

Music is more than kid's stuff to jazz phenom

Carmel Valley Leader

By Karen Billing

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While some kids' idea of making good music may still be limited to an afternoon session of "Guitar Hero," 14-year-old Chase Morrin is building a reputation as a master of the piano. Be it performing alone or in a group or composing his own tunes, this Canyon Crest Academy sophomore is making his own brand of noise.



Carmel Valley musician Chase Morrin will perform a show at the Carmel Valley Library on August 20.

With his trademark black hat on his head, he plays smooth and effortlessly on the piano, fingers flying and creating cool sounding riffs. When he's playing jazz, the rhythm appears to be infused through his body as he slightly rocks and sways, his unused foot near the pedals tapping the beat of an imaginary drum. It's clear when he's at the bench this is where he feels most at home, playing his original piece "Early Morning" without being distracted by his little brother wandering by.

Morrin said he thrives on music simply because it is universal, because even if two people are speaking a different language, music is something everyone understands. "There's something special about getting together with someone else and creating something that touches other people," Morrin said.

Morrin will perform a free concert at the Carmel Valley Library on Aug. 20 at 7 p.m., featuring his original compositions as well as some jazz standards like "Dat Dere" by Bobby Timmons, one of his favorites.

In addition to playing solo gigs, Morrin also plays in the Chase Morrin Trio with Brian Wright and Bob Daniels, two musicians who are slightly older than him. The pair started performing long before Morrin in the late 1960s, but when drummer Daniels heard Morrin play, he immediately sought him out to form a trio. They will perform their debut show on Aug. 17 at the South Park Bar and Grill downtown at 6 p.m.

Morrin also plays in the The Jazz Ensemble, a group of 19 talented young musicians who have played at the House of Blues. They will play a CD release concert on Aug. 18 at Dizzy's downtown at 7 p.m.

Oh yeah, Morrin will also be conducting and accompanying Act San Diego's performance of "High School Musical" starting on Aug. 22. And his schedule doesn't stop getting busy once school starts, with gigs lined up through March of next year.

Morrin began his career in music at the age of 9, when his parents gave him a little keyboard for Christmas. He played around on it and became hooked, begging his parents for piano lessons.

“It wasn’t my parents pushing me,” said Morrin.

“We just allow him to expand on his gift,” Cindy Morrin echoed.

His parents brought in his grandmother’s old piano to help his talent along. The wooden piano still sits in the family living room; although Morrin spends more time at the keys of the shiny black grand piano a few footsteps away.

After getting into the art of piano a bit, Morrin started working on creating his own music.

He has composed over 50 pieces and while he has a heart for jazz, he’s written a little bit of everything: Orchestral, string quartets, pop, rock, Latin and folk.

“It’s really cool to be a composer and be there watching and listening to it being played,” said Morrin.

He had the opportunity to hear his work performed not only by his high school wind ensemble but also the Grossmont College Big Band.

Last year his composing talents were awarded when he won the young jazz composer award from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers and was honored at Lincoln Center in New York City. Last year, he also tried his hand in composing for a musical, creating all the original music for Canyon Crest’s performance of “The Corpse Bride.” The experience, paired with watching several musical plays performed this summer, has influenced him to look more at composing for musicals.

This summer, Morrin was a student at the UC San Diego jazz camp on a full ride scholarship and a month long residential program for the California State Summer School for the Arts at Cal Arts. The summer school in Valencia was his first time away from home.

The trip was more than worth it, not only did he have the opportunity to study music composition and jazz piano with great instructors; he also received the Herb Alpert Scholarship for Emerging Young Artists that he will be able to use when he starts college in 2011.

For more on Morrin and information on upcoming shows, go to chasemorrin.com.