

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Crucian Youth Chosen To Attend Prestigious Piano Camp In New York

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Ernice Gilbert **July 04, 2015**



ST. CROIX -- Christopher Tirado, a 14-year-old freshman at the Good Hope Country Day School, loves to play videogames. He owns an Xbox 360, Xbox One and Wii U. He's also a master pianist who's been chosen to attend one of the country's most prestigious camps to further his skill -- a testament to the excellent talent that continues to emanate from the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Christopher was already in New York at the Luzerne Music Center, founded in 1980, when *The Consortium* caught up with his father, Angel Tirado, 43, who shared how his son captured the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

At the age of five, Tirado took his son to receive drumming lessons, but Christopher was never able to play for long intervals because he would get tired quickly. Because of this, the piano -- without his parents' approval -- and the child



Christopher Tirado

"One day, while at home, we heard Christopher on the piano in the room playing jazz," Tirado said. From there, the parents noticed that piano was more than a hobby for the then-6-year-old, and they enrolled him in a piano program lead by Marsha Shuman, who has been a piano instructor for over 50 years with a studio located in Estate St. John.

Shuman, Tirado said, is very strict, and Christopher didn't play songs for at least six months under her leadership. "Everything was theory, learning how to sit, learning correct posture and that's how the foundation was set. It was that serious," Tirado, postmaster of the Frederiksted Post Office, said.

Recognizing Christopher's gift, in 2014 the principal of then-Country Day School approached Tirado with a brochure of the Luzerne Music Center program, urging him to apply on behalf of his son. However, Shuman said Christopher was not ready, and advised Tirado to wait until the following year.

The proud father followed the instructor's advice and waited until 2015 before allowing his son to audition.

"Christopher video auditioned, played contrasting solos and scales, etc. We sent it up and he was accepted," Tirado said, beaming with pride.



Elizabeth Pitcairn, president of Luzerne Music

Center.

The program is headed by violinist Elizabeth Pitcairn, president of Luzerne Music Center and [owner of the famous 1721 Red Mendelssohn](#), which was purchased by her grandfather for \$1.7 million as a gift for her 16th birthday. The violin is also the main inspiration behind the Academy Award-winning [1998 Canadian film The Red Violin](#), a drama which tells the story of a mysterious violin and its many owners.

According to a press release, the four-week program in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., founded by a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra, is considered one of the top piano programs in the country. Members of the Philadelphia Orchestra and renowned visiting artists present master classes and sectionals for students of piano, string, brass, woodwind and percussion instruments.

The students rehearse under the direction of eminent conductors and coaches for weekly public concerts and attend Philadelphia Orchestra concerts at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center.

The audition committee, impressed by Christopher's level of skill, was excited to have him at the camp, which, aside from its rigorous training schedule, saves time for fun and outdoor games.

And, in relation to funding, Christopher was awarded a \$500 scholarship by his instructor, Shuman. Additionally, Dr. Barbara Campbell of Acute Alternative Medical Group funded Christopher's travels along with that of his father, Tirado, and Edgardo and Nancy Torres of Glass 2000 paid for additional private classical piano tutoring for Christopher while he's at the camp.

Christopher is the first Virgin Islander to be accepted to the Luzerne Music Center.

Christopher Tirado playing The Sonathia

[View the original embedded media](#)

Feature Image: Christopher Tirado, provided by Angel Tirado.

Correction: July 4, 2015

A previous version of this article incorrectly referred to the school Christopher Tirado attends as Good Hope School. The institution is actually Good Hope Country Day School, after both facilities merged following the closure of the HOVENSA refinery. The story has been updated to reflect the correct information.

The story also incorrectly stated Angel Tirado's age as 42, when he's actually 43. The correct age is now reflected in the article.

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