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## MEET OUR TEACHERS! MCGAW YMCA MUSIC STUDIO

**Liz Zenz Plemmons**  
**Music Program Coordinator**  
*Piano and Voice*

Elizabeth began her musical career at the age of three with her first piano lesson. The daughter of two full-time music educators and performers, she grew up participating as a pianist, singer, and percussionist in a wide variety of settings. She competed in the state Solo/ Ensemble festivals and the Wisconsin School Music Association (WSMA) State Honors Choirs, denoting her as one of the top 25 female high school vocalists in the state of Wisconsin. She sang back-up for Sesame Street's Bob McGrath, and took on other miscellaneous appearances with local groups and ensembles. She started her teaching career when she was a senior in High School.

After graduation in 1994, Liz moved north to pursue a degree in Music Education with a Vocal emphasis from the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire. There she completed the requirements for a minor in piano performance, and she began teaching full-time in 1998.

After living in Washington DC during the summer of '98 and working there as an intern with a group of deaf and hearing-impaired individuals, she came back to Eau Claire to find there was a growing interest in music education for local deaf and Hearing-impaired children. She used her proficiency in American Sign Language and her experience with deaf culture to develop curricula for the hearing-impaired students that she took on. At about the same time, Liz also began to specialize in teaching children with learning disabilities including ADHD, a condition with which she herself had been diagnosed. During this time, Liz also participated in many local ensembles, including the critically-acclaimed group The Master Singers, and was a voice student and rehearsal accompanist in the studio of world-renowned soprano Oksana Bryn at the MacPhail School of the Arts in Minneapolis, MN.

In September of 2002, Liz decided to transplant herself to the Chicago area to further enhance her musical career and education. She has put her talents to good use in a number of other ways including accompanying and adjudicating for the WSMA Solo/ Ensemble Festivals, and choral singing and accompanying in the Northwestern University Music Department. She has studied jazz technique for both piano and voice with Chicago pianist Chris White and she currently performs with Coriolis ([www.coriolis.org](http://www.coriolis.org)), a local a capella vocal ensemble. She is a vocal coach and former rehearsal/orchestra pianist for the McGaw YMCA's long-running musical theatre program for high school students, "Brillianteen" and is the music director for "Brillianteen, Jr." She is also an active member of the Music Educators National Conference (MENC).

Liz and her husband Mark live in Zion with their cats, Kenya and Ed.

**Bryan Albert*****Guitar***

Bryan Albert has enjoyed a multifaceted freelance career as a teacher, performer, studio artist, and composer.

Outside of his private studio, Bryan has taught at Northwestern University, Fox River Academy, and Music Makers for Life, Inc. He holds a Masters Degree from Northwestern University and a Bachelors Degree from Northeastern University, both in Music Performance. He has studied with Denis Azabagic, Brian Torosian, Tomas de Utrera, and Anne Waller. He has also performed in Master Classes with Sergio Assad, Oscar Ghighia, and Robert Guthrie.

Bryan has been a professional performer and teacher since 1998 and his professional and teaching styles include Classical, Rock, Folk, Blues, Jazz, Pop, Punk, and Metal.

**Melissa Marquardt*****Piano***

Melissa brings energy and enthusiasm to the team, having received her BA in Music from the George Washington University in 2007. There she studied under world-renowned pianist, Malinee Peris, and focused on developing her own compositional style. She has played and composed for various ensembles and is currently part of a group that is becoming an active part of the Chicago music scene.

Her other work experience includes special training and work with children that have learning disabilities, a population that has helped her explore the ways music can be used as a therapeutic medium and a form of communication without words. She encourages her students to develop a personal connection to the piano while exploring their own creativity and developing self-confidence.

**Ashley Grebe*****Violin***

Ms. Ashley has been an active musician and music educator in the Chicagoland area for 10 years.

Ms. Ashley earned her degree in Music Education from DePaul University's School of Music where she served as first chair violinist of the DePaul Chamber Orchestra. At DePaul, Ms. Ashley studied with Mr. Robert Waters and Mrs. Olga Kaler. She has very diverse musical interests and has played violin in classical, klezmer, celtic, jazz, and rock ensembles.

Ms. Ashley enjoys learning new styles and genres of music and playing the guitar, cello, viola, and bass along with the violin. She has performed in many venues in and around Chicago and the suburbs including the Chicago Symphony's Orchestra Hall. She has traveled to perform around the United States as well as in Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Israel.

Her involvement in the Chicago music education community has included teaching music in three Chicago Public Schools as well as several suburban grade schools and high schools. She has also acted as staff with the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras in their operations and education department. She is currently the Director of Orchestras at The Central School in Glencoe, IL where she directs 3 string orchestras, a chamber orchestra, and a fiddle ensemble.