A PHILOSOPHY AND AN APPROACH TO TEACHING NON-PROFESSIONAL-TRACK VIOLIN STUDENTS

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The aim of this dissertation is to lay the groundwork for an integrated approach to violin instruction for children who are not being groomed explicitly for professional careers as instrumentalists. The study presents a particular focus on the age of middle school children, in order to showcase a more specialized and definitive result of research without, however, distinguishing between advantages and limitations of different age groups of children who study music and learn to play the violin. My first goal is to craft a sample method of teaching with a premise that not all students studying music must or need to become professional musicians in their future. I promote an approach based on the premise that music has universal value available to all and that any kind of music education encourages the growth, personality development, and imagination of children. My second goal is to explore how music education functions in 21st century western culture. Research is based on teachings and methods established by Suzuki, Kodaly, Jaques-Dalcroze, and Orff, among others.
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I dedicate my doctorate to my loving parents without whom it would have never happened. They taught me to always keep on learning. I thank my advisers, first and foremost, Professor Julia Bushkova for her insightful reading of my dissertation and her nuanced comments, Dr. Susan Dubois and Professor Jeff Bradetich, for your support and assistance throughout the journey of my doctorate. I also acknowledge and thank the McGuire family, my American Family who has always been there for me through all the years we have known one another. And last but not least, this doctorate is dedicated to the late Dr. Margaret Bell, Peggi Bell, my American host mother, whom I have known for twenty-one years and who has been the guiding force behind my life’s educational journey. Last but not least, I dedicate my work to my dear husband who has been my inspiration and support since the day we have met.
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CHAPTER 1

THE CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

The aim of this dissertation is to lay the groundwork for an integrated approach to violin instruction for children who study violin seriously but who are not being groomed explicitly for professional careers as instrumentalists. The study presents a particular focus on the age of the middle school children, in order to showcase a more specialized and definitive result of research. The goal of this dissertation, however, is not to discern the advantages and limitations of different age groups of children who learn to play the violin. The purpose of this dissertation is to present the significance for establishing a philosophy and an approach to teaching non-professional-track violin students based on the premise that music is a universal value available to all. We teachers have the great privilege and obligation to help shape generations of young students through music education and learning to play an instrument. It is general knowledge that comprehensive music education encourages versatile growth, personality development, and enrichment of intellect, intelligence, and imagination in a child.

This document is both analytical and discursive, with the emphasis on discursive. I approach the following topic through a philosophical examination of musical values in the twenty-first century global society. I propose pragmatic ideas as well as philosophical beliefs for a continuous discussion about the meaning of music education for children in today’s world society.¹

¹ In this context, by “world society,” I mean any place where access to studying music and learning to play an instrument, such as violin, is readily available.
The research for this document has derived primarily from teachings and methods by Schinichi Suzuki, Zoltán Kodály, Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, and Carl Orff. This knowledge has served as a point of departure for synthesizing the importance of music education for children, specifically when they wish to learn to play the instrument without aiming to become professionals.

One motivation for creating my approach to theoretical and practical violin training of students who do not intend to become professional musicians came as a reaction to the writings about the history of violin pedagogy. The overwhelming predominance of violin instruction had relied on explicit and implicit expectation and assumption that it would lead to a professional instrumental career for a given student. This assumption has prevailed among a wide range of educational institutions: explicitly, at preparatory divisions at major conservatories in the USA and around the world, and implicitly at private, non-accredited music schools and after-school programs. The field of violin instruction continuously needs re-evaluation of pedagogical systems aimed at a large number of young students who want to study the violin seriously but are not interested in developing professional careers in performance, especially in the context of the twenty-first century. The parents of these young pupils, and the pupils themselves, want music and instrumental training to be a part of their overall education and believe in its great potential as a tool for comprehensive development.

Various pre-college music education institutions target elementary, middle school, and secondary school students. This dissertation focuses on middle school children for a number of reasons:

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• Middle school-age children (generally identified as 11-13 years old) begin to think critically, analyze, choose, decide, and take responsibility for their own choices, actions and responsibilities. They also take initial steps on the path of their own development, wanting to be a part of decision making in regard to what they need to learn and to be discriminating in regard to what they want to learn.

