

Humble Music Center: Where Musicians Band Together

By SUSAN MCFARLAND

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If you have an instrument that needs repairing, chances are Gene Garland, at Humble Music Center, is your man. Garland has been repairing instruments for much of his life and has seen instruments of all types, including violins, mandolins, cellos, bows, guitars, saxophones, trumpets, flutes and other horn and wood wind instruments, come through his repair shop. Garland says the only thing he can't fix is "broken hearts" and keyboards. Garland keeps busy with repairs, fixing four or five instruments a day and up to 40 in a week.

Garland's sister, Elaine Garland Mitchell, runs the other side of the house at Humble Music Center, where she organizes music lessons for all ages with one of their six instructors and sells new and used instruments of all kinds, as well as music books, strings and many accessories. Mitchell said people bring in instruments that they have acquired from a wide variety of sources for repair.

"Sometimes they have a family heirloom, other times they have found an instrument at a garage sale or a pawn shop or they order a new instrument online and it won't play. Gene can fix them all and make sure they play properly. We do restoration and repair as well.

We buy antique and vintage instruments right over the counter and resell them online and at the store," she said.

The shop has six different musicians who offer music lessons, either individual or shared. "Brian Turner has been with us since 1978. He teaches guitar, bass, banjo, mandolin, cuatro, ukelele and steel guitar. Tom Dybala has been with us since 2002 and plays trumpet and percussion with the Kingwood Pops. (The Pops has a Christmas music program coming up at the Nathaniel Center on Dec. 1 and 2.) At the music center he teaches horns, wood winds, piano, violin, voice and drums. Paul Mandis has been with us on and off for about 20 years, and teaches piano, bass, guitar and violin. James Wilson is a teacher with North Forest School District and teaches trumpet and drums. Carlos Hernandez is our newest teacher. He's a studio musician and a composer of movie scores. He teaches guitar, piano, voice and drums. He also helps aspiring songwriters put music to lyrics. Benjamin Smith is a very talented young man and he teaches guitar, bass, drums and alto saxophone. The music center also offers drum therapy for individuals with attention deficit disorder or autism," said Mitchell.



Classes are \$25 for 30 minutes of private tutoring. "They can book one lesson and bring a piece of music they need help with, or take a few lessons or they can book every week and come consistently. Sometimes people have mastered one genre, like classical, and want to learn another genre, like slide guitar or jazz. Music is a lifetime learning process; you really never quit learning," Mitchell said. "Parents can drop their kids off for a lesson and go shopping, and know that their kids are perfectly safe with us. It's a great way to enhance children's social skills, because they are on games and computers so much. If they are constantly looking at something someone else invented, they are not tapping into what might be within them that is creative and music can bring that out," she said.

The brother-sister duo, who live in Splendora, opened their first music shop back in 1973. They grew up in a musical family. Their father had a band called Johnny Garland and the Louisiana Playboys who played in Shreveport

at the Louisiana Hayride and in Nashville at the Grand Ole Opry. When he wasn't playing, he was a cabinet builder, and that's where Garland gets all of his talent with wood and fixing things. He spent time in the Navy as a top-secret radioman on a sonar submarine

during the Vietnam war. That's why he's so good at working in small settings.

He plays with his band, the Winchester Band, at the rodeo and the VFW. "He sounds just like Chet Atkins when he plays," said Mitchell. She sang for years with the McChord Air Force Base stage band and has released her own gospel album and sings gospel music at her church.

The first store they opened was Garland's Music at the corner of 43rd and Ella in Houston. "After a fire a few years later, we moved to 45 between Tidwell and Parker, next to Gallery Furniture in 1976. We stayed there until we moved to Humble in 1984, which was the country at that time. Our original Humble location was where the Souper Salad is now located on 1960 and 59. We moved to this building in 1990 and have been here ever since," said Mitchell. She said her claim to fame is her son, Rod Robert, the drummer in the local Beatles tribute band, The Fab 5.

The Garlands have no plans to retire from the music business any time soon. "I tell Elaine, 40 more years and I'm out," quipped Garland. Humble Music Center is located at 138 1st Street W. (across from Harbor Freight).



OWNERS:

*Gene Garland and
Elaine Garland Mitchell*

Humble
Music Center

OPENED DOORS:
1973

FAVORITE QUOTE:

Bach gave us God's word. Mozart gave us God's laughter. Beethoven gave us God's fire. God gave us Music that we might pray without words. (from a German opera house)