

# Music, academics create harmony for CHS salutatorian

□ Chris Alex will play the flute at Clark College

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According to author Pat Conroy, "Without music, life is a journey through a desert."

If this statement is true, Camas High School senior Chris Alex will never know this kind of thirst. Music has been a constant theme in nearly every aspect of his life.

Alex and his family moved to Camas from Newberg, Ore., when he was just 3 years old. He learned to play the piano at the age of 4, and today, at the age of 17, he has already become quite an accomplished musician.

He plays the piano, flute and drums, and began composing music when he was in the sixth grade. As a ninth-grader at Skyridge Mid School, he wrote a piece that was performed by the school's concert band.

At CHS, Alex is the drum major, a pianist in the jazz band, and serves as the first chair flute in the symphonic band and wind ensemble. In addition, he has played in the school's pit orchestra for many performances of

the CHS theater department, the most recent of which had him serve as the one-man pit orchestra for a performance of "The Last Five Years," a two-actor musical that included CHS valedictorian and friend Kristie Stevens.

Among the accomplishments Alex is most proud of are the four orchestrated band pieces he composed and then conducted in performances by the Portland Metropolitan Youth Symphony at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall in front of an audience of hundreds.

"It was really cool," he said of the experience. "It was just an incredible feeling of accomplishment."

Alex, who has been a member of the youth symphony for several years, will conduct his fifth original performance at the concert hall this weekend.

This musician comes by his strengths honestly. In fact, musical ability is evident in every member of Alex's family, including dad Garry, who taught his son to play the piano; mom Sandi, who was a vocal major in college; and brothers David and Jonathan, who play the clarinet and trombone, respectively.

"We always prayed that we'd have

children who enjoy music like we did," Sandi Alex said. "But they are taking it so far beyond what we ever did."

Not only does Alex excel at music, he has also found success in academics, as proven by his designation as the 2006 CHS salutatorian.

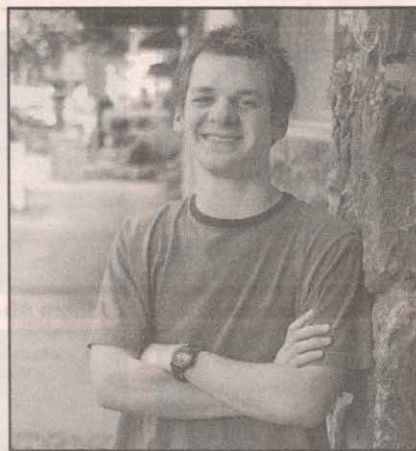
Alex is skilled in math and has consistently challenged himself by taking nearly every advanced placement class offered at CHS including English, U.S. History, U.S. government and calculus.

With a 3.993 grade point average, his academic record is nearly perfect — the only A- came during his junior year in teacher Mark Tomasetti's advanced placement U.S. History class.

Creating his own original compositions has actually been a way for Alex to combine his affinity for mathematics with his love of music — his mom calls him "a left-brain composer."

"I look at the math behind it," Alex said of his compositions. "I get the rhythm and the notes and the creative side comes later."

In his free time, he likes playing video games and hanging out with friends, and is also actively involved with Grace Foursquare Church in



Chris Alex

Camas, where he plays the piano for the worship team.

And it looks like the soon-to-be high school graduate will have a very musical future as well. Alex recently received word that he is the recipient of a full-ride scholarship to Clark College, where he will play the flute as a member of the Vancouver school's symphonic band and orchestra. He hopes to pursue a future career in either music or a math-related endeavor such as engineering.