• Young people between the ages of 11-13 begin to display and develop powerful interests in the world and metaphysical ideas and like to seek their own answers through pursuit and exploration. They often express their keen interests in highly individualized manners, which are particular to and appropriate for young inquisitive minds and demand attention from adults around them.

• Parents of middle school children are vividly involved in their children’s upbringing and are not yet rejected by young people (as opposed to older teenagers who often want to stress their emotional, intellectual, and physical independence from their parents). This perspective allows for the development of a strong relationship among parents, teachers and students, which is helpful on many levels in ensuring the child’s educational progress.

• Middle school-age children are responsive to the voice of the teacher (as opposed to teenagers, who may become stubborn and even rebellious, wishing to stress their intellectual independence from the teacher). Similarly, this perspective allows for the teacher-student communication to be clear, motivational and inspiring.

Furthermore, the world of music performance is in need of re-evaluation of its status in the current world economy, most predominantly in terms of the supply and demand platform of the economy. The current market simply cannot absorb and offer
enough reasonable job possibilities for an overwhelmingly growing number of professionally-trained instrumentalists. And last but not least, there is a need to create present and future audiences for classical music. Musicians, who have been trained to associate violinistic skills with a wide variety of aesthetic and cognitive issues and ideas in culture, can invigorate the core of such an audience that the present music world profoundly needs.
CHAPTER 2
THE PHILOSOPHY, APPROACH, AND SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHING NON PROFESSIONAL TRACE MIDDLE SCHOOL VIOLIN STUDENTS

Instrumental Skills versus Comprehensive Interests

The described results of scholarly research in this dissertation often relate to both professional-track and non-professional-track violin students. However, each group yields separate results upon the application of this research. Whereas among the professionally-trained students, the application of parental involvement and strong emphasis on instrumental efficacy may lead to training the child specifically to acquire violinistic skills and becoming a fine instrumentalist, the emphasis on the non-professionally oriented student will focus more on a broader scope of influence. That influence on a child may include: induction and acceptance of discipline, development of music appreciation, advancement of motor skills and coordination, concentration and focus, development of interest in the composers, geography, languages, mathematical skills, and last but not least, singing.

Thus, it can be observed that the difference in the process of learning between the two groups of students will be considerable. The professional-track students will aim to obtain the highest level of instrumental skills, efficacy and musicality, while the non-professional-track students will less likely concentrate on acquiring instrumental skills but be more oriented toward developing broadly dispersed interests through studying music and learning to play the violin.
The Meaning of Music Education and Learning to Play the Violin

While acknowledging students' wish to study to play the violin, I explore possible motivations behind that wish. Why do students want to engage in a task that yields slow progress, thus slow satisfaction; demands regular, disciplined, often, tedious practice; is complex and challenging and slowly brings rewards? One possible answer is that they must find it meaningful. It seems to be the correct answer, as gathered from numerous sources over the course of my teaching experience as well as my observation of other teachers during the last twenty years.

What constitutes meaning? "Meaning can be ascribed to actions, activities, experiences, and objects according to their value placed on them by the individual. In educational settings, the meaning students find in their learning can be the deciding factor in whether the information will be retained or forgotten. Meaningful learning experiences can encourage students' best efforts and make learning more lasting" (Davis, 2009: 61). According to Jellison (2003), meaningful learning means a greater likelihood of it becoming retained into adulthood than a mere memorization of isolated facts (ibid.: 61). Thus, the first question about the meaning of music education can be answered—music education and what it carries with it (music theory, music history, instrumental lessons, aural skills, and all of the indirectly related fields of math, geography, general history, linguistics) may be transferred into adulthood as children grow in meaningful ways. Yet, another question comes to mind: can music education and learning to play an instrument have an effect on students' aesthetic, affective, and personal abilities? In order to answer all of the above questions, I find it necessary to examine what happens to students when they are exposed to music education. Davis makes a valid point: "By better understanding the value students
find in the musical experience, teachers will be better able to meet students’ needs, develop meaningful curricula for teaching and perhaps even use this information as a means for justifying continued support for public school music programs and instrumental lessons” (Davis, 2009: 62).

