

13-YEAR-OLD AWARD-WINNING COMPOSER

By Larry Himmel
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When it comes to the piano, you might say that Chase Morrin is a late bloomer. He never played a note until age 9.



"My parents get me this little keyboard for Christmas, I think, and so I just started to play it. And then I was getting better, and then I asked them for a piano lesson... I begged them for piano lessons," Chase said.

"My piano teacher -- I got lucky -- she didn't only teach classical, she taught me jazz, which helped, so she taught me all about jazz too."

Soon, Chase was writing and performing his own jazz compositions.

"Jazz is like very emotional. It has a lot of feeling in it. It has good rhythms. It gets, like, in a groove," Chase said.

Last year, at age 12, Chase submitted one of his original compositions to the ASCAP Foundation young jazz composer contest.

"I submitted 'Free Fall', which my parents don't really like, but my piano teacher thought it was a good piece to submit," he said.

His teacher was right. Chase became the youngest winner in competition.

"I got a cash award and an invitation to New York at Lincoln Center," he said.

From the start, Chase's parents, who don't read music, thought he was good, but they didn't know how good.

"His first recital, he played 'Take Five' and there was someone in the audience who started crying, because I think he was so good at improvisation and I was like 'wow, maybe he is really talented,'" his mother said.

In the mercurial world of jazz music, Chase Morrin is already a major player.