



Brotherly love and bribery nurtured musician's talents

Piano instructor nonpareil Ellen Masaki always knew the right approach to coax genius from a reluctant young musician.

For Tyler Ramos it was bribery.

"She had these pieces she wanted me to learn and she told me she'd give me \$5 if I did," he recalls with a guilty chuckle.

In retrospect, the five spot was a small price to pay for helping Ramos realize his vast potential.

Next week, Ramos, 20, will represent Hawaii in the Young Artist-Piano division at the Music Teachers National Association Southwest Division Competition in Tempe, Ariz. There he'll compete against gifted pianists from Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah for the opportunity to advance to the national finals in San Antonio in April.

Also representing Hawaii will be Jeremy Lee, 13 (Junior High Piano); Colin Yeo, 14, (Junior High String); Albert Jiang, 16 (Senior High Piano); William Suh, 16 (Senior High String); Queenie Huang, 15, and Lauren Nguyen, 16 (Senior High Piano Duet); and Sun Mi Jin (Young Artist String).

Ramos comes from solid musical stock. His father, Alex, played violin; his mother, Joy, the harp. His paternal grandfather sang and played piano, harp and accordion.

But it was Ramos' eldest brother, Andrew, a gifted pianist who is pursuing a doctoral degree in music at the University of Colorado, who first inspired Ramos to take up the piano.

"I wanted to be like him and do the same things that he did," Ramos says.

Ramos has been studying piano since age 7. He's also an accomplished cello player.

Ramos credits University of Hawaii professor of mu-



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Tyler Ramos:

The pianist and UH student is among those who will represent the isles at an Arizona competition

sic Thomas Yee with guiding his current musical path. Yee's influence is so profound that Ramos hopes to follow his example not just by becoming a music teacher, but by tackling his first marathon over the coming year.

In the meantime, Ramos is focusing on his musical studies at UH, his work as a piano instructor at the Ellen Masaki School of Music, and his upcoming competition. Coolly self-motivated, Ramos says he enjoys the personal challenge of musical competition.

Unlike simple recitals, where a pianist might enjoy greater freedom to improvise or embellish, formal competitions typically value fidelity to the composer's intent, Ramos explains.

"Once you've learned the piece, once you have it under your fingers, it's less about the notes and more about making them sound better," Ramos says.

As long as he performs to his own expectations, Ramos says he doesn't worry about winning or losing. After each performance he indulges in a little self-bribery: pecan pie from Anna Miller's Restaurant or coco puffs from Liliha Bakery.

"I always treat myself afterward," he says, "results notwithstanding."

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