



Garten's Music

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'I'm still learning'

Visually impaired students overcome obstacles, rely on ear training for remote lessons

When Damiana Eklund and Shawn Moses wanted to play an instrument, some discouraged them from trying to learn because they were visually impaired. But they found the Wichita Music Academy at Garten's Music, where they were matched with talented teachers and thrived as musicians.

When all of our students had to transition to remote lessons, the change presented some hurdles for Eklund and Moses, since their teachers couldn't reposition their fingers on the guitar frets or violin strings. However, these students are relying on their ear training, which is often better developed than in sighted students!

Eklund, 16, started violin lessons in January 2020. She describes herself as "that



Shawn Moses performs in our Student Showcase.

crazy kid who can't read music!" She has septo-optic dysplasia. Her grandmother, Cynthia Swann, explained that Eklund can't write her name or zip a jacket.

"They're in constant movement, the eyes, so they just swirl in circles," Swann said.

When the family approached the Wichita Music Academy, they weren't sure if Eklund could learn music since she can't read notes on a staff.

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Easing into it as we reopen

Hello, students! As you are probably aware, the governor has opened many businesses. We wanted to write and let you know how that affects the Wichita Music Academy as of today. (Things are changing daily, so please stay tuned to your email in-box!)

Here's what we know:

1. You will continue to have the option to take your lessons online, for as long as you'd like. It is your choice when you resume in-person lessons with us (once we reopen for in-person lessons). Online lessons will always be an option.

2. **Our retail store, Garten's Music, is open!** Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 10 a.m. to 4

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Graduation day!



Congratulations to our graduates of the Goofin' Around Keyboard Class (Blue Book 4)! From left: Kerrie Platt, Liz Hicks, Linda Overman, Rasri Kraisan. Not pictured: Brenda Banta.

How are remote lessons/classes going?

Goofin' Around Keyboard Class:

"I really do appreciate the support that Garten's Music has given in that they have sent me materials through snail mail. I don't have a printer right now, so I really have appreciated that support and the Google connection. You get to see some of the same people that were in your class. I think they're doing a great job. The music is so refreshing, to be able to go over to that little Lowrey organ and just calm myself. I play it in the morning and I play it right before I go to bed. I don't know what I'd do without it. I really love having it." - Betty

"It's going well. It hasn't lost that feel by doing it online, and the Google Duo just

makes it feel sort of like you are in class. For me, just the continued structure of having the class and the discipline around practicing, it's really helped with that. I've enjoyed the opportunity to continue. I think my practicing would have become fewer and farther between if I hadn't." - Marsha

"It's worked out really well. I didn't think it was going to for me, but it sure has. I look forward to it every single week. Every Tuesday is special for me. I just think it's a wonderful class. I actually really like it because I feel like Cindy is a good teacher, no matter what. If she's with us or on the Internet, she knows what she's doing. And at this particular time, we all need something to look forward to and something that

can keep us focused in a more positive light. Music is the place we should all be; it does transport us and makes things better." - Chris

"They're going very well. I'm still enjoying them and still learning different music. It means a lot because everything else is shut down and then you deal with all the restrictions at the hospital. It means a lot to have the outreach of the music. Thank you guys for staying open. It helps a lot." - Jennifer, a nurse

Wichita Music Academy, adult students:

"It gives me a purpose during this time. Sometimes it's hard

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to be home and not have things to do, and playing piano has really helped me get through this time. I'm not quite sure what I'd be doing if I weren't playing piano." - Joyce

"I'm loving the online lessons. I would be happy to continue online. If you continue to offer them after the stay-at-home order was over, I think more adults would take lessons." - Erica

"It's really been pretty easy. Google Duo is pretty easy, and there's a group at my church that's working with Zoom, and

the Google works a little better than Zoom. It's great. My teacher, Andrew, is just wonderful and it has meant quite a lot to me. If I'd had to give that up, I'd have been very, very sad. I'm making progress, and he's such a great teacher. He's encouraging, and I feel like he's helping me do the best I can. It just means a lot to me. I didn't want to lose what I had achieved and didn't want to get behind." - Mary

WMA parents:

