

WDSS NOTES

IN THIS ISSUE

Mr Z- *Music Shapes Us Part 2*; Resilience Practice Tips from Caleb MS Gill's Listening Adventure
 2nd Generation Suzuki by the MacPhersons Independent Practice by Twylah Turkey Talk from Mrs B
Nurtured By Love book review by Kimberly Bunny Ballads are the Best! by Ms Crystal

Music Shapes Us *Part 2: On Cultivating Resilience*



One of Dr. Suzuki's most important insights was that talent is not inborn, but developed. As we as teachers, practice partners, and students work to develop our students' talent, there are some other important skills that come along for the development ride.

One of the strengths of the Suzuki method is its use of graded repertoire. Each new piece introduces a new technical concept while building upon and reinforcing the old ones. For our students, the process of progressing on their instrument is a constant loop of encountering something novel and challenging, breaking it down to its simplest parts, and learning to put it back together successfully. The loving guidance of teachers and parents provides a safe space to fail, analyze, grow, and succeed. To make a comparison to building real muscles, the little safe failures and ensuing successes along our musical path are the microtears and recovery that allow our resilience muscles to grow stronger over time.

My own journey as a Suzuki student gave me something of a recipe for resilience. To be resilient is to recognize that failure is a healthy and often necessary precursor to growth, to recognize that there are caring people in my life who can help when needed, and to recognize that regardless of the day's successes or challenges, practice means returning again tomorrow to resume the process.

'If Children hear fine music from the day of their birth and learn to play it, they develop sensitivity, discipline and endurance.

They get a beautiful heart.' Shinichi Suzuki

Practice Tips and Insights *by Caleb, John and Brianna Wirt*

Greetings from John and Brianna Wirt! Our son Caleb has studied cello with Mrs. Gill since August 2022. We were invited by Gill and Laura to offer some tips and insights that we might be able to pass along to help and encourage others with practice!

How do you get in your practice?

We have found the best thing for Caleb for consistent cello practice is to keep a routine and stick to it. We typically wake up about 6 AM to get Caleb ready for school for the day. As we're eating breakfast we like to listen to the Suzuki cello CD. Caleb prefers to practice his cello in the morning rather than in the afternoon or evening so we always do our practices right after breakfast and before school. It's a nice way to start the morning while everybody is fresh (extra coffee for Mom and Dad may or may not be involved!) and before he is too tuckered out after getting home from school.

How do you take notes in lessons and know what to do each week?

For note taking during the lessons, we like to keep it old school with just a pencil and paper notebook. For the most part we take detailed and specific notes from the lesson Mrs. Gill is teaching that day and we often make many markings within the Suzuki book as well for things like tempos and phrasing, bowing techniques, dynamics, etc. If there is something more intricate that needs attention we might make a quick audio recording or a video recording to go back and reference.



How have you figured out how to make it enjoyable?

When Caleb was three years old he used to love watching Yo-Yo Ma videos! We think that is in part what spurred his interest and his inclination toward the cello. We like to incorporate games during practice sessions. We have a couple large fuzzy green dice that we like to roll where we make up different games with the rolls such as repeating a certain phrase or a tricky measure multiple times. Caleb also likes to get a sticker as a reward after he completes a song or a tough passage.

Caleb really gets a lot of enjoyment out of going to see live music. We try to take him to as many musical performances as we can. There's a park by our house that hosts a weekly concert series during the summer months and we had a blast attending those this past summer.

He *really* looks forward to performances and we think he thrives in having a goal to work toward whether it's a solo performance, a group performance, or a talent show. We have found that keeping the goal in mind really helps with the practice sessions.

What have you discovered is a big NO NO!

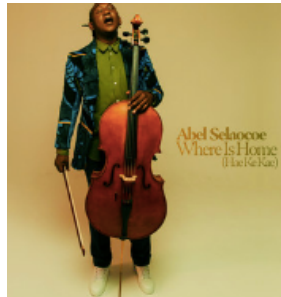
The biggest no-no for us has been trying to get practice in when he is really tired! Hence the reason we started doing the early morning cello practice routines. :)

What is the best part of cello lessons/practice?

