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Crowl heading to Switzerland

Former county resident will perform, address U.N. diplomats

By JULIE E. GREENE
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Pianist and singer Christy Crowl has come a long way since performing for a one-man audience — her father — at the age of 18 months in their Washington County home.

Crowl, 28, will perform in front of several thousand people Thursday at the Fete d' Excellence, or Festival of Excellence, in Geneva, Switzerland.

She also will speak to United Nations diplomats in Switzerland about the arts and how artists can promote and instill values in children.

The 1989 Boonsboro High School graduate will be the featured guest artist at the concert at Victoria Hall.

"I've been very lucky and very blessed," Crowl said in a telephone interview last week from her California home. "This is an incredible opportunity in Switzerland to do everything I've been trained to do."

The festival is an annual two-week celebration honoring excellence in athletics, business, culture and academia, according to its Web site at www.fetexcel.com.

"The spirit of excellence is personified through the beauty of her music," said festival founder Wilda Spalding in a prepared statement.

Crowl will play classical piano and sing songs from her upcoming self-named compact disc. Crowl describes her original works as artistic pop à la Seal, Sting and Sarah McLachlan.

She will be accompanied by her husband, classical baritone Scott Dicken.

Local residents may remember Crowl from Friends 'n Spirit, a show troupe based in Hagerstown that performed at The Maryland Theatre at Christmastime and summertime. The group also performed at conventions in Ocean City, Md.

At age 5, Crowl sang "Tomorrow" from the musical "Annie" at The Maryland Theatre and became the group's main pianist at age 12, said her father, Vaughn Crowl, a founding member of the troupe and a psychology professor at Hagerstown Community College.



Christy Crowl as she appears today, above, and left, singing a song from "Annie" at the Maryland Theatre at age 5.

Crowl's Swiss mission to showcase her talents

The performance troupe gave her exposure and experience with Broadway tunes, pop and country, she said.

"I realized in college how much experience I'd gotten at an early age," Crowl said.

Those early experiences made film school easier, she said.

Crowl attended the University of Miami, where she earned a bachelor's degree in piano and a master's in film scoring and composition.

After college, where Crowl met her husband, the couple moved to Los Angeles in the fall of 1996, where Crowl got a variety of jobs in the music business.

Two years ago Crowl started teaching and working with "Bugs Bunny on Broadway." She is the principal pianist and slide guitarist for the show, which features a symphony accompanying cartoons on a big screen.

She also has been music supervisor for several television shows, commercials and small films. A music supervisor sorts through hundreds of compact discs to

decide what music goes with the scene on the screen, she said.

Vaughn Crowl, of Rohrer'sville, said he remembers his daughter had an uncanny musical ability at a very young age.

As a 1-year-old, she could replicate almost any tune she heard on a toy xylophone, he said.

Six months later, Crowl said, he started hearing the family's piano at around 4 a.m.

It would be Christy playing one note at a time on the piano, which in itself was unusual since many children that age just bang on the piano, he said.

The notes soon progressed into melodies, said Crowl, who would sit and watch her from the foyer during her pre-dawn performances.

"It was just kind of amazing to me," he said.

Hagerstown classical piano teacher Sung Mi Rhee isn't surprised by Crowl's successes either.

"She was very good," winning several statewide concerto com-

petitions, Rhee said. Rhee taught Crowl from when she was about 7 years old until she was 18.

One of Crowl's main goals is to contribute to music education, which she says has declined since her school days when band lessons were given in elementary and middle school.

Playing musical instruments or singing in school choirs can boost kids' self-esteem and academic performance, just as participation in sports does, she said.

"It's really sad to see the state where music education has gone," Crowl said.

She will speak at a United Nations roundtable entitled "The Art of Human Rights."