

# HEARING HEAVEN

BY SALLY JOHNSON ODEKIRK  
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John Yoo makes the piano sing as heavenly sounds reach out and touch his audience. Last summer John performed with renowned pianist Marvin Goldstein and several other LDS musicians as they shared their testimonies through music. “John’s talent with the piano is something he came to earth with. It is a blessing to others,” Brother Goldstein says. “Through it, people will feel the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

John, a teacher in the San Fernando Fourth (Korean) Branch, started developing this talent at an early age.

**When did you start playing the piano?** When I was seven years old I listened to my older brother Samuel play the piano, and I wanted to play, too. I copied whatever he did and practiced with him for about six months.

**How do you learn a new piece of music?** When I learn a new piece of music, I want to hear what the piece sounds like, so I listen to it on a CD and memorize it. My favorite composer is Franz Liszt because his music is so grand and brilliant. My favorite hymn is “Families Can Be Together Forever” (*Hymns*, no. 300) because I love my family so much.

**How do you feel about developing your talents?** I like the advice of Alma to his son Helaman (see Alma 37:35). I believe the wisdom we should seek is not only spiritual knowledge but also physical learning. For me, that means developing my musical talent. One way I do that is through playing in piano competitions, even though it makes me nervous. Another way I develop my talents is through teaching music to younger students twice a week. The best part is when I tell them

**Name:** John Yoo  
**Age:** 14  
**Location:** Santa Clarita, California  
**Major accomplishments:** Awards from the MTAC Los Angeles Scholarship Competition, the Korean Times Annual Children’s Music Competition, and the Virginia Waring International Piano Competition. John has also won awards in the Glendale Junior Piano Competition, the Long Beach Mozart Festival; and in the music chamber series for the Young Music Foundation. John was awarded youngest concerto winner in the Liszt International Piano Competition, and recently was awarded first prize winner at the Antelope Valley Gail Newby Concerto Competition resulting in performing a concerto with the Antelope Valley Symphony Orchestra.

to practice and they actually do it and show the improvements I expected.

**What do you do in your spare time?** I like to play video games, read books, swim, and play soccer with my friends.

John says, “I hope that through what I play others will be able to hear heavenly music.” **NE**

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To hear John in performance, go to [newera.lds.org](http://newera.lds.org).