Results of Research

A Music Meaning Survey was developed as a tool to assess the perspective of middle school general music students in regard to the meaningfulness of their musical education. In order to construct the Music Meaning Survey (MMS), an instrument-creation phase was used. Student-participants (N = 178) were chosen from seven middle schools in five states (Arizona, Alabama, Iowa, Missouri, and South Carolina) and surveyed (Davis, 2009: 64). They were asked about their thoughts about music classes at their respective schools. Students were chosen on the basis of their teacher’s willingness to participate and their ability to meet the criteria; they were middle school students (ages 11-14) who were enrolled in general-music classes and did not participate in any school-based performance ensemble. The classes involved a variety of musical activities, such as: singing, playing an instrument, music theory, and music history. Students were asked to answer the following questions: “Please take a minute to think about the time you have spent in school music classes. Please list your thoughts about what music class means to you. What is important about music class, and why is it important to you?”

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2 In her article "The Meaning of Music Education to Middle School General Music Students", Virginia Davies refers to a Music Meaning Survey that is unattributed.
The 178 student participants generated 670 responses that were analyzed qualitatively and reduced to 147 distinct meaningful statements. Seven broad categories were established:

1) Psychological (regarding one's personal development)
2) Integrative (social)
3) Communicative (expressing one's thoughts)
4) Academic/non-musical (music as school subject rather than as an art form)
5) Academic/musical (reading music and learning about composers, musical styles, and music history)
6) Musical/artistic (active music-making)
7) Future goals (future outcomes of learning about music)

After the survey, the statements by the students were organized into the pilot version of the MMS. There were two criteria used for selecting the statements that were used in the Pilot study: preferences of students regarding music class, and statements representing each of the seven qualitative categories listed above. All together, fifteen statements were chosen from each category, making 105 total statements in the pilot survey (Davis, 2009: 64-65).

To interpret the data gathered from the pilot survey (MMS), five analyses were performed. Each analysis clarified further the students’ statements and led toward the final stage of the study. The following five results of the analyses were found:

1) Psychological: students’ sense of self, personality, identity, and emotional development
2) Future music goals: future outcomes from learning music
3) Academic: music as a school subject: learning to read music, about composers, musical styles, and music history

4) Performing

5) Integrative: social interactions

The final MMS survey contained 50 statements of meaning of music education to surveyed students. See Table 1 (Davis, 2009: 65-67).

Table 1. MMS Survey Items

| 1. To learn something interesting and cool | 2. To perform in front of everybody |
| 3. To play in a band some day | 4. To do group work |
| 5. To be a singer as an adult | 6. To make music with friends |
| 7. To bring joy to people | 8. To learn about different kinds of music |
| 9. To play or sing for other people | 10. To talk to others |
| 11. To learn to read music | 12. To sing or play in a group some day |
| 13. To know about the history of music | 14. To learn beats and rhythms |
| 15. To be good at something | 16. To help each other with class-work |
| 17. To learn to read notes | 18. To use your music to have a big effect on people |
| 19. To set goals | 20. To perform in a concert |
| 21. To get ready for band or choir or orchestra | 22. To feel good about myself |
| 23. To share my talent with others | 24. To get a job in the music business |
| 25. To learn about composers | 26. To work together |
| 27. To listen to music | 28. To get a career in music |
| 29. To bring meaning to life | 30. To be able to play an instrument in the future |
| 31. To get together with friends | 32. To get self-confidence |
| 33. To enjoy being with classmates | 34. To be a musician some day |
| 35. To learn how music is written | 36. To get encouragement |
| 37. To work with partners | 38. To learn to write a song |
| 39. To entertain people | 40. To have a career in the music industry |
| 41. To learn about composers' lives | 42. To socialize |
| 43. To learn how notes work and sound | 44. To sing |
| 45. To get things off my chest | 46. To use in case you want to play music when you grow up |
| 47. To be with friends | 48. To let out my feelings when I make music |
| 49. To be able to read music in the future | 50. To perform on instruments |
The MMS pilot survey results were further reduced through qualitative analysis and the following four categories have been discerned as groups of students’ meaning in music education. They were:

