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## Bend music teachers, students rock on through COVID-19 pandemic

*Schools offer virtual lessons, opportunities for budding instrumentalists*

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY • The Bulletin

**B**efore March of last year, 13-year-old Jaymi Dickinson was a singer with one of Cascade School of Music’s rock ensembles. Then COVID-19 hit Oregon, triggering closures and restrictions on gatherings throughout the state. Playing music with a large group of students was out. Dickinson started taking songwriting and guitar lessons through Zoom with Cascade School of Music instructor Matt Puccio Jr. She has since composed roughly 35 original, complete songs or portions of songs.



Jaymi Dickinson, a 13-year-old student at High Desert Middle School, takes an online songwriting and guitar lesson with Cascade School of Music teacher Matt Puccio Jr.

Tracy Dickinson/  
Submitted photo

“I had always wanted to write songs, and the pandemic almost helped me find what I wanted to write songs about,” she said.

Students and teachers at music schools across Central Oregon have had to adapt to a pandemic-stricken world. But with families stuck at home together trying to work and attend school under one roof, learning and playing music can be an important stress reliever.

“We all know how powerful music is,” Cascade School of Music Executive Director Robert Lambeth said recently during a Zoom call with voice instructor, Cullie Treichler, and violin instructor, Miya Saito-Beckman. “... How this is a constant in so many people’s lives and how this has been a cornerstone for their mental health has been very telling and very obvious to all of us.”

Like most things music during COVID-19 times, lessons haven’t continued without some hiccups. Cascade School of Music’s enrollment dropped to almost zero in March when Oregon closed due to COVID-19 and the school transitioned to virtual learning, Lambeth said.

That number has steadily risen. There are currently 325 students enrolled in music lessons with Cascade School of Music, roughly 44% fewer than in a normal year, Lambeth said.

The school restarted in-person lessons in October after unveiling its safe studio for use with voice lessons and other aspirant instruments. The studio features rooms for the instructor and the student separated by a plexiglass window and a thin wall that allows sound to travel through it.

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