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## How Music Shapes Us

### *Part 3: Finding Your Voice*

*by Mr Z, WDSS Lead Teacher*

The last month at WDSS included both our solo and group recitals, and I'm still smiling wide and filled with pride as I think of them. Seeing our students, young and old, beginner to advanced, navigate the experience of standing up in front of a room and sharing the music they've prepared with such aplomb really fills me up, as a teacher and a person.



Among its many aspects, music is a tool for self expression. It's wonderful to see our students growing in their ability to express themselves from month to month in our program. A crescendo here or an elegantly tapered ending there reflects not only the technical work of bow usage, but also the much harder work of figuring out what we want our music to say. Embedded in our shared Suzuki repertoire is also the notion that every student's Allegro, Bourrée, or La Folia is different, and we as a community are excited to hear their unique interpretation of and approach to these pieces we have in common.

Contrary to the old adage, our work as a Suzuki community is to make sure that our children are both *seen and heard*, and to celebrate their presence and their sound. Through hard work and loving guidance, we empower our students to *share their unique voices*, and that has ramifications far beyond the recital hall.

Wishing everyone in our WDSS community very happy holidays, and we'll see you in the new year!

P.S. Your teachers have artistic voices too! Mark your calendars, as on **2/17 at 2:00 PM** we will once again be presenting a faculty recital in the Sanctuary at St. James. More info coming next month.

*Music is the language of the heart without words. - Shinichi Suzuki*

## The Wand Chooses the Wizard:

### *How Miles Heller found his violin*



In the famous novel series *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling, a prominent motif is that the *wand will choose the witch/wizard* that will wield it. I think this also applies to choosing an instrument; it is not so much your choice as the instrument speaking (or rather playing) to you. This article is about the process of choosing your instrument, as well as a little narrative of how I got mine.

For a while before I got my violin, Georgino, (yes, I named my violin) I'd been wanting a higher quality instrument. As usual, I was growing into new instruments as I progressed through lessons and life in general, but they had been relatively the same tone. My teacher, Ms Lannie, suggested that I get a better quality instrument as I graduated into Suzuki Book 5, and we decided to look into options from my previous luthier, Robertson and Sons. Robertson and Sons has a very convenient feature where it collects credit from one violin return to use on another. The downside is that all instruments must be bought and not rented, however upon the return of the instrument, they will give you a partial refund (minus repairing fees) and apply that credit to the purchase of your next instrument.

Another helpful feature of Robertson's is that they will ship instruments from their headquarters in New Mexico directly to your doorstep. Often they will send some options that apply to your price and quality range and you can pick the one you most like. If you choose one (or don't) they can be shipped right back to Robertson's. If you don't want to do that, they have a showcase in Denver every 6 months or so. The one coming up is January 25-27 at the Broadmoor Hotel, and the one after that is July 16-17 at Stargate Charter School.

Robertson's sent three violins to us, which Ms Lannie and I tested. We picked the one that was not only the highest quality in tone, but also the one that matched my playing style, and felt right physically. We reviewed the sound quality and volume on both the lower strings and upper strings, and went into the upper positions. We felt like Georgino had the right balance, and not only sounded good but felt the most similar to my old violin in terms of width, chin rest placement, and neck girth.

Choosing an instrument can be a challenge. The price range guides how good of an instrument you can get. But if you can find one that matches your skill level, playing style, physical size, and adjustments, the right instrument can take you further than you could ever imagine.



## Upcoming Winter Workshop

*A invitation from Ms Autumn*

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Each year, Primavera Place has hosted a Winter Workshop at the University of Denver. For our Workshop this year, we will be guests of Lamont Suzuki Strings, a program headed by Laura Schleiger at DU. Primavera Place recently partnered with the LSS program for a Spooky Suzuki event (pictured below). It was so fun to get together, seeing new students and teachers, playing fun games with Suzuki pieces, and learning how to do “spooky” sounds on our instruments.

The LSS Winter Workshop will take place on **Saturday, February 24th**. The workshop will have guest teachers, masterclasses (a kind of public performance and lesson rolled into one), game classes, group classes, and prizes!

One of the treasures of the Suzuki Method is seeing people you’ve never even met playing the same pieces that you play. Even though DU is not too far away, traveling across town can feel like a cross-country adventure! This is a great opportunity to bring our communities together, making our world smaller and richer. By focusing together on good technique, good tone, and creating beautiful music together, we can inspire each other to achieve ever greater success with our own playing.

