



Carmel Valley eighth grader is a breeze on the 'keys' — and he teaches them, too

Students to hold December 9 Recital

By Ian S. Port
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When the 13-year-old sets his fingers on the keys of a sparking new 8-foot grand, thunder strikes his family's living room. His left digits pedal on the bass, booming out a boogie woogie-like rhythm that underpins the melodic runs keeping his right hand flying up and down the keyboard. The piece, called Sleek Night, opens with two jazzy tolls, each followed by what seems like a breath — and then the song takes off at a supersonic pace as the boy's fingers dart up high and down low with the speed and surety of a maestro.

It was doubtless a similar impression, left on some unsuspecting listener, that got the 13-year-old, Carmel Valley 8th-grader Chase Morrin into the tangle of teaching and practicing engagements the young pianist now enjoys. He was experimenting on the piano one weekend afternoon, during a party for his younger brother's classmates and their parents, when the adults started to cluster around his bench to listen.

"Later that year a parent from Cody's class approached me and said, 'Will your son teach my daughter?' remembers Cindy, Chase's mother. "And she was serious, because she was persistent and she kept saying 'No I'm serious, I want to pay you.' So that's how it started."



Chase Morrin with his students: (back row l-r) Stanton Zhao, Chase Morrin, Cody Morrin; (front row, l-r) Erik Francis, Anika Hair, Jonathan Balsono

The idea of a 13-year-old with four serious years of piano experience teaching absolute beginners isn't as crazy as it might seem, according to Chase. He says he's actually a perfect fit for the greenest students, who relate better to the young and aren't ready for the price or commitment of a full-blown pro teacher.

"Adult teachers have been playing piano for a long time. They just know how to play piano, and I'm still learning piano, so I kind of know how I learned it and I can teach how I learned it," Chase says. "It's not as much money, obviously, and it's not as committed."

In a neighborhood of doting, ambitious parents like Carmel Valley, piano lessons are an oft-sought addition to the seemingly inevitable schedule of school and sports — and for many, the younger kids start learning, the better. For \$10 per half-hour lesson, Chase teaches 4-year-olds and other absolute beginners.

His low rates, flexible schedule and undeniable talent keeps the limited time he has for teaching — in between his own lessons, practice time, school, sports and other extracurricular activities — very full. Although he just started teaching in May, Chase says he only has room on his weekend mornings to teach perhaps one more student.

“You don’t have to advertise, because so many people want their kids in piano lessons,” says Cindy, who schedules Chase’s lessons.

Although their teacher may be unusually young, Chase’s students receive all the usual benefits of the music student: flash cards, homework, songs to learn and — for the first time — a recital, to be held at his home Dec. 9. The selections for performance will reflect the spirit of the season, since Chase loves Christmas music.

Performance, Chase says, is fundamental to the learning of an instrument, no matter what level the student.

“I’m having my recital for all my kids, because they have to perform sometime. You can play piano, but if you don’t perform it then no one knows you’re playing piano and there’s no point.”

Of course, Maestro Morrin’s resume includes numerous performances of his own, both solo and with his school’s jazz band. His first solo concert was a two-hour affair at Greene Music last year, and he plans another fundraising show there in the spring. He’s played for the Heritage Club, numerous public events in Solana Beach, and at his school’s talent show.

Chase says he doesn’t get nervous about performing anymore. For his students, however, it’s another story.

“Some of them don’t know what’s going to happen, so they don’t know they’re supposed to be nervous,” he says, with a knowing grin.