



The Music Academy  
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# The Music Academy

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Newsletter  
Spring 2022

## Welcome Dr. Laura Eakman

After an extensive and rigorous search led by The Music Academy Board of Directors, we are pleased to announce that Dr. Laura Eakman, an alum of The Music Academy, has accepted the position of Executive Director beginning April 1, 2022.

The Board made this selection based on Laura's extensive experience and professional achievements. She holds degrees from the University of Colorado at Boulder (Doctor of Music Arts – Viola) where her doctoral thesis was "Teaching the Violin with Purpose: Strategies to Foster Musical, Social and Cognitive Growth in Low-Income Students," and Northern Illinois University (Bachelor of Music Viola Performance). Laura also has significant experience in teaching violin and viola in multiple institutions including Kansas State University Community School for the Performing Arts where she was Chair of the Strings Division and a violin and viola instructor, and most recently, Suzuki Strings of Manhattan (KS) where she was the Founder and Director.

A graduate of Byron High School, Laura studied at The Music Academy for nine years. She studied under Cindy Doering (violin), Hui Wang (viola) and Rachel Handlin (viola) and was a member of Measure 5. Laura, her husband Jakob Hansen, and son Elliot Hansen, have made their home in Rockford.

The Board is confident that Laura's many talents, thoughtful, collaborative and engaging leadership approach, and wide-ranging experience will help us continue The Music Academy's record as a high-integrity, vibrant, diverse, inclusive and growing community that provides our students opportunities to grow through music, inspiring them to pursue a life of excellence, accomplishment and fulfillment. Laura will work closely with the Board to ensure the future of the organization in realizing its strategic goals and vision. She will start her role as Executive Director April 1, 2022.

Marti Frantz' last day as Executive Director will be March 31. We cannot thank her enough for the dedication, passion, compassion, and visionary leadership she has provided The Music Academy over the past 36 years.

Finally, we are grateful to Search Committee members, School Board and Foundation Board members, faculty and staff who participated in our decision-making and to the entire Music Academy community for your encouragement and support through this process.

*Janice Westlund-Chair, School Board of Directors  
Christopher Wrate-Chair, Director Search Committee,  
The Music Academy in Rockford*



## Parting thoughts from our Executive Director—Marti Frantz

I want my legacy to be that The Music Academy was a team effort; that we created a place with a sense of community, where there is a sense of the whole where no one was turned away, where kindness prevailed, where there was fellowship and collegiality and where we cultivated a rich and elevated way to learn about music and life. This was and is a place where passionate people (mostly women) gathered to part the waters and make things happen for the benefit of our students and our community. Over our 36 years of working together, we have created (as Martin O'Malley wrote) a community united by ideas of compassion and creativity that has incredible power. Art of all kinds – music, visual arts, literature, traditional arts – can lift a community. We at The Music Academy have been powerful change agents who have lifted this community as well as the lives of thousands of our students over the years.

I am well suited to being a leader, a "change agent," to being the person who figures out how to get things done and who will "never, ever" give up on the values, beliefs and the very essence of this place. I have leaned into leadership roles for some 60 years (my first paying gig was at 12 years old with the RSO) and I own up to finding a certain comfort in them. Taking on the role of passionate "hero" for something you believe in can be rewarding. It is time to let the team take over and find ways to navigate what we now face – a world embroiled in a pandemic and/or perhaps a world that might one day be post pandemic, but in the process, has dramatically changed.

And so, I have decided to retire from my beloved school. I welcome Dr. Laura, our new director with great optimism. I

have nine years of personal experience with Laura and I know her to be a hard and thoughtful worker. Laura has also expressed her appreciation and fondness for this place where she grew up and "where kindness prevailed."

Meantime, I will turn to carving out a space where the reins of leadership will be more relaxed (there is little hope that I can leave my leadership habit totally behind - just ask my patient husband of 48 years.) I have all faith the team will face the challenges we see before us and "never, ever" give up. Our faculty and administrators know exactly what they are supposed to be doing. They have purpose and are fulfilling their heart's desire and soul's intention. When your life is on course with its purpose, you are at your most powerful. You may stumble, but you will not fail. The work of The Music Academy is incredibly powerful and it is purposeful. It has lifted our students, our community and made much difference in all of our lives - the work must continue. Whatever your role was (and those of you reading this do have a vital role) thank you for your time, your attention and your continued love.