**Please join us for the Winter Workshop on February 24th!** *Enrollment details to come to everyone in a separate email. See you there!!!*



### Dates to Remember

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**January 28th, 2:00-4:00pm** — Advanced Student Chamber Music Reading Party  
*Talk to your private teacher for additional details.*

**February 17th, 2:00pm** — Faculty Recital and Reception at St. James Episcopal  
*Details to follow.*

**February 24th, all day** — Winter Workshop at Denver University  
*Look out for more information in the next newsletter!*



## Oh, The Places You'll Go

### *Part 1: Where Music Has Taken Me*

*by Ms Gill*

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If I think about the best experiences that have shaped me, many of them are traveling the country and the world with my cello. I will always have gratitude for all of the incredible places music has taken me and the way I was able to experience those places and cultures more deeply through music.

I've been to Italy and lived in Viterbo's medieval quarter, enclosed by 11th century walls and towers. During the day we'd rehearse and by night we'd perform operas in the piazza.

I've been to London to study abroad and fell in love with going to the ballet, seeing plays, and soaking up all the museums I could get to. I learned how to maneuver a cello on the second story of a double decker bus and sometimes still remember the British terminology for rhythms (is a quarter note a quaver or crotchet...?).

I've been to Japan with an orchestra performing side by side with local musicians, connecting with my culture, and eating the best food I've ever had.

I've been to Las Vegas, playing stadiums with acts like Michael Bublé and the Trans Siberian Orchestra. The list goes on...

Music is unique in that it is an international language and can bring a different richness to traveling. I can't wait to see what places your musical journeys take you!



## Turkey Talk

### *Teaching Children to Advocate for Themselves*

*by Mrs B*

Talking turkey | *idiom, US informal: to discuss something honestly and directly.*



Several weeks before the Fall Recital, I was having a discussion with several students who had had back-to-back weeks of poor practice about *learning to become their own advocates*.

Paraphrasing, this is what I told them: “You want to play well on the recital and you know that requires more preparation time than we can usually imagine. You need to stick up for your practice time and see that it get’s done so that you will be able to play well on the recital. You need to *advocate for yourself* and your violin work.”

(A small aside here is that the study of music needs advocacy because there are so many other opportunities out there which, though good, are often easier and less time consuming.)

In our lesson as we tried to flesh out what being a ‘self advocate’ meant, I realized that **every 2 year old knows how to be a self advocate**. They have it down! They know what they want and they use their personal power until they make them selves understood; they throw a fit! The question which grew out of our conversation was, do my students **THEY KNOW WHAT THEY WANT....**

I am not sure that my student *knows what they want* clearly enough to advocate for themselves.

*Do they want to just get practice over with? Do they just not want to be in trouble for not practicing, or not have a bad lesson?*

Those seem like lower level, short goals/wants. Can we help them get to a richer place?

I think that is a large part of our job. We, as teachers and parents, need to help them envision and solidify what they want, stretching them to a richer longer vision/goal.

We can help our students develop a deeper idea of what they want by dropping little lovely glimpses of vision by saying:

*My, Ms Lannie will really love how you are working so intently on your sound point.*

*Oh my, could you play that again? I just want to close my eyes and take in how beautiful that sounds.*

*I think that music was really talking to me.*

*Today for practice let's listen to Book 10. We can lie on the floor with pillows, turn out the lights and imagine what it will be like when you play it!*

*When you are in orchestra, which piece are you looking forward to playing?*

*Let's jot down three teaching points of this piece so that when you teach you can pass them on.*

*Let's experiment by taking a video of our first practice and last practice this week and see if we can notice your progress?*

There are all sizes of 'what we want', small, medium and large; a cup of coffee, a vacation and a million dollars!

Part of our task in guiding our students is to help them develop and solidify the near goals, the medium and the long range goals. It is our responsibility to help cast a vision and clarify goals so that the student will KNOW what they want and can begin to refer back to their 2 year old selves and begin to use their personal power to advocate for their dreams.

Becoming a self advocate for your music work looks a little like:

*Mom, Joey wants me to go to his house after school on Friday but I am supposed to practice then. Could we do two practices on Saturday instead?*

*Dad, I have a recital coming up but it is also a busy weekend, could you help me find time to practice?*

*Mom, could you video me so I can see how this sounds?*

*Ms Lannie, I love this piece I heard by Lindsey Stirling. Can you help me to learn it?*

*May I go Busking with Gabby and Rockwell?*

*Can I bring my viola to Grandma's? I want to play her a song.*

I hope you can hear the forward-leaning strength in these possible comments from our students. That is a very healthy and self advocating attitude towards their work that we need to help them cultivate. Guide your child towards a more concrete vision of *what they want* and what they can do on their instrument and that vision will help them to lean forward and begin to advocate for themselves.

*Happy Holidays!*

*from all of us at WDSS*