an audience in his 20s and 30s, although he was able to speak in front of hundred of lawyers with no problem. Determined to overcome his stage fright, he began competing in piano competitions and has not looked back.

"Playing piano is a real passion," Pronske says. "It's just something that has really driven me. I'm not sure what it is, but it's just something that I really love."

To see videos of Pronske's performances, visit [texasbar.com/tbj](http://texasbar.com/tbj) and click on "Table of Contents," then "Web Exclusives." — P.G.



## The Year of the Advocate

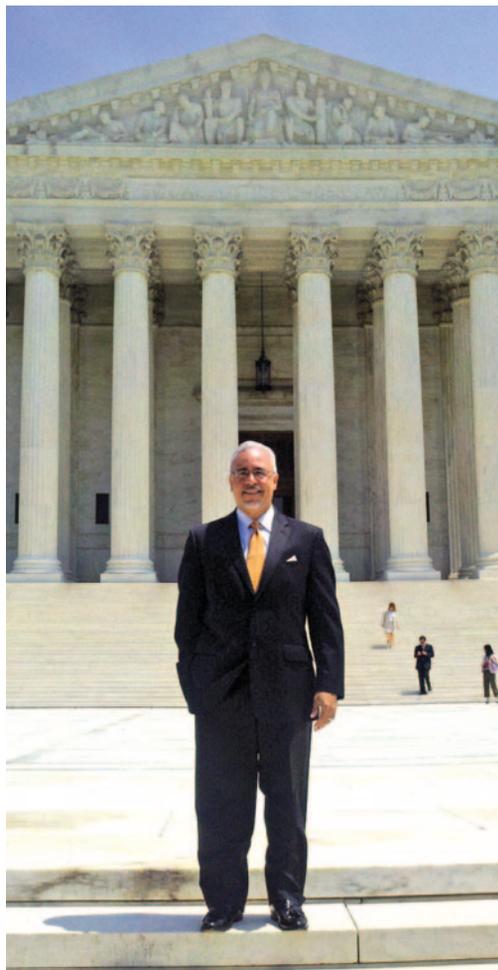
Houston attorney and Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA) president **Benny Agosto, Jr.** has declared 2011–2012 the “Year of the Advocate.”

“This year, we’re elevating our advocacy,” says Agosto. “We’re focusing on three areas: advocacy for the profession, advocacy for the community, and advocacy for children.” Agosto’s goals as HNBA president include improving CLE, involving more Hispanic attorneys in the judiciary, instituting a program to assist veterans, and founding the Feed the Children Initiative — a project that gives back to host cities of HNBA conventions and events. The initiative will donate at least \$10,000 to local charities that help foster education and community enrichment.

Agosto, a partner in Abraham, Watkins, Nichols, Sorrels, Agosto & Friend, was sworn in as HNBA president on Sept. 3, 2011. Since then, it has been a whirlwind year. Agosto has traveled all over the country, from Seattle to Miami and Boston to San Diego. He met with President Barack Obama at the White House prior to the State of the Union Address, attended a one-on-one reception with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, and spoke at the Harvard Latino Law, Policy and Business Conference.

“It’s been a great experience and opportunity. I’ve covered the entire country and expanded my wings to new heights,” Agosto says. “We’ve worked to create visibility for the organization and tackle the issues that affect Hispanic lawyers and our community.”

Agosto has another role aside from HNBA president and law firm partner — father of four. Together with his 10-year-old daughter, Victoria, he has written a book titled *Victoria Goes to Court*. Featuring colorful illustrations by Christina Escamilla, the book follows a fourth grader as she learns about the justice system. Agosto plans to give out the book for free during Law Day activities in an effort to raise awareness about the importance of educating children about our courts. — *E.C.*



Houston attorney and HNBA President Benny Agosto, Jr. in front of the U.S. Supreme Court.

## TEXAS PEOPLE



**Adriana Maddox**

*Benavides Maddox, P.C.,  
Laredo*

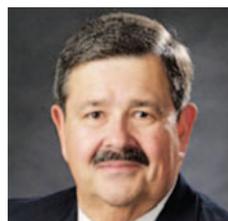
Appointed by Gov. Rick Perry to the Task Force to Reduce Child Abuse and Neglect and Improve Child Welfare for a term to expire at the pleasure of the governor.



**Yvette Ostolaza**

*Partner, Weil, Gotshal &  
Manges, L.L.P., Dallas*

Named a 2012 Most Powerful & Influential Woman by the Texas Diversity Council for her leadership excellence, community involvement, and professional accomplishments.



**Richard Gary Thomas**

*Partner in Thomas, Feldman &  
Wilshusen, L.L.P., Dallas*

Inducted into the American College of Construction Lawyers for his demonstrated skill, experience, and high standards of professional and ethical conduct.



**Judy Warne**

*Judge of the 257th District Court  
of Harris County, Houston*

Appointed to the Public Policy Committee of the Texas Council on Family Violence to provide subject matter expertise to the council.