

WDSS NOTES

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Music Shapes Us *Part 4: Living Music*

By Mr Zach

Over the last few months, I've been writing about how studying our instruments shapes us beyond the practice room or lesson studio. Empowering us with an identity, teaching us resilience in a safe space, and cultivating our individual voices are just a few of the myriad effects of being a part of a thriving Suzuki community. That said, I want to point out something so obvious that we often miss it: studying music makes us all

better at...MUSIC! Learning to play an instrument immerses us in music, this sonic art that spans cultures and generations, provides solace in dark times and joy in happy ones, and connects us to past and present.



In a few weeks, the Colorado Symphony will play one of my very favorite pieces of classical music: Sibelius' Second Symphony in D. To me, this piece is like a letter from the year 1902. It expresses how joyous life can be, and simultaneously explores, and ultimately accepts, life's more difficult aspects. There are plenty of songs or pieces that can bring me to tears when I listen to them, but this symphony is one of a handful of pieces that actually has a pretty high risk of making me cry while playing it. I'm so grateful to have Sibelius 2 as good company in my life (how many of us can think of a song or a piece of music that makes us ache or brings us comfort?), and without my own Suzuki training, there's no way I could connect to this piece in the same way. While music can be an incredible tool to accomplish extra-musical things (character development, higher test scores!), remember too that our students' instrumental studies also let them connect to this wild, beautiful, deep, and varied art of music, and that's a worthy end in and of itself.



Faculty Recital

By Ms Gill

We hope you have marked your calendar and are planning on attending **WDSS Annual Faculty Recital on 2/17!**

We will again spotlight our awesome teachers and raise funds for our new Student Scholarship Fund. Come and enjoy a mix of ensembles and a special farewell from Mrs. B who retires this May. We are planning violin duets, cello duets, Ms Lannie improv demo and a rousing group Tango!

This is a benefit concert and 100% of your donations will go towards student scholarships. WDSS teachers have spent much discussion on how we might assist some parents who might need it with the WDSS fees and the process for awarding such assistance. We look forward to presenting our plan and invite you to join our efforts by attending and making a donation. We hope everyone comes together in community to be inspired, give back, and celebrate with music!

There will be a time to chat after the recital at a *pot luck* reception in the Parish Hall. Please sign up below to bring a treat.

See you there!

When: Saturday 2/17 at 2:00 PM

Where: St. James Sanctuary

Bring: Please bring a treat to share . Sign up [HERE](#)

Dates To Remember

January 28 2:00 pm-4:00 pm Reading Party at the Barnette's Ask your teacher if you can join the fun!

February 17 2:00 pm Faculty Recital and pot luck Reception

February 28 Winter Workshop at DU

May 1 Group Class Concert 5:00 pm St James Episcopal Sanctuary

May 18 WDSS Solo Recitals

Where love is deep,
much can be accomplished.

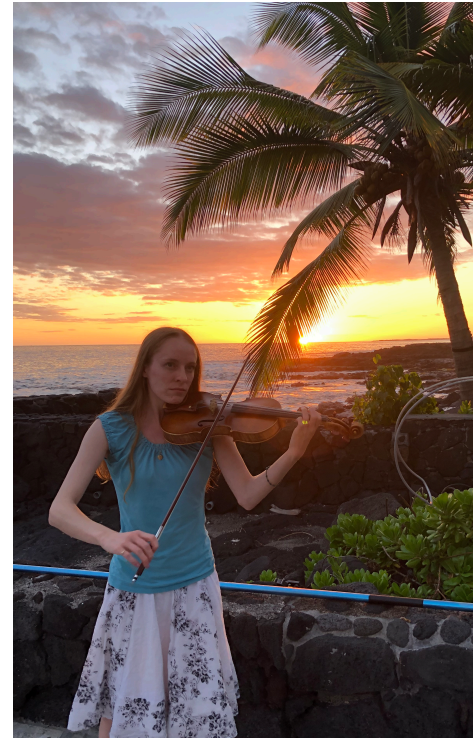
Shinichi Suzuki

‘The Places You Will Go!’

by Ms Crystal

I have been to quite a lot of places with my violin in tow. The first time I traveled with my violin on the airplane was when I was seven, attending a fiddle camp in Maine that my cousin was teaching at. When I was around nine years old, my sister and I started a practicing streak that lasted *years*. This meant that we would bring our violins along on family road-trips to South Dakota, Utah, California, to grandma’s in Maryland and Montana, across the Pacific Ocean to Hawaii. Some of my earliest memories are of lugging my violin through the airport and of my dad convincing us to play in front of famous landmarks such as the Grand Canyon and Mount Rushmore. Even last month, I went visited my dad in Hawaii and brought my violin because I wanted to rather than needing to.

As I became more serious about being a violinist, I began to travel because of my violin instead of just bringing it along for “fun”. When I was in high school I attended summer institutes in Ithaca, New York. The summer between high school and college I traveled to France, Italy and Spain with the Denver Young Artists Orchestra. We performed in antique churches and concert halls. I remember one church echoed so much that we had to play softer and watch the conductor like crazy! In college, I received a scholarship to study abroad in Florence, Italy where I performed chamber music all over Italy with other college students. It was one of the most exciting times of college for me! I have also attended other music festivals in Illinois, Michigan, Colorado and Montana. As a professional, I have also played in orchestras in four different states! Keep practicing, you never know where you might go with your instrument!



A practice parent observing a new finger pattern.

How do you fit in Sports and Music?

From David and Catherine Mickey

Charles, 10, Soccer, Basketball, Indoor Soccer, Golf

We keep it to one sport at a time, which allows for the ability to balance sports with violin practice. We don't necessarily plan out when each daily practice will be, but we do try and plan ahead in the week, especially if we have a Saturday full of games. Also, we try and restrict screen time until after our practice is complete. That's a tactic that could work for all families, even if you don't have a calendar full of sports!

