

## ENTERTAINMENT

# Piano is kid's work for 10-year-old winner

By Angela Bianchi

Stewart Goodyear never knew his dad but he knows the kind of music his late father loved — it's the kind Stewart excels at.

The 10-year-old Thornhill pianist captivated audiences and won honors at this year's Kiwanis Musical Festival but says he is just doing what comes naturally.

His mother, Brenda, believes Stewart's musical life began in the womb.

"I was eight months pregnant when Stewart's dad fell ill and, to keep his spirits up, he'd listen to classical music." Her husband died before ever seeing his son.

"After Stewart was born, I'd put on his father's favorite music to remind me of him," his mother recalls, "and I swear Stewart would listen like he heard it before."

Before he could walk, Stewart would put recordings of Beethoven compositions on his dad's record player. At 3, he played nursery rhymes on a toy piano. Before learning his ABCs, he could play the recorder.

"He loved his musical toys. When he was 2, he'd say 'Mom, Stewart conductor' — and he'd twirl his pencil."

As a toddler too young to read music, Stewart taught himself to play the piano. "At 4½, I bought Stewart his first piano. He'd play by ear," his mother recalls.

At 5, he took up the recorder and at 6, the violin. He was 7 when he took his first piano lesson and learned to read music. He still plays all three instruments.

## 'Outstanding' on piano

But it is his mastery of the piano that can bring tears to the eyes of a critical audience. That happened at this year's Kiwanis Music Festival, the night an adjudicator awarded him a 95 and asked for his autograph. "I really felt honored," he says, shyly.

Stewart first participated in the Kiwanis festival at age 7. He promptly won a scholarship.

Now a Grade 5 student at St. Michael's Choir School, Stewart was awarded a mark of 90 for his performance of a piano concerto in the junior category for those 15 and younger at this February's festival.

Kiwanis administrator Barbara Bagnell says, "Not many marks in the 90s are given out. Stewart's outstanding in piano. He can easily compete with older people."

At last year's Canadian Music Competitions, the toughest national competition for musicians age 7 to 25, Stewart was awarded a mark of 98 and a \$300 scholarship.

Thirty thousand performers participated in this year's Kiwanis festival. Fewer than 200 musicians from some 1,000 who qualify coast-to-coast can expect to enter the final round of the national competitions.

Stewart enters the first elimination round for the 1989 national competitions on piano for those 11 and younger at the University of Toronto's Walter Hall in mid-May.

Other opportunities to hear him play exist this spring. The Canada Music Competitions has arranged a concert for top music students at the Royal Conservatory concert hall in Toronto on April 30. Stewart has also been invited to perform May 10 at a concert in Seneca College's Minkler Auditorium.

Success has meant a lot of hard work for him and his mother. She must work to support the family.

Weekly piano lessons and training in composition and orchestration at the Royal Conservatory are expensive. The scholarships

Stewart earns help. So do his grandparents.

Though classical music is his music of choice, Stewart does listen to pop but shuns rock. When other youngsters dream of meeting Michael Jackson, Stewart dreams of meeting 70-year-old Leonard Bernstein, the acclaimed composer-conductor of the New York Philharmonic.

"I paid \$200 to get Stewart a ticket to Bernstein's concert (in Toronto) last year. He didn't get to meet his idol, but it was a memorable night for him just the same," his mom says.

Stewart's gift leaves him little time — or inclination — for child's play or TV. When not busy with school work or music lessons, he reads books on classical music and listens to his favorite composers on compact disc.

"I told Stewart to drop some of his lessons but he said, if there was anything he'd like to drop, it was school," Goodyear says.

Stewart has already composed a Gregorian chant, *Ave Verum*, and is now working on a musical, *Elizabeth and Richard*.



ALAN DUNLOP/TORONTO STAR

**STEWART GOODYEAR:** One performance by this 10-year-old Thornhill pianist brought tears to the eyes of the adjudicator rating his work at the recent Kiwanis Music Festival. He's won regularly there since the age of 7.