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Northern Family Brings Southern Gospel

For nearly a decade, The Garms Family has sung everywhere from historic auditoriums to a makeshift stage in a barn. The Minnesota family puts thousands of miles on their 40-foot motorhome each year. Road life can be grueling, but the late nights, the busy schedule, and the breakdowns are not the most challenging part.

It's when the family of eight gathers for a practice session.

"Forget instrument practice; it's character practice!" laughs Kris Garms, mother of the family. David and Kris and their six kids—Ben, Taylor, Leesha, Sam, Jayme, and Caleb—not only blend vocals but personalities and ideas as they work together.

Family harmony requires grace, humility, and a team attitude.

The Garms Family's musical journey began in 2005. They had settled in Braham, Minnesota after a year and half of traveling the country to help build churches. They never intended to share their music outside their living room. The kids were interested in Civil War history and their small acreage. Singing hymns on Sunday afternoons and attending Southern Gospel concerts was enough. Random people, though, began to approach them with a strange question: "Do you guys sing?" They always said no.

"But God had a different plan," says David, the group's emcee and manager.

Instruments were added as the years went by. None of the three brothers and three sisters had instrument or vocal lessons, but instead each trained themselves to play at least two instruments. Kris laughs: "We have some books and DVDs, but they tend to gather dust!" David and Kris found some old sound equipment at a thrift store and gave it to the family one Christmas.

A desire to share their music outside the home began to develop.

In 2008 a promoter asked the Garms a familiar question, "Do you guys sing?" The family decided to say yes for the first time. He then asked them to open for an upcoming concert. After The Garms Family's first experience on stage, word spread fast about the young group. Local churches and events booked them, and the family crammed instruments, kids, and equipment into a 15-passenger van until they later added a trailer. They felt called to encourage people with the Gospel of Jesus through their songs and smiles.

David, a small aircraft mechanic by trade, lost his job in 2010. Feeling led by the Lord to keep singing, the Garms took a step of faith and entered full-time ministry.

And they haven't looked back.

With six CD projects under their belts—each one recorded at their home studio—The Garms Family has toured in over 25 states. Their eclectic musical style brings a fresh appeal. With over 15 instruments on stage, they can transition from a straight-up Southern Gospel group to an entire bluegrass band.

“It is difficult to nail our exact genre!” says Taylor, 25, who plays piano and mandolin. “We sing entirely Christian music and cover Southern Gospel, bluegrass, Celtic, and modern hymns. Our foundation, though, is the three- and four-part harmony of Southern Gospel—and we love throwing in a cappella arrangements.” Members of the family have also written multiple songs for their repertoire.

The oldest sibling, Ben, is 26; Caleb, the youngest, is 14. All of the kids have been home-schooled. The graduates of the family are involved in additional pursuits besides the band: Ben is an audio engineer, Taylor owns a graphic design business, and Leesha is writing a book series for middle-graders.

“For me, the performances are the best part about road trips,” says Sam, the family’s 17-year old bass vocalist and drummer. “Every time I get on stage I am reminded of the reason we travel thousands of miles: To share the gospel we have been given to every person that comes out to see us sing.”

Not one of them claims to be worthy to stand on stage. Each has an account of failure and sin—daily they fall short of the glory of God. But, because The Garms Family serves a Savior Who died for their sin, Who saved them—not because they were worthy of saving—they proclaim the hope they received with their voices and instruments, to be a living picture of God’s faithfulness and grace. That’s what The Garms Family wants people to know.

For more information about The Garms Family, visit them online at www.thegarmsfamily.com.