



The Music Academy
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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Since stepping into the role of executive director in April, I have delighted in getting to know many of our wonderful Music Academy families. I look forward to forming relationships with everyone this year, and would like to begin that process now by introducing myself.

I am thrilled to be re-joining The Music Academy community after graduating nearly 20 years ago. The education that I received from The Music Academy has been perhaps the most important leg of my musical journey; it was the foundation that established my musical future and planted the seeds that eventually led to three degrees in music. I and so many others owe more than we can measure to Marti Frantz, who cofounded the school with Eleanor Stanlis in 1987. When Marti retired in April, I was awarded the formidable task of filling her shoes; one parent suggested instead, that I simply “fill my own shoes,” and I appreciate that sentiment.

I am a teacher. Teaching is where I am the best version of myself: while I’m teaching I am my most creative, most joyful, most humble, most patient, and most open to learning. The greatest thrill in life is seeing a student make progress. I strongly believe that the environment in which we learn contributes to that progress: it should be joyful but with high expectations, one that nurtures and challenges, and one that is rooted in a supportive community. While researching The Music Academy in preparation for my interview, I realized that my teaching philosophy aligned seamlessly with the school’s – talk about planting seeds.

I know that learning to play music at a high level positively contributes to many aspects of a person’s life. As a teaching artist with El Sistema Colorado which serves primarily low-income students and whose mission globally is to improve the life trajectory of people living in poverty through music, I observed the impact that a musical community had on dedicated families. Societies are strengthened by access to resources such as ours at The Music Academy.



Dr. Laura teaching a violin lesson.

My most recent role as Chair of the Strings Division for the Community School at Kansas State University taught me that administration is an extension of teaching; my strengths, creativity, and experience as a teacher aid in my decision-making as an arts administrator. I am able to see growth in students from a different vantage point and that is exciting.

The goals for 2022/23 will continue on a similar path to what Marti and Eleanor established 37 years ago. We will of course offer high-quality instruction and endeavor to provide meaningful performance and educational opportunities. This year will include a strong community-building initiative: we have included a number of opportunities designed to make all feel welcome and nurtured within our musical community. The goal is to rebuild what has been lost since Covid, but also strengthen support systems for parents, establish new relationships among students, and include more of our surrounding community.

I’m looking forward to getting to know all of you and witnessing exceptional growth!

Dr. Laura Eakman

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, September 10th: Group Lesson Potluck and Play-in

Our first Saturday group lessons will include a special schedule! Students will meet in their instrument-specific group lessons before joining everyone for a potluck-style breakfast in the fellowship hall of First Lutheran Church. We will end the morning with a giant, school-wide play-in which will include Suzuki pieces and fun, no-practice pop songs! More detailed information will be sent out.

Wondering what a “play-in” is? The play-in is an iconic Suzuki event. Because all Suzuki students play the same repertoire, they know all of the same pieces. This makes for a fun and easy way to make music with others. A play-in can range from just a few students to thousands. We’ll expand on the idea by including all instruments and adding additional, non-Suzuki specific repertoire so that traditional students can join in. The concept is simple: if you know the piece, play; if not, take a break!

Saturday, December 9th - 10th: Randy Sabien & Winter Workshop

Jazz violinist and Rockford native, Randy Sabien will be at The Music Academy! In a collaboration with the Mendelssohn Performing Arts Center, his band will host a concert featuring Music Academy students on Friday, December 9th at FLC Sanctuary. All Music Academy families will receive free tickets to this event! On Saturday, December 10th, Randy will host improvisation workshops for Music Academy students as part of our Winter Workshop.

Randy Sabien is an American jazz violinist, composer, and music educator. He founded and chaired the Jazz Strings department at Berklee College of Music and he has collaborated with many artists including Bela Fleck and Corky Siegel. (source: Wikipedia)

Practice Fun:

We will be starting a new practice challenge this Fall! Students will receive a keychain and will collect charms for each 5 days of practice. Keychains can be displayed on cases or music bags, fun stickers will be an option as well. Special prizes for 25, 50 and 100 days of practice. There is a wide-variety; from music to travel to cats and everything in between – collect as many as you can!