1) **Vocational.** This group was summoned by expressions such as: “to perform in a concert,” and “to be a singer as an adult,” among others. These statements can lead to a conclusion that students liked being involved in active music making. According to Nolin (1973), students prefer hands-on activities to passive ones. The experience the students associate within this category suggests that they may be developing aspirations through the exposure to music classes. “Active music making is at the heart of music education” (Elliott, 1995). In the music programs at schools, there needs to be room for challenging activities which help students develop understanding of music and competence through individual performance. According to Hargreaves and North (1999), the term *musicianship* has connotations in the world of new technology thus leading to students’ potential interests in: sound engineering, music production, and studio recording as ways to engage in a music-related, lucrative career. (Davis, 2009: 73, 74)

2) **Academic.** This group has encompassed statements that related to the academic side of music learning, such as: reading music, learning about composers, different styles of music, and rhythms. During the survey, students pointed out that learning to read notes was closely related to learning to play an instrument. (ibid.: 74)

3) **Belongingness.** The issue of belongingness had to do with the transitional development of students from elementary to middle school-age. Early adolescence is marked significantly by: biological, social, and cognitive changes which all play a role in how the student perceives him/herself and how others perceive him/her. Peer interaction
plays the crucial role in this group as the social classroom dynamic provides a stimulus for the children to grow and develop.

4) Agency. As described above, the rapid developmental changes have a direct influence on the children’s self-confidence, self-worth, self-esteem awareness and comprehension. (Davis, 2009: 75)

Conclusion of Research

The central notion drawn from the study confirms that for middle school children music education is a meaningful experience. A secondary conclusion derived from the MMS survey can be that music programs at public schools need increased support as they benefit children in multitude of spheres. The MMS study profoundly justifies the belief: “music for every child” (Davis, 2009: 75) and if that could become the music teachers’ mantra, music schools could resemble adult-music-making and music-consuming opportunities in the real world. Such a paradigm would allow the young generation of school students to truly develop multifaceted personalities and abilities as a result of a comprehensive and in-depth exposure to music education (Ibid. 76).

Furthermore, if students grow up with music appreciation and musical skills, they will value music in their adulthood and may likely develop interests in sponsoring musical activities, music institutions, and above all, become concert-goers. It cannot be underestimated how much influence early childhood music education has on the potential for building the next generation of audience members. And last but not least, the early music education’s positive meaning can most definitely impact a young person’s sense of well-being and happiness (Natvig, Albrektsen, & Ovarnstrom, 2003). According to Natvig et
al. “meaningful activities were significantly related to life satisfaction and well-being” (ibid.: 173).

Music Education through Learning to Play the Violin

The significance of music education for children portrayed through the analysis of the MMS study, has shown us the benefits of music education on children with a specific emphasis on middle school children. This model of analyses and comprehension can directly be applied to the specification of a genre of music education—study of instrumental playing. In the study of results among my middle school-age students, I have proposed the very similar questions asked in the MMS survey:

1) Why do you like the violin and why have you chosen this instrument?
2) Why do you think violin is important and what does it mean to you?
3) Does violin help you with anything?
4) Why is learning music important?

The selected answers (by 11-13 year olds) to these questions were as follows.

Question 1:

I like to play the violin because I think it has a pretty sound and it is also fun to play it. I also think it relates with school, some things are easier than others, which is also the same with violin. (student 1, age 11)

I like the violin because it makes a sweet sound and it’s easy to show expression and it helps me not be hyper. I also want to play better than my sister. (student 2, age 11)

When I was little, I chose the violin because, as little kids put it, “it is cool.” Now I realize that it is one of the most difficult and famous instruments to play. It also has a beautiful sound (if you play it correctly), which is why I enjoy it. (student 3, age 12)
I like violin because it can sound both elegant and sharp. I chose the violin because the coordination between the two hands is a challenge making it fun to play it. When I was choosing an instrument for school the violin stood out the most. (student 5, age 12)

I like the violin because it can play almost everything. I didn’t really choose this because my dad gave it to me one day and so I started to play it. (student 6, age 13)

Question 2:

Violin to me is important because it is one of my top favorite things to do. I have many others, but violin has always been one of my favorites. I also think it is important to me because I think at all times you should play at least 1 sport and 1 instrument. (student 1)