Caleb loves being able to put together all the individual puzzle pieces and in the end have it be one cohesive piece of music. Right now he is really loving playing "Etude" and he's always eager for a new challenge. He loves learning new techniques and new ideas. In addition to his solo private lessons he also really loves the group classes and being able to engage with all the other kids with music and with the fun games they incorporate in the group classes. We really love the Suzuki method and the foundation rooted in the parent, teacher, student triangle. It's a great bonding time for the entire family and even Caleb's little sister is already singing along to many of the pieces she hears!

Great Job, Caleb and Mom and Dad! Thank you for Sharing.

Teachers Need to Listen Too!



Listening to music is a core tenet of the Suzuki Method that brings not only technical benefits to the musician but enriches our lives with great joy. I think we've all witnessed the practical benefits that come from listening so I want to focus on the second part of that sentence- the joy and inspiration listening can bring.

I've recently been practicing Bach's Sixth Suite for solo cello which has taken me down a listening rabbit hole. The Bach Suites occupy a massive role in the cello repertoire and there are as many vastly different interpretations of them as there are cellists. I've been loving Dutch cellist [Pieter Wispelwey's recordings](#)- his playing is delicate and masterful and his phrasing always leaves me with ideas to explore in my own playing. I've also been really excited by South African cellist Abel Selaocoe's debut album, [Where is Home \(Hae ke Kae\)](#). He moves across genres and styles with a mix of singing, cello playing, and percussion, creating music that is compelling and exuberant. Listening to him fills my soul and inspires me to use my voice.

I encourage you to add some listening to your lives in addition to the Suzuki recordings. Try finding 3 recordings of your current piece by different artists and find differences in their interpretations. Which do you like best? Was there a musical idea you disliked and want to steer away from? Find a recording of your instrument in a different genre- fiddle or jazz or pop. Does this give you a renewed excitement during practice? Have fun, be curious, and happy listening!

-Ms. Gill

Do you have a favorite 'not Suzuki' recording? Share it with us!
email Mrs B lbarnette@me.com



Journey Towards Independent Practice

Hello, I'm Twylah, I'm thirteen and I play violin and viola. A few months ago I transitioned from my mom taking notes during my lessons to taking them on my own. When I was first starting out on violin my mom would take notes as well as tell me what to practice, when to practice, and how much I needed to practice. I have now been practicing on my own for quite a while since my mom usually has to help my little sister who plays cello. Practicing on my own was not a tough transition but taking notes on my own was a bit more difficult. My teacher, Ms. Lannie was very helpful for

me during this transition.: She would give me reminders to write certain things down and what was especially helpful was how she would summarize everything at the end of a lesson so that I could write down the majority of the notes then instead of scrambling to write everything throughout the lesson. My mom was also helpful in that she also gave me reminders and she also made sure not to write down any notes for me. It was very helpful to have both my mom and teacher holding me accountable for my note taking as I began to get more comfortable taking my own notes.

A big motivation

in practice for me is being able to continue to new pieces because I tend to get a little bored doing the same thing over, and over again and when I practice more I can move through songs faster. On my best practice weeks I am able to practice every day but I often can't make that because I am a pretty busy person so the best thing that works well for me is practicing longer on less days. So have a big and very thorough practice on three or four days of the week so that I can do everything I need to do each week. Another way I make

sure to get in as much practice as possible is if I am bored, instead of watching TV I will practice. I really enjoy practicing and taking notes on my own because I can engineer everything exactly to what works best for me and I can feel a little more comfortable making mistakes at first when no one else is watching. I do miss having someone making sure I practice all the stuff I need to because I do have those days where I don't want to practice but I think I enjoy independent practicing a lot. I don't plan on making violin or viola into a profession but I do plan on continuing to play instruments because I think playing is very enjoyable as well as interesting, plus it feels like there are always many options when playing an instrument. **Bravo Twylah!**



Second Generation Suzuki

I started Suzuki violin at age 4, following my older sister who started Suzuki cello at age 3. We played at the Family Suzuki School in Rochester, New York where Don and Suzi Gross led a studio. I studied with Mrs. Gross all the way from age 4 to 18. I played in the Rochester Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, several wedding quartets, finished Book 10 and beyond, and then ended my violin career going into college.

