

Tyler Johnson

Suzanne Behnke

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Dr. Molly Doran: The Newest Member of Wartburg's Music Program

After starting off a normal sunny day in the Bachman Fine Arts Center at Wartburg, music students enter classroom FAC 212 as they are optimistic to learn their next topic in Music History II. Once everyone was settled into their seats, they immediately grab out their laptops and notebooks and prepare for a lecture about romantic composure in piano. The instructor then dimmed the lights and began the slideshow lecture. The first slide immediately looked into the romantic music methods and style of famed Polish pianist, Frederic Chopin. After a few slides, a student asked to specify what kind of style Chopin had. That is when assistant professor, Dr. Molly Doran answered that he had a nostalgic method of classical Polish music that Chopin would write in his pieces.

Dr. Molly Doran first joined the Wartburg faculty in the Summer of 2021 while still trying to get her piano doctorate degree from Indiana University. "I plan on finishing my degree by fall break," she said.

Molly Doran was born on March 30th, 1988 in Brighton, Michigan, a suburb town outside of Detroit. She is the daughter of a lawyer and an advertiser and is the second child of seven kids. Molly grew up in a warm social circle that would later influence her to be comfortable around people with different personalities despite being homeschooled.

When asked how she developed a passion for piano, she stated that her mother would buy her cassette tape recordings of Tchaikovsky and began practicing his overtures when she was at a

very young age. This also led her to teach other people in her neighborhood to play the piano when she was 13-years old.

This allowed her to get the opportunity to have her own piano studio in her town and teach other homeschooled students the piano and as well as music history.

After completing her studies, Molly then went and got her Bachelor Arts Degree in music at Hillsdale College in Michigan in 2010. When she was at Hillsdale, she stated that her music theory professor helped inspire her passion.

“It was in my undergraduate studies that I wanted to pursue my passion to teach music history and do more research in music.”

She then went to Bowling Green State in Kentucky and taught piano to other students while studying for her master’s degree. She then spent a nine-year doctorate program at Indiana University where she got “loads of teaching experience,” and became friends with many of professors of the music department there including one of her role models, Peter Burkholder, who has several published piano books and music.

According to the co-chair of the Wartburg Music Department, Eric Wachmann, as Dr. Survilla was retired and the department was looking for a new experienced instructor to teach an advanced music class, Wachmann was impressed by Dr. Doran’s music skills and knowledge that eventually qualified for her to make the shortlist. It was then that her introductory letter was enough to convince him to offer her the teaching position.

“It was one of the best introductory letters I have ever read. She was so descriptive and knowledgeable that we knew she was the one for the job,” he said.

When asked about her plans, Dr. Doran stated that she intended to stay at Wartburg in the long run.

"I plan to have at least a published book or two in the next five years that I am here," she said.

Although dealing with a schedule load in her teaching career, Dr. Doran makes sure she reserves time to spend with her husband and three-year old daughter as they adjust to their new lifestyle in Iowa after moving from Providence, Rhode Island.

Anyone can catch seeing Dr. Doran in the Fine Arts Center either teaching her music history class or giving piano lessons to other students.