

Alumna Claire Ritter Enjoys Teaching the Art of Music

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The Charlotte Observer

OUR TOWNS

Immerse yourself in free arts from locals

Pianist's performance is worth checking out

SARI MONACO

A 2006 Arts and Science Regional Artist Grant recipient in our own backyard? Yes it's true.

Claire Ritter is originally from Weddington and moved back to this area from Boston a decade ago after living there for 15 years. She is a jazz and classical composer and pianist who also enjoys teaching.

Recently the Philadelphia Museum of Art gave her permission to use painter Georgia O'Keeffe's 1919 oil painting, "Orange and Red Streak" on her new CD, *Waltzing the Splendor*.

Her works are rich and velvety like a superior Cabernet. I listened over and over while driving and while reading the Sunday paper.

Ritter is an alumna of Queens University of Charlotte and the New England Conservatory of Music. She has served as artistic director of "Composers Charlotte" at Queens and has been a guest composer for the Chamber Music Series at Central Piedmont Community College. She gives private student instruction for about 25 pupils in her artist's loft in our town, and there's a waiting list.

Ritter's emerald eyes reflect a palpable passion for her art. An important goal is showcasing her child prodigies.

"Inspiration is contagious and has no boundaries," she says.

In Ritter's intimate studio with great acoustics and high ceilings, advanced student composers Grace Kennedy, third grade, Alex Kim, seventh grade, and Emma Barnes, a 10th grader, feature new compositions.

A wispy girl, 8-year-old Grace has studied exclusively with Ritter for four years.

"She is quite the performer!" Ritters boasted, as Grace played her original composition "Circus Waltz" for me.

Alex, an elegant pianist, played "Medieval Sail," which sounded like the score to a motion picture. I later learned that is what he hopes to do with his talent. His mother says he has been composing songs since he was 4 or 5 years old.

Emma, 15, has studied with Ritter for six years and feels music will be her major in college.

Ritter loves Brazilian music and listening to jazz on the radio but isn't fond of some overly processed mainstream music. She does some performing and traveling, two or three times a year. Alex suggested it might be "a good idea to have us on tour with you."

Ritter's opus is recorded on Zoning Recordings, founded in Boston.

For more information, contact the Claire Ritter Studio at 704-321-0708. Go to ClaireRitter.com to subscribe to her mailing list. To hear Ritter perform online on Jan. 2, visit www.wqbh.org/ OUR TOWNS



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