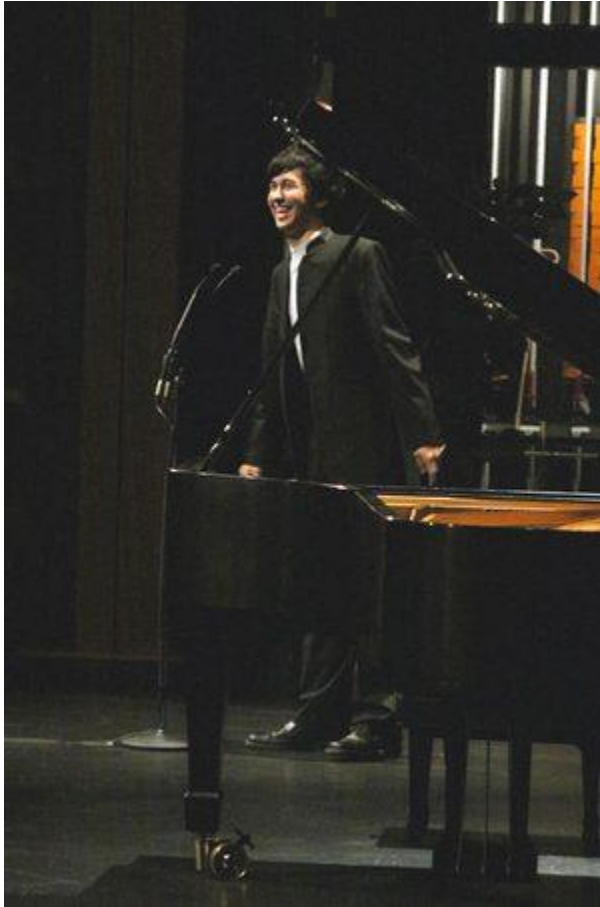


Charlie Albright 'Excited' to Perform in Hometown for First Time Since 2011



Holly Pederson / For The Chronicle

Charlie in Centralia

Pianist Charlie Albright jokes with audience members at the Centralia College Foundation's benefit concert in late 2011 in Centralia College's Corbet Theatre. "The concert was tremendous fun to give, and I really hope that the audience enjoyed it," Albright told The Chronicle. "There seemed to be a great connection between us all evening that was lots of fun, and the piano was of course wonderful!" He performed on a \$100,000 Steinway grand piano that bears his name. Albright, 23, can be heard all this week on public radio in a five-part "Performance Today" series. Visit performancetoday.publicradio.org for a link to the broadcast in which the broadcaster Fred Child calls him "an immensely talented pianist and fine improviser as well."

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Charlie Albright 'Excited' to Perform in Hometown for First Time Since 2011 By Christopher Brewer / cbrewer@chronline.com

Charlie Albright has come a long way since he last performed at Centralia College. Thousands of miles, in fact.

Albright graduated in 2007 from both Centralia High School and Centralia College through the Running Start program, and the college bought a Steinway piano to replace an aging one at Corbet Theatre in 2009. Albright performed on that very piano in 2011, his last concert in Centralia.

Four years has been kind to the piano virtuoso. Since 2011, he has toured across America, spent time in foreign countries for concerts and last year received the Avery Fisher Career Grant. This year, he'll embark on a tour with a highly-acclaimed orchestra from the United Kingdom.

But for Albright, the time-tested adage rings true: There truly is no place like home, and home is where he'll once again perform Saturday, Feb. 7 in a benefit concert for the Centralia College Foundation and the Charlie Albright Piano Fund.

"The home crowd is the best. It's awesome and it's always just a lot of fun," Albright said in a Tuesday phone interview. "It's really a relaxed atmosphere and the audience is there to have a good time."

Albright will perform Mussorgsky's piece "Pictures at an Exhibition," a performance Charlie described as a half hour-long "massive behemoth" comprised of different structures and feelings evoked through several different sections.

"The whole piece is based on him moving around a picture exhibition from picture to picture, then stopping and looking at a piece," Albright said. "It's really neat because each of these pieces are like a snapshot."

The concert will entail some other pieces that include one of Albright's favorite parts of a performance: the improvisation. It's become a favorite of concertgoers, particularly because they get to tell him the note to start out with and he lets the music fly from there.

"Improvisation is music at its core. You never know what's going to happen," Albright said. "There's no going back, no redos, no 'can I take that back?'"

The Centralia College Foundation approached Albright about coming back to the college for a performance, and he said he eagerly accepted. Finding free time wasn't terribly difficult, Albright said, although he is slated for a busy 2015 that might be his biggest professionally.

Albright will fly to London at the end of March to record some music with the BBC Concert Orchestra, then fly with them back to the United States for a series of concerts along the East Coast. It will be his second trip to Europe, as he just returned within the last couple weeks from Finland, where he performed with conductor Alpesh Chauhan and the Hymi Sinfonietta in two cities in the Scandinavian nation.

Those nations — and his current home in New York City — are a great distance from Lewis County, but the Centralia native says he's more than excited to return to the Northwest as often as possible. After performing in Tacoma late last year, this time he's returning to simply give back to the community that raised him by helping the Centralia College Foundation raise money for scholarships.

"I usually try to get back for some type of Northwest concert," Albright said. "Knowing it's the first time I will have performed here in awhile, it's very exciting."