Marti Frantz

### Faculty & Staff

Mary Ann Anderson\* - violin  
Janice Bartik - Business Manager  
Michael Beert\* - cello  
Valerie Blair\* - piano  
Lauren Canitia-Viel\* - Prelude/violin/viola  
Ella Caswell\*\* - piano/violin  
Cindy Doering\* - violin  
Debra Dew - piano  
Shannon Englert\*\* - violin  
Richard Evans - cello  
Nanette Felix - harp  
Laura Eakman\*\* - Executive Director  
Lillian Gonzalez - Piano/Prelude  
Rachel Handlin\* - violin/ String Program Director  
Lauren Hart\* - Music Lab/Prelude  
Cathy Herdeman - voice  
Patricia Jeske\* - piano  
Brandon Lamm\*\* - violin/viola  
Don Larson - clarinet/saxophone  
Candy Lovan\* - piano/Prelude  
Kerena Moeller - cello  
Dave Nelson - guitar  
Anne Olson\* - piano program assistant  
Jacques Saint-Cyr - flute  
Kathryn Siegel-violin/Prelude/Piano Director  
Betty Waits—Assoc. Business Manager

### School Board

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\* Music Academy Parent  
\*\* Music Academy Alum

## Living Well: A Workshop Session for Adult Students

### By Dr. Deb Dew, Piano Faculty member

Dr. Jake Hardesty, Dean and Associate Professor Education at Rockford University and former band teacher, led a discussion about the advantages and pleasures of learning to play an instrument as an adult. All agreed that performing music has many benefits such as enhancing mental skills and providing purpose and pleasure to life. Participants each shared their stories of why they chose to learn to play a musical instrument.

The discussion then progressed to memorizing and practice techniques for adults. Dr. Hardesty and participants shared memorization tips such as choosing starting places in a piece in case of a memory lapse. All enjoyed Dr. Hardesty's performance on the saxophone as he demonstrated tips such as choosing small segments of a piece to practice when learning new music.

Thanks to Dr. Hardesty and Music Academy adult students for the tips and lively discussion at the school's annual workshop, Saturday, February 19, 2022.



## 20 PRACTICE TIPS & TRICKS FOR MUSICIANS OF ALL AGES

Practicing is key to achieving your musical goals—no matter your age, instrument, or experience level. It's the only way to improve and grow. In addition to helping expand your skills and improve your sound, regular practice teaches music students the importance of self-discipline, perseverance, and focus.

Here is sage advice from several of our artist faculty members:

- It's important to touch your instrument EVERY DAY! Even if it's just 10-15 minutes, it helps keep your piece fresh in your mind. That way, instead of spending your limited practice time re-familiarizing yourself with the piece, you can pick up where you left off and make progress!
- Leave your instrument out of its case. If you see your instrument and it's out of the case, that's one less thing to make it challenging. It's right there! Get at it!
- Enjoy it! When I was a student, I would turn on the radio or my favorite recording and play along with the songs, just to see if I could find the right notes. Your rhythm will improve, you'll be using your scale knowledge, and your ear will improve by finding the right notes or key. Learning an instrument shouldn't be all hard work, it should be fun too!
- Marti Frantz**, *cellist and former Music Academy Executive Director* who reminds you to practice everyday you eat!
- As much as you want to play through the parts you know, make sure you spend more time on what you DON'T know yet!
- Make some time to play for your parents and family. This will help you get used to playing for an audience. The more you do it, the easier performing will become. And parents, don't forget the applause and encouragement.
- Start Early – Music Academy Prelude Classes are great ways for babies and caregivers to get in the routine of making music a part of life.
- Kathryn Siegel** *Piano and Prelude Program Director* – Check out our spring and summer Early Childhood classes!
- Practicing, to be effective, needs to be part of your daily routine. Set up a specific time for it. For instance, after dinner, or the first thing after school—the same way brushing your teeth is part of your daily routine after waking up and before going to bed.
- For high school students: During school finals, many students don't practice piano. But it is shown in studies that you learn more effectively if you alternate different brain activities. So, for instance, if you have Chemistry finals, don't stop practicing piano. Alternate your Chemistry study with practicing piano—Chemistry for 30 minutes, then piano for 30 minutes. The result is that you will be able to effectively learn for Chemistry and piano.
- Select small segments of a piece to practice each day. Practice that segment until you can play it without mistakes at least twice in a row.
- Dr. Deb Dew**, *Piano Faculty Member*. Advancing piano students can look forward to one day joining Dr. Dew Starmakers and Jubilation piano group class!
- Slow practice is best! It allows you to get finger movements correct, building good habits. Then, increase tempo.

- For sight-reading, remind your eyes to look ahead several notes from the one you are playing, so you can prepare if notes rise, fall, or jump.

- A metronome is a great tool for musicians. It is fun to challenge yourself to see how fast you can play a scale! Can you make it to the "200 Club"?

- Dave Nelson**, *Guitar Faculty Member*. Mr Nelson enjoys his guitar classes and especially guitar ensembles. Join him for lessons and group classes.

- A votive candle burns 3-4 hours! Have a parent light a candle every time you practice and blow it out when you're done. When the wax has burned up completely, bring the empty candle case to your lesson to pick a prize! One prize per burned case or four burned cases equals a gift card to McDonald's. You can get a coffee, an ice cream, or a burger with your card to celebrate your hard work!