Alumna Spotlight

Kristianna McCombs recently won first place in the Mountain Soul Vocal Competition. Part of her award included an opportunity to record in Nashville and a guitar signed by Dolly Parton! Kristianna was a cello, piano & violin student at The Music Academy.

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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
Debra Dew - piano
Laura Eakman** - Executive Director
Shannon Englert** - violin
Richard Evans - cello
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
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Check out our new website!!
Musicacademyinrockford.com

PARENTS: THE AT-HOME TEACHER

Children look to their parents or caregivers to model behaviors and help them navigate any journey – and music is a long one. Joshua Bell, Hillary Hahn and even Mozart have had famously involved parents who helped their children become accomplished musicians; the children did not do it on their own. It's not always easy work and there is no straight line to progress but the long-term benefits of this collaboration are invaluable. Please remember that The Music Academy is your partner in this journey!

We asked some of our teachers to share what they believe is most important for parents to know when starting music lessons with their child – or even as a reminder many years into lessons:

My successful students have parents who:

Let their children know that this is a long-term commitment.

Do the listening and reviewing! Practice and attend lessons and groups!

Participate in both mind and body; observe lessons.

regularly so that they can help their child practice effectively at home.

Take pictures and videotape important parts of the lesson

Takeaway: commit to lessons and be there for your child

Tips for parents new to music lessons:

Let your child know that you are listening to their songs and let them know which ones you particularly like. They will like those best too because of your interest.

Help your child to be open to new ideas and ways of looking at things.



Sam Spates and his mom, Michele

Communicate with your teacher - good or bad – we all have your child's best interests in mind.

Feeling overwhelmed with practicing at home? It's hard! It's totally worth it, so hang in there!

Takeaway: take an active role in the process – find favorite games, songs, and experiences alongside your child.

What do I most often have to explain to my students' parents?

Progress does not always come in a straightline. Interest may increase and decrease. Your job is to be patient and encourage your child throughout.

Regular, consistent attendance is key.

Repeating small sections with proper technique is [most often] more important than playing through the entire piece with sloppy technique.

Students will not always love it and will go through different phases of interest. It's a marathon, not a sprint! Also, you do not have to have a music background or plan on being a professional musician to benefit from studying music.

Takeaway: be consistent and stay in it for the long-haul. The lessons learned from sticking with something even when it's difficult affect all other aspects of your child's future.

What do I want all parents to know when their child is beginning private lessons?

You are important – as important as the child and the teacher. We each need each other. Communication is essential. That providing their children with the gift of music will change their family's lives and their children's lives for the better. It builds character and a beautiful heart and spreads it around to others. Magical!

Try not to be constrained by what you remember your own musical training to be and allow your child to create his or her own experiences.

It is important for parents to know that they and the teacher are partners in the child's musical training. The teacher knows pedagogy; the parents know their child. The teacher needs feedback from parents about what is working and what is NOT working.

Takeaway: communication between parent, child, and teacher is essential.



Kaya Lin and her mom, Emily

A THANKS FOR A SPECIAL FAREWELL

Dear friends,
Thank you all for adding to the fun and joy of my retirement. Your well wishes and gifts are dear to me. Sharing with the students and their families on Senior recognition day in May was right up my alley. For me, all these years have really always been about the students and the families. Watching students grow, flourish and learn to contribute their gifts to their community was the motivation I needed each day of the past 36 years.

enjoying the gift certificates from the East State Street restaurants I came to love while working downtown - the Parent Organization knows me well! The lovely garden party hosted by the Foundation was a sweet, final note. The last in a string of wonderful celebrations in the Spring of 2022 that I will always cherish and remember.