I can't remember a time before violin, and I believe the dedication, responsibility, and rhythm of daily practice and performances taught me invaluable lessons. Practice time with my daughter Ginny, who started with Ms. Crystal this year also at age 4, is a time for us to connect, be silly, but also serious, and hone our musicality. Suzuki offers a standard program for kids to

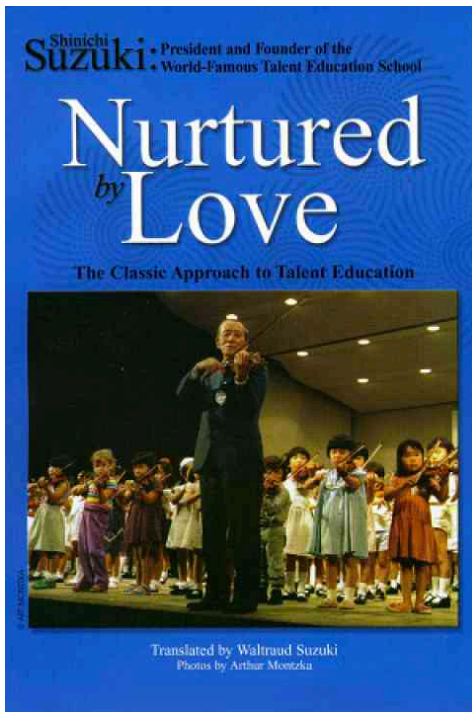


work and play together while still allowing their individual personalities to shine through. There are clear expectations and goals, which I can already see building Ginny's sense of personal responsibility and self-confidence. I hope that through Suzuki, Ginny builds a lifelong love of music and continues to share that love as she has already started to do. I also hope that the accomplishment she feels through hard work allows her to tackle anything else that she may choose to do in life, as me and my sister have since our days participating in Suzuki.

Book Review: Nurtured By Love by Dr Suzuki

By Kimberly Thompson -Weber

As a new violin parent, I walked into the Suzuki Method excited for the adventure and vast possibilities that lie ahead, but I must admit, inside I was extremely unsure of how I was going to foster a musical talent within my young soon to be violinist. I was aware that parents have a much larger role in the Suzuki Method than in a typical school orchestra, which made me keenly aware that I hadn't played my viola for 20 years and I doubted I was going to remember enough to be a successful and supportive at home teacher. Luckily, when we started, our teacher Ms. Lannie, suggested that I read *Nurtured by Love: The Classic Approach to Talent Education* by none other than Dr. Shinichi Suzuki himself. As soon as I picked it up and read the Preface, I knew Dr. Suzuki and I were going to get along just fine.



Dr. Suzuki succinctly writes the story of his life and reflects on how the experiences throughout it shaped him, his beliefs, and how he eventually came to form the school of the Suzuki Method. As I read the book, I found myself inspired and filled with the confidence that fostering a musical talent within my daughter was not only something I could do but something I should do. The book kept me thinking and reflecting on how I parent my children in general and I found myself noticing the differences I can

make with tiny adjustments in our routine and interactions to foster a more nurturing and loving environment.

As a parent of a violinist, the book provided me with specific ideas and techniques for framing our at home practice, suggestions for what to do when we've hit a wall, and most importantly how I can create a nurturing home environment for my children to blossom and thrive in no matter if they are a violinist or not. The entire premise of the book is that exceptional talent is not something that we either inherently have or do not have (i.e., something we are born with) but rather something we are all capable of developing within ourselves and our children when we are nurtured by love. One of my favorite ideas from the book is that "Talent education is life education".

As we have now been with WDSS for going on 2 years, I still find myself coming back to my dog-eared notes in this book and Dr. Suzuki's words of wisdom to help me when my daughter and I feel stuck, or I need supportive advice. Most importantly, Dr. Suzuki's book helped me to understand that I do not have to have all the answers or musical ability myself to be a successful Suzuki parent and that by creating a nurturing and loving environment there will undoubtedly be a strong correlation to my children's success. I hope you find the book to be as comforting and helpful as I have.