The real reward? You sound amazing and are establishing consistent practice habits!

- Make music with **Rachel Handlin** in her ever clever, fun filled Suzuki Violin Group Classes.

- Practice starting near the end (or end of section), working backwards (last phrase, back up a phrase and play to the end, etc.)

- Practice everything staccato.

- For long runs (Chopin piano music is really good for this) practice in 5-note groups. First 5 notes, several reps, start on the second note, several reps, etc. to the end of the run. Lot of work on the front end, but ultimately very efficient.

- Valerie Blair**, *Piano Faculty* who tells us she is not looking for ANY more piano students at this particular moment!

- Ask the student if they can imagine their improvement if they practiced 180 hours. My thought is, they could envision themselves greatly improved. Well, then ask what goals they would like to see accomplished by this time next year? And do they think 180 hours would be enough to achieve those goals. I think most would say, yes. This would hopefully put into perspective that 180 hours is 30 minutes per day for one year with four days off for holidays.

- Don Larson**, *clarinet and saxophone*. Now is the time to get a leg up on joining the band in the next school year. Private lessons are huge for quick and rewarding learning-fun!

- I always ask Isabelle to choose what she'd like to play first. This draws her attention in to the practice, teaches her to learn how to make practice decisions and allows her take ownership. It also makes it easier for me to then get her to do what "I" want to work on next.

- If you play the instrument even minimally, play along with the student. This gives you empathy and makes the practice a lot more fun!

- We always make repetition practice into a game. Any sort of game is well-received by a child (much more so than telling them they have to play something perfectly 10 times in a row). After determining the number of repetitions and what a "perfect" one is, we: toss things into a basket across the room; roll all kinds of fun dice; get up and run around the house each time it's played perfectly; do jumping jacks; make Grama keep count and absolutely amaze her with how many "good ones" she can play (we got up to 63 one day!)

- Anne Olson**, *Piano Faculty and Isabelle's whiz of a practicing partner/grandmother*.

## KICK STARTING YOUR LEGACY

With their gift to The Music Academy our donors aren't just promoting a cause close to their hearts. They are becoming a force for good. There are many ways people can give to make their community more cool and connected. Your name can live on as champion of the causes and places dear to you...for generations to come. Consider a gift to The Music Academy Foundation's Endowment Campaign and know that you are helping remarkable young people achieve their full musical and personal potential while making our entire community more vibrant and vital. Kick start your charitable legacy! Please call The Music Academy at 815-986-0037. We can help!



Music 2 Celebrate; Celebrate 2 Music, February 20, 2022.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**May 7, 2022** – Closing Activity Concert and Senior Recognition. First Lutheran Church, Sanctuary.

**May 14, 2022** – Solo Recitals at 8:30, 10:00, and 11:30 a.m. Loreen Hall and First Lutheran. Performance and Run Through schedules TBD.

**May 19, 2022** – 6 – 8 p.m. Select MA students perform for an Anderson Japanese Gardens Donor Party. Attendance by invitation.

**Sunday, June 12, 2022** Nadia Jensen. Senior Recital First Lutheran Sanctuary.

## AUCTION EXCEEDS GOAL

The Music Academy Foundation's on-line auction closed its books with \$5,418 – exceeding our stated goal. These funds support The Music Academy's student scholarship and financial aid fund. Many thanks to our donors to the auction and to those who purchased auction items in support of this effort. Interestingly, the "fund a need" item – tuning Music Academy pianos – was a popular choice.

## ALUM NOTES

**Chantalle Falconer** studied music at The Music Academy in Rockford with Rachel Handlin, violin and **Tricia Jeske**, piano. She went on to receive a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from Olivet Nazarene University where she was also the concert master for the symphony orchestra. She performed as soloist with the orchestra after being a finalist in their concerto competition in violin and piano.

She went on to receive a Master of Arts in Collaborative Piano and Music Industry at Houghton College in New York. She worked as a freelance collaborative pianist and voice coach at the State University of New York at Fredonia for three years. Presently, she is enrolled in a Doctor of Musical Arts program in Collaborative Piano and Coaching at the University of Minnesota where she has a private studio of piano and violin students.

You know those Monster Piano Classes at The Music Academy? That is about the beginnings of collaborative piano work and it is somewhat unique offering at The Music Academy. We think learning to play piano collaboratively is part of becoming a complete musician – and it is fun! Apparently, it stuck with Chantalle!

And, more about our alums:

**Anthony Epperson** is attending Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa and plays his violin with the University orchestra.

**Savannah Jackson** is attending Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana as an engineering major and playing her violin with the University orchestra.

Keep us posted about our alums. We are happy to share their good news!