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A Community of Musicians Moves to Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini



First jamming session in Lafayette with Jonathan Freeman playing lead guitar and Patrick Bradley to the right. Photo Sophie Braccini

guitar, supported by teachers on the bass and drums. Freeman's been learning the guitar with Bradley for three years and his mastery was impressive. Other young students, more and less advanced, kept following one another to the stage, playing different instruments or singing. Jamming time was from 4 to 6 p.m. for the younger students, 7 to 9 p.m. for the oldest.

"Playing in front of an audience is an integral part of the music experience I want to give to my students at any level and age," says Bradley. "I am a professional musician and we also do jamming here that's very advanced. But the beginners love it, too; it gives them a goal and the satisfaction of really being a part of a supportive community, and that's highly motivating." Bradley sees his school as a community first; a community that happens to be teaching music.

Bradley also invites celebrity artists like Orestes Vilato, the 2009 Latin Grammy Award nominee, to teach master classes and partake in the jam sessions. "We teach all ages and all levels," he adds. Professional musicians, like Kenya Baker, come to take lessons because they want to continue to improve.

Bradley may be an artist, but his left-brain is very active, too. When students become members of the school, they get Bradley School of Music's highly structured instruction manual that takes them on "a step-by-step path to proficiency." Students define short- and long-term goals with their instructor and monitor their progress, even online if they prefer.

Monthly memberships include the method and a weekly lesson. Part of the program involves the monthly Jam Week with the live performance, a group jam class on Sunday night with all the stage equipment, and counseling sessions on Tuesday, where students can work with an instructor on a topic of their choice, and even jam with other drop-in students or teachers.

Students can learn piano, percussion, guitar, bass, voice, mandolin, drums, banjo and ukulele. Classically trained and professional musicians teach all the classes.

Bradley School of Music is also offering summer camp sessions through the Moraga Recreation Department: Intro to Music, which allows young students to experiment with a different instrument each day; a guitar and bass camp; and a ukulele camp. Others who want to be part of the school will be assessed by Bradley and included in a summer group.

For more information about the camps, visit www.moraga.ca.us. For more about Bradley School of Music, visit bradleyschoolofmusic.com.

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According to Patrick Bradley, his music school is as much about community as it is about music. The young man who recently moved his business and his home from Concord to Lafayette is a professional musician who decided to trade some of his career as a performer to become an educator, with a creative and empowering way to transmit his passion of music. He recently moved Bradley School of Music to a charming cottage at 1042 Brown Avenue in Lafayette because he needed room to expand and fell in love with the central location.

The first jam session was held May 20 in the Brown Avenue cottage. Early in the afternoon, the younger players were invited to come and the energy of the place rose quickly. "I started performing at jam sessions a month after I began learning the guitar," says 9-year-old Nate Elwood after his first performance in the new Lafayette studio. Monthly jam sessions are a key component to Bradley's method.

The roomy cottage opens to a large room with a stage. Facing it, the audience sits at high and low tables. On the night of the jam session, staff served snacks and drinks in the back, and the high ceiling reverberated nicely with the music. Twelve-year-old Jonathan Freeman played lead

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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