

Van Alstyne, Texas (February 23, 2021) -- Van Alstyne, Texas is home to a vibrant historic downtown, beautiful city parks, and unique shops and businesses—but until recently, the town did not have a school of music.

When Dr. Rand Certain, Owner of Plano-based Certain Music, moved to Van Alstyne in 2020, he decided to open a second location in the town, teaching students from his home studio. Certain Music also hired an assistant piano and violin teacher, Gabby Aguirre, and a voice and assistant piano teacher, Claudia Rasmussen, and began offering virtual lessons. After teaching private violin and piano lessons to North Texas students for more than 26 years, Dr. Certain is excited to bring his growing music school to the Van Alstyne community.



“Music is a universal language, and the spirit of learning music helps any individual grow exponentially—emotionally, spiritually and intellectually,” says Dr. Certain. “I am always proud to see the progress a student makes on their instrument, and in their confidence.”

By providing virtual classes, Certain Music offers its students a safe, contactless way to learn a new instrument. Through one-on-one video instruction with a live instructor, students can enjoy a personal learning experience that is very similar to an in-person private lesson.

“In the midst of the pandemic, I was looking for something different and interesting to do—and since we had a piano at home, I thought I would give learning it a try,” says Ketan Ambani, a new Certain Music student. “At the age of 47, and without a single ‘musical bone’ in my body, I

wasn't sure where this would go—but I am so glad I decided to do it. We are doing sessions by video, and yet Dr. Certain has an uncanny ability to understand how I am feeling and adjust his teaching style accordingly. I have been very happy with the lessons, and have learned a lot under his tutelage.”

Although many students are choosing virtual lessons, private face-to-face classes are still available. Certain Music offers one-on-one classes, which can reduce potential exposure compared to group classes. The music school teaches students as young as three, up to age 93, and many families have multiple students enrolled.

“We have been with Certain Music for almost 12 years now, and our three children play both the piano and the violin interchangeably,” says Gabriella Aguirre. “It has been such a delight to see them growing with music as their friend under Dr. Certain’s guidance and teaching.”

Prior to the pandemic, Certain Music held annual student recitals at Steinway Hall in Plano—and for 13 years in a row, students played at the Plano Starbucks on Coit Road each December. In 2020, formal recitals were suspended, but students still took advantage of opportunities to perform, while following COVID-19 safety protocols. St. Paul Lutheran Church in Plano invited the school’s violin students to play for their congregation in September. Students prepared and practiced the music individually, and spread out to practice and perform, wearing masks and practicing proper social distancing. In December, 14 violin students from Certain Music played at the outdoor Christmas tree lighting in downtown Van Alstyne. The large stage provided plenty of space for students and their teachers to stand safely spaced apart, and all Certain Music participants wore masks.

For Madelyn Wheat, a new Certain Music student from Van Alstyne, the performance was an opportunity to challenge herself. “A public performance wasn’t really something I’d have thought I’d do when I set out to learn, but it was a great experience and I look forward to doing it again,” she said.

Wheat had originally been a brass player in her school band, but wanted to learn violin because she enjoyed Celtic / folk fiddle music. “At first, a delicate stringed instrument terrified me and I had no idea where to begin. In just six months, I have come a long way in learning to play. Dr. Certain is kind and patient with me, and has gone out of his way to make sure I have access to Irish/Celtic tunes, knowing they are what and why I want to play.”

Certain Music proves a traditional style of music education, offering private lessons in Violin, Piano, Music Theory and Conducting. For younger students, the studio provides family-style teaching, including the parent or parents, who can participate in learning the instrument along with their children. This may mean re-introducing an instrument to a parent who has previously played or studied the violin, and giving them the opportunity to accompany their child. Lessons balance music theory and technical skills with music playing.

“It has been more than three months since Dr. Certain began mentoring my son, Arjun, in piano, and I already see great progress in his technical abilities and musicality as a whole,” says

Sriram Guruswamy. "Arjun has started to love piano and never misses his practice time, thanks to Dr. Certain's frequent encouragement."

Dr. Certain himself began learning violin at age two, during a lesson with the famed Shinichi Suzuki, founder of the international Suzuki method of music education. He went on to train under many of the world's most respected teachers, including Franklin and Dorothy Washburn, Laura Crawford, Samuel Applebaum, Yehudi Menuhin, and Ivan Galamian. Dr. Certain holds Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees in Violin Performance from Centenary College's Hurley School of Music, as well as a PhD in Musicology from the University of North Texas.

Dr. Certain has performed with the Dallas Symphony, Richardson Symphony, East Texas Symphony, Marshall Symphony, and Shreveport Symphony. He has shared the stage with Violinists Itzhak Perlman, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, and Eugene Fodor, as well as Pianist Dave Brubeck, Fiddlin' Frenchie Burk, Chubby Wise, and Randy Travis. He is a member of the Grayson County Music Teachers Association, Plano Music Teachers Association, National Music Teachers Association, American String Teachers Association, and the National Association of Schools of Music.

Dr. Certain is also an ordained minister, and is grateful to God for the gift of music. "Whether I'm teaching Violin, Piano, or the Bible, God has given me the ability to connect with individuals, sense what they are feeling, and have a down-to-earth conversation with them," Dr. Certain says. "I will be loving, caring, and respectful, and will listen to them and help them learn. First, trust is created. Then, there is a connection of gently teaching that student. When you are in an environment that is caring, loving and respectful, you will feel at ease and able to learn. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to share the joy of music with others."

About Certain Music

To learn more about Certain Music, visit www.certainmusic.net or <https://www.facebook.com/DrCertain/>. To sign up for piano, violin or voice lessons, email CertainMusicStudio@gmail.com or call 469-671-6078.