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Leigh Blenkhorn, STAFF

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BARRIE - Pianist Chris Donnelly is looking to fuse the past and the future when he takes the stage at the Barrie Jazz and Blues Festival in June.

Donnelly will perform at the Giant's of Jazz concert, part of the Yamaha Piano Concert Series at the festival. He will perform a tribute concert to jazz great Erroll Garner on June 18, at 8 p.m. in the city hall rotunda. "I am a big fan. There are so many piano players out there to listen to, but I listen to a lot of Erroll Garner," he said. Donnelly said he is currently working to create a lineup that showcases his own talents, yet pays tribute to the jazz greats.

"I am wrestling with how I am going to balance this out," he said. "The question for this concert becomes how much do I showcase Erroll Garner and how much do I do my own thing?"

Donnelly has been playing piano for 23 years, starting when he was just three years old.

While most kids who take piano lessons move on to different things in life, Donnelly has continued to focus on music.

"I think throughout my studies there was always something about music that was fun," he said. "There were moments when I wanted to quit, but there was always that element of fun. I think that's why I chose this as a career path."

Donnelly graduated from the University of Toronto with bachelor and master of music degrees. The musician has released one album, *Solo*, during his career, which earned him a Juno nomination in 2009. He also earned two nominations, Best Recording of the Year and Best Keyboardist of the Year, at the 2009 National Jazz Awards.

He is a professor at the University of Toronto.

Donnelly is currently putting the finishing touches on his new CD.

"You can expect to hear a few songs from that new album at the concert," he said. "The songs fit into that Erroll Garner theme."

The Barrie Jazz and Blues Festival runs from June 10 to 21 at a number of venues throughout Barrie.