

Pianist brilliant in youth showcase

By Rita Moran

Fifteen-year-old pianist Alan Gampel says he doesn't practice "enough."

But it would be hard to convince the audience of nearly 500 in the Ventura College theater Sunday afternoon of such a possibility. Gampel, concertizing as a result of his winning the Ventura County Symphony's Young Artist Competition a few months ago, demonstrated again the technical facility and maturity of interpretation that brought him the honor.

Gampel, a Los Angeles resident, was 14 when he won the piano competition and admitted that he didn't practice "enough." He also said at that time that he'd been studying since he was 5 and that piano was not the only pastime he enjoyed.

But whatever else Alan Gampel enjoys or excels in, there is no question that he is a gifted pianist and that those who came to the Young Artist Showcase concert were privileged to hear an artist who is outstanding not only for his age, but among pianists far beyond his age. In Gampel's

case, it is clearly an instance, as a teacher was heard demurring after the performance, not so much of teaching but of guiding an exceptional talent.

For his showcase performance with the Ventura County Symphony, Gampel reprised Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor, with which he won the earlier competition. He again played the melodious concerto with an ease that immediately silenced any question of technical competence. More important, he played it with graceful and lyrical interpretation that seemed to spring effortlessly from his own innate musicality.

The audience sprang to its feet at the conclusion in one of the most truly deserved standing ovations; the orchestra and conductor Frank Salazar joined in the applause. Young Gampel, very much a typical 15-year-old in demeanor, bowed shyly and gestured for Salazar to join him at center stage. Salazar responded by firmly guiding the soloist back on stage for another bow before the audience that, in attending the free concert,

had witnessed a richness of talent.