Turkey Talk

with Ms B

I just looked up 'turkey talk' in the dictionary and it says 'American English informal for to talk frankly; mean business'. That is what I would like to do as my last months of teaching; talk frankly with you on several subjects which I have observed over the last 51 years.

This month's Turkey Talk relates to *practice and scheduling*.

When a student walks into my studio I usually greet them and say 'How was your week?' 'What did you practice this week?' This is always a good idea as I don't want to surprise the student with a request for something they have not looked at all week. Nor do I want to be surprised by an event in their lives which affects practice like 'We flew to Paris and just got back an hour ago!' I want to start our lesson well. Now perhaps it is because I am becoming a grouchy old lady or perhaps over all these years I have developed a sensitivity to this particular answer, but when I ask about the week's practice I seem to be hearing more often...

'Well, I didn't get much practice done this week.'

Sometimes when I turn to the parent for an explanation and this it isn't the case, the student just forgot that they practiced my required 4 personal practices a week. But in most cases, when I inquire further, 'Why didn't you practice?' the answer is '*We were too busy to practice.*'

OK here is the Turkey Talk, **Practice is part of your busy**. It doesn't come after your busy, it is part of your busy. Practice should be equated with getting dressed and brushing teeth not having dessert after dinner. Dr Suzuki is often quoted as saying you only have to practice on the days you eat. A bit severe for real life but you get the idea.

We teachers do not insist on regular practice because we think playing a musical instrument is more important than anything else in your child's life but because we know that is necessary for pleasing progress. We think children learning to read, progressing in math and science, using their bodies in sports, playing outside, being with friends and with family are all so very important and need portions of your child's time. But we know that without *regular practice* on your instrument you cannot progress; your mind, nerves, brain pathways, muscles, hearing and heart cannot develop in a way and at a pace which will help support your student's dream of being able to play their instrument.

I looked up 'practice' and one definition said '*practice is the only way you can make your desired skill, your best friend*'. I loved that playing music on my instrument becoming my best friend. What a lovely gift to give to our young growing humans.

But has the potential 'best friend' of music become an enemy or a foe to be tackled or overcome or the thing that get done when the busy is over?

I would like to make two suggestions. *First*, do some frank, clear *turkey* thinking and begin to consider time at home with your child on their instrument as part of your *busy* and not what gets done after the *busy*.

Second, I will pass on to you a motto I adopted which upheld me through a number of years practicing with my youngest. *Practice must be pleasant and regular*. If it wasn't regular, it wasn't going to be pleasant but stressed and negative. If it wasn't pleasant, well why would we want to do that on a regular basis?! Pleasant and Regular. You can do it!

All for now, Mrs B.

Bunny Ballads are the Best!

by Ms Crystal

As many of you already know, it takes quite a lot of practice and many skills to play Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star, the "easiest piece" in the Suzuki repertoire. Any beginner in my studio, as well as Ms. Autumn's is familiar with the Twinkle Bunny Family, but it wasn't always this way. In 2015 Kathleen Spring published the Bunny Ballads Book. Kathleen Spring taught Suzuki Pedagogy at Denver University for many years and taught Suzuki Violin for even longer. She had been using these songs for quite some time in her private teaching and thought it might be helpful for other Suzuki Teachers and Parents to have access to them. Ms. Autumn and I both did training with Kathleen Spring. When students learn using the Bunny Ballads, they love playing pre-twinkle songs and will often want to review them well into Suzuki Book 1.

"What are the Bunny Ballads?" you might ask; they are little pieces that start on the open E and A strings based on the rhythms for the Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star Variations. They gradually get harder and there are several pieces with fingers as well. Most students are very eager to

play songs on the violin and perhaps not quite as excited to work on things that are necessary for them play the songs beautifully. By playing the Bunny Ballads, the Twinkle Student gets to play songs sooner and the teacher and parent have more time to work on bow hold, violin hold and other important techniques. Each song also includes a story and a picture about a character in the world of the Twinkle Bunnies loosely inspired by Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit stories. Students are also encouraged to create their own stories. Originally, the Bunny Ballads were available only for violin, but now are also available for cello and viola.