"The girls are loving it! Thanks for offering us this online op-

portunity. We feel truly blessed to be able to continue on with lessons and also for the social contact that this has been providing." - Brandi

"Lessons are going great! It's nice she still could continue playing. She also was so excited she got her first challenge done this week!" - Michelle

"So far, so great! She isn't complaining, and for a 16-year-old, that is golden! I'm so grateful and think it's wonderful she can still do lessons during this time. Thank you! She looks forward to every Thursday!" - Teri



Congratulations to our graduates of the Goofin' Around Keyboard Class (Red Book 1)! Clockwise from top left: Sara and John Matzen, Tammy Etherton, Peggy Dilsaver-Cusper, Michael and Cindy Houston of Garten's, Jeanette Barber. Not pictured: Nona Van Damme, Tammy Schuster, Alice Shelton, Mae Fields.



Like us on Facebook!
Facebook.com/gartensmusic

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p.m. Saturday. Curbside pickup is also available!

3. We are planning for a reopening of our in-person lessons in the coming weeks, date TBD. We are continuing to monitor the government mandates and will update you on our reopening date for in-person lessons.

Our office staff will continue to stand by and assist you as normal, so please don't hesitate to contact us if you need assistance with your online lessons or anything else.

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She was matched with Pam Lawson, an orchestra teacher at the academy who holds a master's degree in special education.

"I learned what she could do – what worked for her," Lawson said. "That's always been my standard of teaching students with special needs: What do they need from me to be successful? So I use that as the blueprint for teaching lessons. With Damiana, because of the visual impairment, she has an incredible sense of using her ear to hear pitches and to hear rhythms. And that's worked very well for her."

Eklund recently learned the song "The Irish Washerwoman." She loves Celtic music and oldies such as Beach Boys, Beatles and Bee Gees.

"It feels really good," Eklund said of her latest song. "I'm glad I know a Celtic song."

Swann said remote lessons had worked better than she expected. She added that Eklund loves her teacher, Lawson, who compliments her and helps build her confidence.

"She always gets run down – like, 'your writing's terrible, you can't do this, you

can't read notes,'" Swann said. "We're all shocked that she's able to do this because she has no fine motor skills. And it lets her stand out in something, because she can't do sports or anything like that. This is for her, to be able to be good at something and proud of what she does. I just wish we'd started this stuff about 10 years earlier."

Lawson said Eklund now has a list of songs she can play, which she described as "very impressive" for the short period of time Eklund has been a student.

"Because Damiana has such a keen awareness of pitch and rhythm and using her ear, that's worked very well for her, even during our virtual lessons," Lawson said. "She exceeds expectations in that regard, in comparison to a lot of students that do have sight. If the note is not in tune, she won't settle."

Like Eklund, Moses encountered some discouragement when he became interested in learning to play guitar.

"It's been nice because before I went to Garten's, I went to a couple guitar places and they said it was probably easier for me to teach myself guitar," Moses said.

Now 22, Moses was matched with Wichita Music Academy instructor Andrew Wingert in 2016, when he enrolled in guitar lessons.

"He just took me full-on even though I had the visual disability," Moses remarked.

Moses was born with a visual impairment that began progressing when he was about 14. Wingert said it would have been difficult for Moses to move forward as a guitarist learning on his own.

"It would have been harder for him to self-teach because it would have been hard to find reading materials, and then if you don't know you're a fret off, you could be getting it wrong the whole time," Wingert said. "And then sometimes you might think you're doing something right, but if no one's there to watch you play ... you'd only be able to guess if you, like, listened to a video or read something."

Instead, Wingert provides music for Moses in large print, so he can read it. Moses also uses an accessibility feature on his phone, so he can enlarge and also invert colors; for him, white on black is easier to see than black on white.

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“He’s gotten really great at chords and strumming, so that feels pretty natural,” Wingert said. “He’s gotten really great at soloing. He’s learned how to do tons of riffs and songs, learned a lot about songwriting, finger picking, different scales. He has good acoustic and electric guitar technique.”

Moses likes to write songs, so he especially enjoys working with Wingert, who earned a master’s degree in composition.