It has been my pleasure to serve. I thank you for that opportunity. And, I thank you for your gifts, kindness and love as you wished me well in my future.

*With great appreciation and fondness,
Marti Frantz (Ms. Marti)
Music Academy Director Emerita*

*It always helps to have people we love beside us when we have to do difficult things in life.
—Fred Rogers*

IT'S WORTH IT! HANG IN THERE

Hi. I'm Susan MocarSKI and I'm Dr. Eakman's mom. I'm so proud of her and so happy that she and her family are back in Illinois and I wanted to share with you a little about how we both got here.

When Laura was five, she kept saying over and over, "I want to play the violin." I don't know where that came from. I've taught instrumental and general music in schools and privately for over thirty-five years, but when Laura said she wanted to play violin, I didn't even own one. My exposure to violin consisted of a one semester course at the University of Illinois and a semester of student teaching elementary and high school orchestra. She was relentless though, in her insistence on learning to play the violin, so I called the Music Academy, and what resulted was not only a lifelong vocation for Laura, but an incredible immersive experience in music education for me as well.

In my university studies, I'd learned about the Suzuki Method in theory, but through the Music Academy I was able to see the Suzuki Method in practice. I took parent lessons for weeks before Laura was ever able to touch even a box violin. I learned the importance of being the "home teacher." I'm not sure, however, that I was prepared for how difficult the job of being a home teacher would be over the years.

Laura, like almost every new music student, was very excited in the beginning and it was easy to get her to



Dr. Laura Eakman was the viola soloist at Sinnissippi Park, August 2, 2022, with the Rock Valley Summer Festival Orchestra for Music in the Park.

practice and attend lessons. Also, like almost every music student, when the newness faded and skills became increasingly challenging, it was NOT easy. There was stubbornness and many times there were tears. Thankfully, all of Laura's teachers at the Music Academy were supportive and understanding and they gave me lots of suggestions for home practice that were very helpful.

Eventually the collaborative nature of music became its own reward for Laura when she was in high school. My job as home teacher was gradually replaced with roles of taxi driver and cheerleader.

Of course, I'm immensely proud of all that Laura has accomplished, but not every student will make a career of music. I can tell you though, that she got so much more out of her music

education than a career path, and as difficult as it is to be that home teacher, taxi driver, and cheerleader, the rewards far outweigh the occasional struggles.

Just last night I happened to have dinner in Providence, Rhode Island with a former violin student of my own. She didn't make a career of music. In fact, she's now the managing librarian for the State Capitol of Rhode Island. She told me that learning to play the violin was instrumental (sorry!) in her overall education and she's looking forward to getting her own children started soon.

What you're doing isn't always easy. It might even be difficult more often than it is easy. It's worth it. You're giving your child a gift they'll thank you for - eventually. Hang in there.

KEEPING YOU UPDATED



Chamber Week was a Hit!

Eighteen students participated in our Chamber Week in July! Students received instruction from guest artists, the Kalara Quartet as well as Music Academy Faculty. Each morning consisted of small chamber ensemble rehearsals and a sight-reading orchestra. The week concluded with a concert on the final day – every group performed and sounded wonderful! Congrats to those who participated and we hope to see even more students get involved next year.

A Facelift at the Academy

The Music Academy has received some upgrades thanks in part to a grant from the Kjellstrom Family Foundation. The grant was intended to help us improve on safety and appearance of our very cool, old learning space in downtown Rockford.

Many thanks to contractor Scott Aska for the indoor and outdoor painting at Loreen Hall. New dawn to dusk lighting in the alley was installed and has really been noticed by many when leaving the school in the evening hours.

Piano instructor Tricia Jeske said, "The new lights in the alley are wonderful! They make me feel so much safer when I walk out to my car."

You might be interested to know this building was originally Westminster Presbyterian Church and was built in the 1860's. It burned and was rebuilt as a European-style choir school in the 1940's by Frist Lutheran (who also used it as a Sunday School building.)

