



Tania Savayan/The Journal News

Elena Rossman, president of the American Association for the Development of the Gifted and Talented, yesterday with musicians, from left, composer Josie Yalovitser, 11, of Rye Brook, singer Oksana Lepska, 13, of Latvia and pianist Aimi Kobayashi, 12, of Japan in New Rochelle. The three girls will perform Saturday at Carnegie Hall.

Composer, 11, set for big stage

Carnegie Hall show to feature Rye Brook girl, other gifted kids

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The Journal News

MAMARONECK — Eleven-year-old Josie Yalovitser of Rye Brook has been winning awards for her music compositions since she was 6, so she rolled her eyes when asked if she liked listening to Disney sensation Hannah Montana.

"Sorry, I'm not a big fan," she said.

On Saturday, Josie will take the stage at Carnegie Hall with a handpicked group of other musical prodigies from around the world. The child artists were selected by New Rochelle resident Elena Rossman, a music instructor who nurtures prodigies with her group the American Association for Development of the Gifted and Talented.

They will perform a preview concert today in Mamaroneck.

"For exceptional gifted youngsters, it can be difficult for them to get the recognition they deserve," Rossman said. "It's also hard for them to find the proper training."

Josie said she was encouraged by her parents to hone her music talents.

"I used to make little tickets for my parents to come in the family room and watch shows I'd put on for them," she said.

If you go

The children will perform a preview concert at 7:30 p.m. today in Mamaroneck at 1185 Greacen Point Rd.

Saturday's Carnegie Hall show, "The Passion of Music," will take place at 3 p.m.



On LoHud

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She wrote her first serious composition in 2003, after watching a news story about Jessica Lynch, the U.S. soldier whose story of being rescued from Iraqi captivity gained wide publicity.

"I just imagined the nightmares she might have had from these Iraqi soldiers," Josie said about her song, "Sweet Dreams for Jessica." "So I wrote this song as a lullaby to soothe her so she could sleep peacefully and quietly."

Thirteen-year-old Oksana Lepska from Latvia will be singing some of Josie's songs this weekend.

Lepska, who goes by the stage name "X-Sana," rose to fame in Russia last fall after being a finalist on the show "Minute of Fame," a talent show equivalent to "America's Got Talent" on NBC. Rossman spotted Lepska on the show and introduced her to Josie.

"We became friends and we used to talk to each other on Web

chat," Lepska said.

The third girl being featured this weekend is 12-year-old piano prodigy Aimi Kobayashi from Tokyo. She's been playing classical piano music since she was 3.

A YouTube video of her at age 4 playing a Mozart piece has had more than 700,000 hits alone.

"She's fairly shy but she shows the best of herself when she's on stage," her teacher, Yuko Ninomiya, said.

Rossman mainly funds the program by herself, spending thousands of dollars flying the students to the United States and organizing these shows. Seeing the passion in these children, she said, is what has motivated her to keep her group running since 1994.

"We sometimes have some small, private support," Rossman said. "But it's hard to find them sponsors."

Josie said her dream is to become a music professor, saying what she enjoys about her skills is the impact they have on others.

"Music is such a good way to express your feelings," Josie said. "Sometimes I play at nursing homes and my music touches other people. It's amazing to see some people who may have trouble remembering their own names being able to use music to remember their favorite moments in life."

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