Transcript of *The Sound of Learning: Albano Berberi*

Albano Berberi, visually impaired student: Music is pretty much everything. I've been with music pretty much ever since I was born. I started out with a keyboard. I was playing the keyboard ever since I was around five. They say by one year, I was able to play the demo pieces of the keyboards perfectly. And then I started the violin.

[Violin music transitions to computer-game sound effects.]

Video game voice: Laser pistol *[shooting sound]*. Door in zero, eight.

Albano Berberi: And there goes a door. The screen output is minimal at best. Most of the game is played by sound alone. Now, just running through a passage. Wahoo! Basically, I just encountered this mad scientist that goes around stealing my things. If you have sound-orientation skills, you can do it.

Ryan Snyder, composition teacher: Let's go to page 275 in our books real quick just so we can review that, and then we'll have some people come up to the board. C minor. Seven diminish six.

Albano Berberi: Diminish six of two.

Ryan Snyder: And then the last one is an E major, and that's seven diminish six five of four major. So, Albano what did you get for this one?

Albano Berberi: B flat, D flat in G.

Ryan Snyder: B flat from the key signature and D flat in G. Good.

Richard Jackson, associate professor of education, Boston College: This sounds a little strange, but in 2008, this is a wonderful time to be blind. Digital documents allow content to be displayed in multiple ways, like hearing it, feeling it with Braille. Students that couldn't see the computer screen or see a textbook page can now listen to the textbook, or feel the textbook in a Braille version. Students that haven't been able to use their hands for writing papers can now speak to computers and have their speech recognized and converted into print.

Susanna Martini, student: Answer, air pressure prevents this from happening. Source—

Richard Jackson: The beauty of universal design is when accessibility features are built into the environment, or into an educational system, these features are useable by everybody.

Gerald Bilodeau, Advanced Placement computer teacher: We're going to go back and review the GridWorld, because the GridWorld is a big piece of the AP exam, which we have two weeks to get ready for. So, today we're going to make a dancing bug.

Albano Berberi: We call it dancing bug runner, when it should be dance bug runner—maybe.

Gerald Bilodeau: OK, yeah, you're right.

Terry Maggiore, teacher for the visually impaired: When he first came here, he couldn't speak any English. He spoke Greek only. In a year, he learned to speak English, he learned to read and write Braille, devoured anything I could give him that had to do with computers. He just has blossomed with that, and it allowed him to be able to compete and to just be a part of high school.

Gerald Bilodeau: We're good.

Albano Berberi: Wait. Should it be in the code, or in the folder?

Gerald Bilodeau: One of the things Albano has here on his computer is a program called JAWS, which reads to him what's on his screen, and he's able to do 90 percent of the work we do here in computer science using that JAWS program. In fact, I think it actually helps him in doing programming, because it walks through the program sequentially. It reads each and every line to him.

Albano Berberi: World, backslash—where did we put it? Ah, there we go.

Gerald Bilodeau: Doing computer programming is a sequential logic, and so, where other students tend to hop around and look for quick solutions, Albano works through it line by line. The other students in class here, they get confused a bit by having so many options on the screen, whereas if they got through the program step by step sequentially, as JAWS reads it for Albano, I think they could benefit greatly from that. It would force them to go through the program line by line, which is one thing these students don't want to do, and I'd love to have them do it.

Albano Berberi: Oh, it's set to H?

Gerald Bilodeau: It's set to H, yep.

Melissa Figueroa Soto, English teacher: So what we're going to do first is, we're going to share the limericks.

Albano Berberi: The assignment was to write a limerick, but I was kind of inspired, so I wrote five verses, and then I went home and wrote the keyboard line for it. This is called "Albano's Tale." It's a rather self-ridiculing limerick. I hope you like it, because it was fun writing it.

Albano Berberi: *[singing]* Oh, there once was a lad named Albano. / He once said, "How I hate the piano." / So he sat at his spinet and started to clean it. / "Let's spin us a

tune," said Albano. / So Albano stopped trying to sing, / and instead started trying to swing, / but he tripped and fell flat / and his spinet went blat. / 'Twas a sad and horrible thing.

Flavia Viggiani, mobility specialist: I want you to negotiate by yourself that little curve that goes around the rotary. *[Train and traffic noise.]* There you go. Let's just put the map in your head, Albano. We crossed Huntington and we walked on Mass Ave. Now we crossed Westland and we took a left turn, so what's behind you?

Albano Berberi: So, probably it would be actually Mass Ave.

Flavia Viggiani: Excellent. It's like a spiral, and it goes all the way around.

[Computer voice speaking.]

Albano Berberi: This is almost a fully capable computer. You can type in notes. You can go online. I'm pretty much signed on to AOL Instant Messenger as soon as I get home.

Computer: Message transmitted.

Albano Berberi: Hmm—let's see if she actually says anything back.

[Dinosaur fighting noises.]

Albano Berberi: There's this game called *Warpath*. Dinosaurs from *Jurassic Park* fighting in their fighting arena. The sound in the game is detailed enough so that I know when I am the one being hit. The movement is only backward and forward, so there's no way I can stray off a field or something like that. *[Dinosaur roaring.]* Oh, no you don't. He is just about dead.

[Violin music.]