

Twelve-year-old Carmel Valley composer/pianist to tickle the keys at solo performance

By Adam Harju
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Right now “Musician of the Year” Chase Morrin practices piano on his great grandmother’s Bradbury stand-up piano. His parents have promised him if he gets straight “As” all the way through Carmel Valley Middle School they’ll get him a grand piano. “We’re going to have to get a second mortgage on the house though,” said Chase’s mother Cindy Morrin, “because he is going to do it.”

Back when the 12-year-old was all of 9 he received a Yamaha keyboard for Christmas. “Right away he started playing songs on it,” said Cindy. “He would play them by ear.”

Not long after, Chase started begging his parents for piano lessons and they put him in classes with Carmel Valley’s Svetlana Pikous, a renowned Russian piano teacher.

After the lessons proved beneficial, Chase needed a piano. “I thought, ‘Oh great, how much is a real piano going to cost,’ and I was looking into renting and then my dad told me he had my grandma’s piano in the garage,” Cindy said.

Though Lilian German died a long time ago, her piano now lives in the living room of the Morrin’s home in Carmel Valley. “It sounds like a regular piano ... it’s old ... it’s more straightforward and ‘pricklyish’ [than a grand piano],” Chase said, who has played grand pianos before.

“She really loved music,” said Cindy of her grandmother Lilian.

And Chase really loves music too. Not only was he awarded “Musician of the Year” by the San Dieguito Boys and Girls Club, he is having his own concert at Greene Music on Nov. 4.

He also plays in his school’s jazz band and advanced orchestra as well as the Boys and Girls Club jazz and advanced rock bands. Chase says he likes the “oldish” and “newish” kind of rock and the jazz of Dave Brubeck and Billy Joel. “But I completely despise classical. Who wants to go to a classical concert ... it’s so boring,” Chase said.

As he sits at the piano he can drop into a litany of tunes that run the gamut from Nora Jones to Bossa Nova to “Linus and Lucy” by Vince Guaraldi. “Jazz and rock music you can enjoy,” Chase said as he plowed into one of his own compositions.

The 12-year-old has four original compositions under his belt. “I have two in the works,” Chase said.

The original compositions have names like “One Scoop” or “Embrate.” “He’s always



“Musician of the Year” Chase Morrin

making music,” said Cindy.

“Something will come into my head ... a certain tune ... and then I’ll figure out the basic notes and then make it into chords and then I’ll add some bass,” Chase said.

“We’ve been in the car before and he’ll say, ‘Mom we have to get home now,’” Cindy said about when Chase has a song in his head.

Chase says he usually gets the first part in his head and then has to develop it on the piano to figure out the main melody. “A composition can take months to days to hours. Sometimes I can’t figure out what goes right with a certain part,” Chase said.

His mother said that Pikous has suggested they find a composition teacher for Chase. He says that once he has the tune hashed out on the piano he’ll get a piece of paper and write out the notes and then enter them into his computer. Chase uses a computer program and a keyboard to compose music as well. When he received straight “As” last year in school his parents upgraded the original keyboard for him.

Last year Chase had a short-lived rock band called “Better Than You,” that dissolved after one gig at a Muirlands Middle School talent show. Infighting and egos led to the dissolution of the band, says Chase, but his mother said, “It was nice to see Chase being a leader for the first time.”

He says he is not totally obsessed with playing every minute. Chase also enjoys soccer, baseball and writing. He is in the middle of his second novel about a boy named Sholl, who lives in a land of dragons. “He does all this creative stuff and he reads a lot and I don’t know where he gets it,” said Cindy.

Cindy is a counselor at area community colleges and his dad Dave is a facilities manager for Starbuck’s Coffee. Chase has one brother, Cody, 6.

Cindy says Chase is a highly gifted, intense child. “His intensity level is great as long as it is focused on something like the piano. Overall he’s a good kid ... he’s very deep and I don’t think he understands that yet.”

Chase also plays chess, builds and launches model rockets and hopes to some day write stories for a living or be some sort of composer. “We feel fortunate [that he is gifted], but it can sometimes be a challenge,” Cindy said about keeping up with Chase.

To see Chase perform on Nov. 4 go to Greene Music 7480 Miramar Road at 6 p.m. He will play some jazz pieces, a little Billy Joel and five of his own compositions. There is no cost.