“He always says he wants to steal my songs!” Moses said with a chuckle. “Before, I used to show him songs I was writing, like the lyrics, and we’d try to come up with different chords, different riffs, different melodies and that stuff to see what would work.”

Moses said that online lessons required adjustments, but he admitted that some aspects of the change have been good for him. He must rely on his first instincts when positioning his fingers on the guitar, instead of Wingert correcting him by hand.

“Now I can hear if I’m on the wrong string or the wrong fret,” Moses added.

Like many, Moses has lost a lot of his usual activities due to the spread of coronavirus, from his job as an assistant para at an elementary school to planned summer camps.

“It helps me focus more on guitar than I would with the job and the summer camps and everything, so that’s been a plus,” he said. “But I can’t go to work – I like going to work with the kids. But I’m still learning, and I’m learning new things.”

Moses has a dedicated space where he takes lessons, near his five electric guitars, two acoustic guitars and one ukulele.

“I have everything at home,” he said. “The corner of my room is where I put all my guitar stuff. I’ve got all the papers Andrew’s given me over the years.”

Wingert said that Moses even organized those papers by category – chords, songs, riffs, etc. Moses and Eklund both miss taking lessons in person, but they were relieved to continue learning music from their teachers online.

And their teachers were excited to continue working with them and to keep encouraging them. Lawson recalled her

The magic of music keeps us going



Wichita Music Academy instructor Toby Lind teaches an online music lesson. Students are beginning to prepare for Student Showcases. See back page for information!

first meeting with Eklund:

“I was taken aback by some of the accounts she gave, being told that she can’t,” Lawson said. “To tell a student, ‘You can’t, this is not for you’ ... that just should not be.”

When it was necessary to transition to remote lessons, Lawson and Wingert used the same philosophy as when they first started teaching Eklund and Moses: Figure out what the student needs.

“And then do your best to provide it,” Lawson said.

WMA students earn recognition

Wichita Music Academy students recently received their trophies, wristbands and certificates for achieving musical milestones. We are proud of them! See more photos on Page 7.



Ellie H.



Aidan A.



Anabelle A.



Jillian H.



Joshua M.



Kylie T.



Emily S.



Breigh A.



Jace A.



Maddie W.



Rachel P.



Teagan P.



Isabella M.



Carley B.



Alexis M.



Daniel H.



Hannah H.



Emerson R., teacher Patrick



Siblings Erin and Isaac L.

Students: Please send photos of yourself or your kids when they receive their trophies, wristbands and certificates! We'll include their photos in a future newsletter! Send to info@gartensmusic.com



Morgan R.



Alexxis S.



Jacob A.



Rand R.



Cooper H.



Francesca W.



QuyAnh N.



Amanda E.



Kylie S.



Givellie L.



Kavar W.



Brendan W.



Shawn M.



Alisson M.



Sophia E.



Ethan E.



Lina F.



Ella K.



Brooklyn C.



Jennifer L.



At left:
teacher
Georgeanne
& Micah J.



At right:
Zeph R.



Siblings
Rooks,
Harper
& Finn
R.

Sign up for Student Showcases Aug. 15-16

The June Student Showcases have been moved to Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 15 and 16. They will be held at Best Western Wichita North in the South Atrium, a room of nearly 10,000 square feet where we can spread out!

Showcases will be held at 5 and 7 p.m. Aug. 15 and 1, 3, 5 and 7 p.m. Aug. 16. Students may sign up now for the showcase when they want to perform! Call 942-1337 or email the office at info@gartensmusic.com.

Showcases will be available to students enrolled at the Wichita Music Academy in June-August. We want to set them up for success, so they'll need time to practice and work with their teachers as they prepare. There is no charge to perform!

The Wichita Music Academy offers instruction in piano, keyboard, guitar, bass, voice, ukulele, banjo, mandolin, violin, viola, cello, brass, woodwinds, drums & percussion!



Need a gift idea?

Surprise the graduate on your list, or Dad on Father's Day, with the gift of music! We have digital pianos, keyboards, guitars, ukuleles, music books, accessories & more! Gift cards and music lessons are available, too! We are open, and we also offer curbside pickup. Call 942-1337!