Charles is Red #17 below



From Jason and Sabina Schickli

Aria, 9, soccer and Saira 11, swimming/tennis

Managing competitive sports and violin takes a fair amount of juggling, and sometimes there are missed practices and games, but we just do the best we can. Friends are helpful, and we often rely on carpooling with neighbors and teammates to get our kids to activities. We bring healthy snacks with us to stave off hunger on days when we don't make it home until late. During weeks when one event piles on top of another (tournaments, rehearsals, recitals, extra trainings, etc), we prioritize good sleep and rest. We do our best to

communicate with teachers and coaches ahead of time when we anticipate potential conflicts. We strive to make solid violin practices a routine, although sometimes we need to string together mini-practices to get in enough violin time. Healthy doses of grace, flexibility, and patience help get us through those tough weeks



Turkey Talk

'American English informal for talk frankly'

with Ms B

You don't have to WIN, you just need to be a little bit smarter.

During every parent meeting, our conversations always flow towards and end up with a discussion on how to get our students to practice. The uncomfortable truth is that students just do NOT want to practice every day. In fact some students almost *never* want to practice. As a parent, I found that trying, tiring and disappointing. Why wouldn't my child want to do something so cool as playing the violin, viola or cello. They love music and they love performing but they *hate* to practice. Sigh.

Over the years, I have formulated several answers to this question but the answer I keep coming back to is that for almost all children, learning to play their instrument is the *hardest, most*

challenging thing they have to do each day. Think about how much harder it is than brushing their teeth, doing their math homework or even cleaning up their play space. Practicing their instrument challenges their entire brain and body, in addition, during practice they have to be able to relate well to you, the practice parent, and learn to relate well to themselves.

We, as the adults, need to HELP them with this challenging journey not by *winning* the practice battle, but by being just *a little bit* smarter than their reticence.

I think the best way to explain this would be to tell you several stories about my own time as practice parent with my youngest daughter. Annie has always loved music. By 4 she could sing the entire “Queen of the Night” aria from the Mozart opera *The Magic Flute*. She could identify songs by Vivaldi when she could only say Bibaldy. She was excited to begin violin lessons and enjoyed the first several months of violin practice. However after the initial honeymoon months, when I would say all cheery like, ‘Annie, it’s time to practice:)’ I began to get all sorts of push back. You know, ‘I don’t want to do violin today!’ or ‘Do we HAVE to?’ all the way to ‘I HATE violin!!’

Well, I knew *that* wasn’t really true, so I began to wonder what was really going on. What I eventually figured out was that Annie did *not* hate the violin what she hated was to be interrupted. In fact she didn’t just hate to be interrupted for practice, she hated to be interrupted for anything. That is how her mind worked. She dug deeply into whatever she was doing and found it difficult to leave it. Even as an adult, she finds interruptions jarring . So....back then, I switched things up. Instead of barging in and announcing that it was practice time, I strapped a watch on her wrist with an alarm set. I said, ‘Annie, when the alarm rings will you come get me for practice time?’ That gave her some control. When she did come get me, many times I would try to model for her what it might look like to handle an interruption in a good way. ‘Now? I am really busy with dinner, could I have 5 more minutes!?!’ or ‘Be there in a few, could you start with out me?’ I know there are some plot holes here such as, what if she just turned off the alarm and never came for me, but for some reason, it worked.

See, just *a little bit smarter*.... Chances are that your child is not like you. It seems some sort of divine smile that we are often presented with our opposite personality type in our child. But just take it as a wonderful given that your child is wildly different than you and that you will need to spend some time and observation trying to gain the wisdom on how to best accompany them on their journey. I bet you are already doing this and I encourage you to keep it up!

Part of this *being a little bit smarter* not only involves insight into your child’s particular makeup but also a willingness to deep dive into creativity. Do surprising things, things which will catch and engage your student. I once had a very wise friend say to me, ‘Laura, try to live in a way which causes your children to question you and that will help create entry.’

Here is an example of curious creativity relating to practice:

One morning, I put three mints in the middle of the breakfast table. Of course when Annie came to eat she asked what those mints are for and I responded, “Oh, those three mints are to remind me of the three violin things we need to do for Ms Sue today when we practice violin.’ You can almost write the script after that... some practice and three mints later...all done for the day.

Or the week I said we would NOT practice violin at all for a week IF Annie took her violin everywhere with her and would offer to play a song for any one who asked her about it. She agreed to the new plan and that week she played at the grocery, the dentists office, in front of the school, at soccer practice, at church and many, many other places. And I never had to ask. I realize this plan might not work for the wee cellists but you could modify it. Cold call or FaceTime friends or relatives and ask if they have time to hear you play a song. Three cold calls a day... and zap, the practice is done.

The value of some practice weeks is to build motivation, enthusiasm and joy, rather than learning a new song.

See, just a little smarter and curiously creative.

Admittedly, as my Annie got older, before abstract thinking/reasoning was truly working, it was a bit harder to push past the inevitable plateaus. I did have one Saturday practice success by taking her around to three different music stores and having her play to try out new shoulder rests. We were able to get about 40 minutes of practice and a Starbucks treat in with no tears or push back.

Just a little smarter and curiously creative.

If you are in the midst of the practice battle, don't give up. Turn your attention from winning the battle to becoming *just a little smarter* by studying your wonderful child's unique makeup, how they think, how they tick. Be willing to put the effort into being *surprisingly creative*. You won't always have to do this, they will eventually get over the hump. But all of us need help in doing things which are challenging and hard for us. All the best, Mrs B



*Any child can be developed, it
depends on how you do it.*

Shinichi Suzuki