

# BALANCE

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for montana women

## Out of the Basement, Into the Limelight

Two years after forming a band, teenage girls  
continue delivering a unique sound and a lot of fun

### STYLE

Local offerings in and around  
southwest Montana

### PROFILE:

Jen Hoyord finds unique balance through  
'Holy Yoga,' fusion of yoga and Christianity

Two years after forming a band, teenage girls continue delivering a unique sound and a lot of fun

Caroline Janssen on guitar, left, Amy Giullian on drums, center, and Colleen Schmidt, on bass guitar perform during a recent rehearsal at a Bozeman garage.



BY REBECCA BALLOTTA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
ADRIAN SANCHEZ-GONZALEZ

# Out of the Basement,

# Into the Limelight

**F**OURTEEN-YEAR-OLD Claire Young was classically trained in violin since age 3, and discovered a love for tenor saxophone while in the Sacajawea Middle School jazz band. Colleen Schmidt, 15, was also classically trained in violin since age 5, and discovered a love of jazz bass guitar in Sacajawea Middle School jazz band. Caroline Janssen, 15, trained for six years in piano (didn't really like it), five years in violin (didn't really like it), and finally found her passion in guitar four years ago, fueled in Sacajawea Middle School jazz band. Amy Giullian, age 16, began playing percussion in fifth grade, loving the diversity involved with percussion instruments, but found that she loved jazz drum kit while in, you guessed it, Sacajawea Middle School jazz band.

"I think we need to say a big thank you to Mrs. Hickman, who is a fantastic teacher," exclaims Claire about their former jazz band

From left to right, Amy Giullian on drums, Caroline Janssen on guitar, Colleen Schmidt on bass guitar and Claire Young on tenor saxophone, all together are Basement Jazz.

instructor.

While playing together in the jazz band, and after participating in music-focused Camp Epic in 2010, the girls decided to meet in Amy's basement and play and jam together outside of class. Because they sounded so good together, Claire's dad, Greg Young (interim MSU School of Music director), suggested taking their sound out of the basement and into the world. Thus was born: Basement Jazz.

For the two years they've been together, Greg has continued as their manager, doing their marketing and getting most of the gigs for them. And the girls say he is great at it, being so well connected in the community. Sometimes, as soon as they finish playing one gig, someone approaches them to offer another.

For example, after musician Kelly Roberti featured them at the Bozeman Library Foundation's Jazz and More program, they got a gig at Big Sky. One of their favorite things about playing gigs is that they get to go places they would never have considered going otherwise, like the Baxter Hotel — or places they didn't know existed as venues, like the sky boxes at MSU Stadium.

Although they started out as a strictly jazz group, their style has evolved and they like to mix it up.

Claire explains, "We started off playing just jazz, but now we've branched out quite a bit. So, we can play anything we put our minds to. If there's a new opportunity for a different kind of playing, we're open to that."

"We love experimenting and mashing songs together," adds Caroline. "Like one time, for my solo, I went into this rock riff and everyone just joined in. I thought, I love this band!"

The girls share an easy rapport. And they're happy to share their ideas about what parents can do to foster greater cooperation from their kids when it comes to practicing an instrument. The consensus is to support the child's interest, making it a priority, but don't force them.

"Start the kid early. From 3-7 is the best time, especially for ear training and sight-reading. Your brain is a sponge then," says Claire.

Colleen says, "Also, be open to other things. My parents were so cool with me when it came to bass. With violin, we were a totally classical family. But my parents said,



## OUT OF THE BASEMENT CONTINUED

"You want to play bass and be in a band? Cool. We'll see how this goes."

"My mom was really good about taking me to live musical events, like the symphony," Caroline says. "The more I saw and heard, the more I wanted to do that."

Uniformly, they also emphatically laud the fundamentals.

Per Claire, "My advice to parents: have your kids listen, when they're young, to standards and classical



music — old stuff. Don't have them listen to rap, pop, hip-hop stuff, because that's not great music. When they get to their teenage years, that's awesome and it's fun to listen to, but there's a time and a place. Lay the foundation for them first. Start with the basics, the classics, and that might help them come to love music more." She continues, "Everything is based on scales, so scales and etudes are essential. If you don't know scales, how are you supposed to improvise? And pretty much all classical music is scales all over the place. You have to do the basics all the time."

Amy adds, "Like exercises with a drum line. If you don't master these certain exercises, you won't be able to play something else. You have to know the exercise."

Amy Giullian discovered a love for jazz drum kit in middle school. Above, Caroline Janssen during a break with her guitar.



As a group, they coach weekly with Jake Fleming, and they get in at least one extra practice right before a gig. Their individual music teachers have included Jake, Carrie Krause, Craig Hall, Kyle Brenner, Mike Videon, Jeni Fleming, Jeff Vick, Adam Greenberg, Mike Gillan, Julie Gosswiller, Deborah Schuerr, and YouTube, from which Caroline gets her instruction in harmonica. Amy learned to play spoons on her own.

Both Caroline and Claire also like to write songs. In fact, Caroline has been a winner in the Hand Me Down Some Silver Young Songwriter's Competition, with her pieces appearing on Volumes 4 and 5 of the Footnotes

CDs, and she recently returned from Nashville where she attended a songwriting workshop.

While there, Caroline discovered a new idol to add to those she admires. "Wynona Judd came on stage and she was like, 'This is my house,' and she took total control. She was like, 'I am powerful and you can't make me not be.'" *continued on page 12*

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## OUT OF THE BASEMENT

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do — like, my cousin who has done Ironman competitions. Also, two bass players that have come out of Bozeman: Emma Dayhuff and Suzanne Ford. I took a lesson from both of them when I was first starting out. I thought that all women bass players, at least what I'd seen, were older women in symphony orchestras and such, but then these two women are young, skinny, pretty, strong, and playing upright bass for hours on end. Both of them made me realize that I could do that too."

The girls have long lists of female musicians who inspire them, except for Amy. "I haven't really looked up to any drummers or anything, so for me, it's my stay-at-home mom and my sisters. When I look at them, I realize I can do what I want. I can pursue my education and get

On the subject of role models, Colleen includes "a lot of the women in my family who do stuff that you wouldn't think women would

married and really do whatever I want to do."

Being an all-girl band hasn't presented obstacles that the four can define. Rather, they sometimes feel it actually opens some doors for them. However, ranging in age from 14 to 16 seems to directly affect how they are perceived. Because they're young, people don't expect them to be very professional, responsible, or even very good musically. They have to prove themselves.

"But I really like that because when they see me do my thing, I've overcome that obstacle," Caroline says. "And they come up afterward and say, 'That was amazing!'"

There's no escaping their ages, though, and time management is certainly required in order to juggle schoolwork with performance schedules. Yet, three of the four carried 4.0 GPAs, with the fourth scoring 3.75. Sometimes gigs come first and sometimes academics come first. Amy says, "When you have time to do the

work, do it. Then, you have time for the other things you love to do — like music."

And these girls love to play music. They determine their playlist from the vibe of the crowd and consider their most successful gigs the ones with audience interaction. Altruism is integral in their attitudes as well, playing numerous fundraisers and benefit concerts, including Haven and Arts without Boundaries. They would love to do something with Girls for a Change. In keeping with her love of philosophy, Claire quotes Ghandi to summarize the group's dynamic. "I am who I am because of who we all are."

You can enjoy Basement Jazz at the Sweet Pea Ball inside the Baxter Hotel Ballroom on July 28. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. with tickets available at the door for \$15 per person. All ages welcome. For more information contact ball@sweetpeafestival.org. Visit Basement Jazz online at basementjazz.shutterfly.com.

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