



Musical Bridges Program
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What is Musical Bridges?

The University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance strongly supports the goal to recruit from underserved populations. Historically, however, our minority applicant pool has not been as broad as we would like. Those who do apply frequently do not meet the academic and audition requirements for admission.

We propose that the best way to ensure a pool of applicants who will qualify for admission to UMKC Conservatory (or another institution of higher education) is to provide underserved pre-collegiate musicians in Kansas City with quality training prior to arriving at the Conservatory. While some of this can take place through ensemble instruction at the pre-collegiate level, the ability to reach the highest levels of artistry in music and dance almost always depends on individual nurturing through one-on-one lessons beginning at an early age.

To foster this nurturing of artistic potential, the Conservatory has created a “bridge fund” endowment to provide musical training to promising 6th-through-12th graders from the Kansas City urban core. Musical Bridges is funded by generous grants from PREP-KC, the Francis Family Foundation, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City, and the Shumaker Family Foundation.

2007–2008: The Pilot Year

Administrators and music instructors at Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts and Kansas City Middle School of the Arts enthusiastically endorsed the idea of Musical Bridges and partnered with the Conservatory during the 2007–2008 school year in a pilot program with the following elements:

- Music teachers at these institutions work in conjunction with Conservatory faculty and staff to
- identify scholarship students from grades 6th through 12th.
- Selected students receive 60-minute private lessons from the faculty of the UMKC Conservatory’s
- Community Music and Dance Academy for 36 weeks throughout the school year.
- Students also receive instruction in music theory and perhaps music composition from Academy
- faculty or from Fellows in the Composers in the Schools program.
- Students are invited to participate at no charge in concerts, master classes by guest artists, and
- interactive arts experiences (e.g. singing, playing or dancing with a Conservatory ensemble in
- rehearsals) at the Conservatory.
- Each student’s progress is assessed annually. As students mature and skill levels improve, the
- level of training increases accordingly.

Although the purpose of the program is to train students for successful admission to UMKC Conservatory, there is no obligation implied for successful scholarship students either to enroll at UMKC Conservatory or even select music as a major. At the very least, the program supports arts education for underserved populations or students who either can’t afford it or haven’t accessed it in the past. Given the numerous studies correlating arts study and high academic performance and higher retention/graduation rates, this is no small accomplishment.

At the close of the pilot year, Musical Bridges students achieved numerous recognitions and awards:

- Graduating senior Michael Turnbo was accepted to Baker University, where he is now majoring in music.
- Musical Bridges students won scholarships to UMKC Jazz Camp, Lyric Opera Camp, and Canta Filia.
- Musical Bridges students achieved superior ratings at MSHSAA District Festival.

2008–2009: Expansion and Achievement

Building on the success of the 2007–2008 pilot year, Musical Bridges expanded in 2008–2009 to four schools: Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts, Kansas City Middle School of the Arts, Ruskin High School, and Smith-Hale Middle School. The 2008–2009 school year closed with a final concert at White Recital Hall in the James C. Olson Performing Arts Center. In addition to highlighting this year's high achievers, this concert served as the Musical Bridges Instrument Fund Competition. Adjudicated by UMKC Conservatory faculty and prominent Kansas City arts professionals, this competition determined the allocation of funds generously donated by the Shumaker Family Foundation. The funds were awarded to Musical Bridges students Brandon Butler, Sara Johnson, Cheyenne Melton, Andrea Goering, and Tschzyl Berndt, and went towards the purchase of high-quality instruments for their use, as well as scholarships to summer programs and other enrichment activities.

At the close of the 2008–2009 school year, Musical Bridges students once again exceeded expectations, achieving admission to collegiate music programs as well as other honors and awards:

- Graduating senior Andrea Goering was accepted to Northwest Missouri State University, where she is majoring in music education.
- Graduating senior BreAnna Wilson was accepted to the American Musical and Dramatic Academy, where she is studying musical theatre.
- Musical Bridges students won scholarships to the Chamber Music Festival at UMKC, the Midwestern Music Academy, the Community Music and Dance Academy Spring Festival, and other programs.
- Musical Bridges students achieved superior ratings at MSHSAA District and State Festivals.

