

Top kid composers orchestrate wins

By S. Derrickson Moore
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LAS CRUCES — Four Las Cruces kid composers will appear with two symphony orchestras over the next year and will soon have their very own professionally recorded CD.

Jaimi Donaldson, 11, Levi Doyle, 8, Andrew McLaughlin, 11, and Amalia Zeitlin, 12, won top honors in the 2008 Hey, Mozart! child composer competition, ranking in the top 16 in a hot competition that included 264 entries from throughout New Mexico. The finalists will have their melodies professionally arranged and recorded on a CD and performed by two leading symphony orchestras.

Among the state's youngest winners is Levi Doyle, a Hillrise second-grader, son of Pam and Clay Doyle of Las Cruces.

"He was inspired by other winners he knew from Las Cruces," said his mom, reporting that he composed his winning melody "Pharaoh's Destiny" on his violin.

"When I was just a little kid, I used to watch all these Egyptian movies. I used to hear the music in those movies. So I started putting a little piece together, and I knew right away that it would be about the pharaohs," said Levi, who is looking forward to his orchestra performances.

"I guess I might be a little nervous, but it will be fun," said Levi, whose other interests include writing, math, soccer and taking care of animals.

"I have been playing the violin since I was five years old. I love the different moods that music creates," Levi said, adding that his favorite kinds of music are "pharaoh music and jazz."

Jaimi Donaldson, a sixth-grader at Zia Middle School, is the daughter of Becky and Clynn Donaldson.

"My favorite subject is orchestra. I play the bass. I like playing and singing music and making music altogether. The reason I like making music so much is because when you play a piece in front of other people you can tell it just brings joy to their faces. I feel good making people smile with art of my own. I also like running and riding my

2008 Las Cruces

Hey, Mozart! winners:

- ▶ Jaimi Donaldson, 11
- ▶ Levi Doyle, 8
- ▶ Andrew McLaughlin, 11
- ▶ Amalia Zeitlin, 12

Honorable mentions:

- ▶ Autumn Chavez-Repp, 11, Las Cruces
- ▶ Phillip Miller, 12, Las Cruces
- ▶ Leonardo Escamilla III, 9, Anthony
- ▶ Ella Kirk, 8, of Silver City

bike and just hanging out with my friends," Jaimi said.

She's looking forward to performing her song, "Becoming Rat Food" with an orchestra.

"I'm a little nervous, but I can do it," she said.

Andrew Scott McLaughlin, son of Inez and Earl McLaughlin, is a sixth-grader at Vista Middle School whose melody is a tribute to a beloved grandparent, Paul McLaughlin.

"I composed 'Leaf on a Pond' in honor of my grandfather who recently passed away from cancer," reports Andrew.

"His grandfather told him he felt like 'a leaf on a pond, at God's mercy' when he was diagnosed with cancer. Andrew played the song for his grandfather before he died, and at his funeral. It was very sweet," said Inez McLaughlin.

Andrew said his favorite subjects include science, math, band and music technology.

"I love many things about music. First of all, there are so many ways to enjoy and create music. I enjoy composing my own music, especially songs that have a special meaning. I also enjoy learning to play the piano, trombone, and guitar. I also love listening to music written by great composers. Other than music, I enjoy building model planes and rockets, riding my bike, bowling, and playing with my sister and cousins," Andrew said.

It's a repeat win for "A Walk Through the Meadow" composer Amalia Zeitlin, daughter of Leora Zeitlin and Stuart Kelter of Las Cruces.

Artists of the Week



Andrew McLaughlin, 11



Amalia Zeitlin, 12



Jaimi Donaldson, 11



Levi Doyle, 8

Shown here are local winners of the statewide 2008 Las Cruces Hey, Mozart! child composer contest.

COURTESY PHOTOS

ONLINE EXTRA
www.lcsun-news.com

▶ For contest information: www.hey Mozart.org. To sample compositions of Hey, Mozart! child composer contest winners, including two 2007 Las Cruces Winners click on this story at www.lcsun-news.com/SunLife

"I'm so happy that I was one of the winners of Hey Mozart! Last year, I was glad to get an honorable mention, but being an actual winner is a whole different story. I go to Zia Middle School where I take orchestra with Mr. and Mrs. (Kathy and Ron) Smith. Orchestra is definitely my favorite subject because Mrs. Smith is a fabulous teacher, and I enjoy playing violin," said Amalia, who has lots of hobbies.

"In my free time, I like to dance,

sing, play violin, take pictures, and talk with friends. I love music because it's a way for me to express myself without having to put my feelings into words. Whenever I play or sing music, I feel free from all of my worries," she reports.

Music is in the family DNA. "Amalia's been very musical since she was an infant, when she would sing for us on the changing table. She comes from a long musical heritage. Her grandfather, Zvi Zeitlin, is a violinist and professor of music at Eastman School of Music and he's still active at 86, and her dad's family is also very musical," said Leora Zeitlin, a classical music host for KRWG-FM.

"Both Andrew and Amalia received honorable mentions last year. And Phillip Miller, 12, who was a winner last year, received an honorable mention this year," said Brookes McIntyre, an Albuquerque-based volunteer and member of the Hey, Mozart! program board of directors.

Also among the 18 young com-

posers receiving honorable mentions are Autumn Chavez-Repp, 11, of Las Cruces, Leonardo Escamilla III, 9, of Anthony and Ella Kirk, 8, of Silver City.

The 2008 finalists will perform their melodies at a free public concert at the National Hispanic Cultural Center on Sept. 12, and then members of the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra will play orchestrated versions under the direction of Alejandro Ruffy, artistic director and developer of the project. The melodies will be released on a 2008 CD available following the concert. Southern New Mexico finalists will also be featured at Las Cruces Symphony's annual Pops 4 Kids Concert in 2009.

Hey, Mozart! New Mexico, now in its third year, is a statewide program for kids 12 and under. For more information about the program and a sampling of tunes by 2007 winners, visit online at www.hey Mozartnm.org

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