



Bulletin file photo

Leo & The Lark (Michael Edmiston and Kiera Lynn) are local musicians who have produced online performances while the area's live music venues are closed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Area musicians are turning to online performances

By Larry Ferguson

If the audience can't come to the show, take the show to the audience.

It's been a tried and true method of entertaining people since the Middle Ages, when wandering minstrels plied their talent from town to town.

Today, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic with its social distancing and temporary shutdown of music venues, local musicians are reviving the concept with the help of the internet and social networking.

"The coronavirus shutdown has been especially disruptive for local musicians," said Kiera Lynn, who with Michael Edmiston comprises Leo & The Lark, a Manitou Springs-based duo specializing in what they describe as funky folk.

"We have a lot of fellow musicians who lost their day jobs so it's especially hard on them."

Several Manitou and Westside venues that regularly support area musicians are currently closed or off-limits to customers/audiences because of the virus pandemic.

Among them are Adam's Mountain Café, Armadillo Ranch, Good Karma Café, Swirl Wine Bar,

The Townhouse Sports Grill, Mona Lisa's Wine Bar, Front Range Barbecue, Benny's Lounge, Lulu's Downstairs, Trails End Taproom, Mother Muff's and Kinfolks.

Lynn and Edmiston are among the area performers who have turned to broadcasting their performances on Facebook.

Their show is titled "Live from the Living Room."

Among the other area musicians and groups who have produced online performances are High Mountain Duet (James Galloway and Samantha Hemmann), Joe Johnson, Ryan Flores, Jeff Daugherty, Snake & The Rabbit (Brett and Leanna Patterson), Eli Blackshear, Ben Pratt and Broken Revival (Jewels and Morgan Kraft).

"Most have some sort of pay system at their sites such as Venmo or Pay Pal in which you can make donations, whatever you feel is applicable, so they can make tips they otherwise wouldn't have," Lynn said.

Lynn is also a co-founder of the Manitou Music Foundation, a nonprofit group launched in 2018 with the goal of supporting live music and community music programs.

The group regularly helps publicize local concerts and perfor-

mances that feature Manitou musicians, and sponsored the Women's Music Fest in Soda Springs Park last summer.

However, continuing that publicity has proven especially challenging in this time of coronavirus, according to Steven Miller, MMF president.

"We've put out requests for musicians to let us know where and when they might be performing online, but there really isn't a schedule at this time," he said. "In the past, when we did our listings, we contacted the venues that had musicians scheduled, so we knew who was playing where and when.

"But there are far fewer venues than musicians, and reaching out to them and listing when they'll be playing every week is a huge task. But if you do some looking (on social networks) there are some great shows out there."

The current economic shutdown has forced the MMF to change its direction, at least temporarily.

For one thing, the group has given up its 124 Ruxton Ave. space "because we thought the money could be better spent helping musicians. We weren't able to generate a cash flow there

because of the current (coronavirus) situation," Miller said.

"So we're currently re-evaluating our goals and mission because everything has obviously changed. We've generated a list of ideas and we're meeting virtually, and we're going through ideas of what we can do, particularly to help those musicians who rely on performing for a large part of their income."

MMF board members are discussing an idea from Kansas City: a drive-in concert.

"The band was playing on a patio at a venue with the audience sitting in cars parked in every other parking space," Miller said. "People could order food and drinks, sit in their car and enjoy the music."

Another idea featured a "flash concert" by local group Tejon Street Corner Thieves that was staged on short notice with no crowd.

Miller pointed out that most of the online performances by local musicians are produced on Facebook Live, a social network that features real-time videos. All that is required is a computer with a camera or a mobile device.

"There are a lot of opportunities to help musicians," Miller said.