2009–2010: Pre-Bridges Reaches Out to New Talents

In 2009–2010, Musical Bridges expanded once again to incorporate music composition. Musical Bridges continues to be the most intensive component of the Conservatory's groundbreaking Conservatory in the Schools outreach program, which also includes Composers in the Schools and Ensembles in the Schools.

2010–2011: An Early Start in the Arts

One of the most exciting new developments of the 2010-11 academic year has been the creation of a Pre-Bridges program in partnership with the Kansas City, Kansas, school district. In this new pilot expansion, elementary school students will receive weekly private instrumental lessons with highly qualified professional instructors. By providing access to the same high-quality performing arts training that older Musical Bridges students receive, the Pre-Bridges program is intended to provide a strong foundation of musical experiences starting at an early age. Pre-Bridges students will truly have a head start. The Pre-Bridges program is currently in the final planning stages, and outstanding students have been nominated. Lessons will begin in the fall of 2010.

- Musical Bridges expanded into Kansas City, Kansas, adding eight students from that area.
- We hosted guest artists from the Sphinx Chamber Orchestra as well as Michael Hall, a visiting violist from Vandercook University. Students from Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri, played for these esteemed musicians in master class settings. These artists also made

- presentations for more than 500 students while here in the city.
- For the second year, students performed in a final concert at UMKC where students were awarded scholarships for summer camps, summer lessons and sheet music, as well as instruments for their own use.
- Three seniors who graduated from the program are now attending the University of Central Missouri and the University of Missouri-Columbia.

2011–2012: Growth

In May of 2011, we were able to host of first annual Musical Bridges gala with helped expand the number of students to almost forty KC metro area students. The program now reaches students at Arrowhead, Central, Coronado, Eisenhower, Rosedale, Washington, Argentine, Sumner, West, Hickman Mills Junior High, Paseo and Ruskin.

2012-13: Extended National and Community Support

The UMKC Conservatory's Community Music and Dance Academy was awarded a grant in the amount of \$65,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts as well as a leadership grant of \$120,000 from the Francis Family Foundation. The awards benefit engagement programs, reaching hundreds of school-aged students throughout the greater Kansas City area. Specifically, the grants will allow the expansion of the *Conservatory in the Schools* program in 2012-13, which is comprised of three distinct in-school programs: *Musical Bridges*, *Composers in the Schools*, and *Ensembles in the Schools*. The funding is critical—creating a wide impact within our community. *Conservatory in the Schools* has tremendous relevance, particularly as underrepresented schools have less funding to contribute to arts education. With this additional support from the NEA and the FFF, we will reach 53% more students through *Musical Bridges* (going from 36 to 45 students in 2012-13), and reach a total of 17 schools through *Composers in the Schools* and *Ensembles in the Schools*, up 47% since 2011. One of our students was selected to participate in the Interlochen Arts Camp in Michigan. Seniors graduating from Musical Bridges in 2013 were accepted into UMKC, the University of Missouri, University of Kansas, K-State, and the University of Arkansas – Pine Bluff, to pursue degrees in such areas as music, music education, theater, medicine and veterinary medicine.

2013-14: Growth

We will reach 55 students through the Musical Bridges program in 12 schools throughout the KC Metro Area.

Opportunities: Guest Artists and More

From time to time, Musical Bridges students are given unique opportunities to work with distinguished guest artists. Recent guests have included the Imani Winds (spring 2010), the Sphinx Chamber Orchestra (fall 2010), violist Michael Hall (spring 2011) and DBR (2012 and 2013).

Your support can make a difference in the lives of the talented young musicians involved in the Musical Bridges and Pre-Bridges programs. By sponsoring a Musical Bridges student's instruction, contributing to the Musical Bridges Instrument Fund, or making a donation of any size, you can help keep the arts alive in Kansas City for the next generation.

For more information, email or call Dr. Mara Gibson, Director of the Community Music and Dance Academy, at gibsonmb@umkc.edu or 816-235-2741. Classroom music educators may download the Musical Bridges nomination form from the web address above to nominate your high-potential students for the Musical Bridges program.