I think Violin is important because it is an instrument that is in the strings section that has so many instruments that are so much like the violin and they cannot reach most of the notes the violin can play. (student 2)

In a concert, violins often hold the main melody or you have a solo violinist perform. The violin has the range of notes where most melodies occur. First chair of first violin has the name ‘concertmaster’ instead of principal. To me, the violin is an instrument where you can learn much and express yourself through melodies. (student 3)

I play the violin because I love to. It is fun to look forward to rehearsals. (student 4, age 13)

The violin is important because of its sound and the music it can create. The violin is my second instrument and to me it means an extra chance to perfect two instruments. (student 5)

I think violin is important because it is able to play many octaves of high notes and low notes. Violin sounds the best. I think violin is the king of instruments. (student 6)

Question 3:

Violin teaches me a new level of thinking. It is not just memorizing facts. It is interpreting information, controlling movements, and it is art. Playing it well requires accuracy, precision, technique, and a sense of dynamics and good sound. You also need musicality and good phrasing. (student 3)

I have great grades probably because playing music improved my listening skills. I can listen and comprehend what people are saying without looking like I am
paying attention. That is why people are always surprised at what I know. Also, playing violin is great practice for multi-tasking. (student 4)

Violin helps me at school and outside of school. At school it is easier to analyze problems and you think more. Outside of school, in piano playing, I can hear more differences in sound and I practice more in everything I do. (student 5)

Violin helps me to have more knowledge in music and math. Math, because there is rhythm that we have to count. (student 6)

Question 4:

I think music is important in your life because you need to be well-rounded. I once heard somewhere (I don’t remember where) that some colleges want well-rounded students. Like people who can do or play instruments or sports or do art or something like that. Right when I heard instruments I thought I am sorta-kinda well-rounded because I can play VIOLIN?? (student 1)

Learning music is important because music is our feelings played on instruments that can be a pleasure to have to distract you from your problems or help you not feel down. (student 2)

Music is a totally different aspect of knowledge, compared to other things learned in school. When you learn music you are introduced to a new world. Music increases your ability to think and makes your brain more well-rounded, improving the right side of the brain which is based on creativity and art. (student 3)

Learning music is important because it helps you in life. When you are feeling down and you listen to music, your mood lifts. It is easier to focus on the important things in life. (student 5)

Learning music is important because we listen to music everywhere, then why not understand and learn it. Learning music also helps part of your brain. (student 6)

The children surveyed were students at Dallas Strings in Allen, Texas, as well as my private students. The former attend the facility for after-school private instrumental lessons, the latter attend weekly private lessons with me. None of them in my three-year experience has expressed interest in becoming a professional violinist. All parents of the students are heavily involved in their children’s musical/violinistic education by attending
the lessons and/or being in close contact with me regarding each weekly lesson. The purpose of our studying together is to provide a nurturing learning environment for these children through music education and learning to play the violin. Each of them has exhibited well-roundedness in expressing why they chose to study to play the violin and why they liked music. As previously stated, music and instrumental education for non-professional-track students is a key to bringing up a versatile young person with an acute sense of cognitive skills developed by the multitude of problems and challenges that learning to read music and playing an instrument involve. Parents know that in the future their children will look back at this time of their lives and will realize that they have been provided with unique and solid tools that they could use later in life’s many spheres.

The Source for the Study of the Importance of Teaching Non-Professional-Track Violin Students

The hypothesis for crafting an independent methodology of teaching for non-professional-track violin students was born out of an evolving philosophy of mine regarding the stance of music education and instrumental training in today’s world. By “today’s world,” I regard the twenty-first century state of the:

- World economy
- Arts in the public and private sectors (cycle of creation and consumption)
- Professional orchestras (remaining and dissolved)
- Musicians’ unions (their effect on orchestral management and protection of musicians’ rights)
- Concert audiences (demographics, interests)
- Music conservatories (number of students–instrumentalists entering and graduating; students’ attitudes at the beginning of their studies and at
graduation; number of students–instrumentalists obtaining orchestral positions and founding or joining professional chamber music ensembles; freelancers)

- Audition processes for orchestras (a number of open positions in relation to the number of graduating students)

- Patronage of musical institutions (sustained: long-term; sustained: short-term; non-sustained: incidental)

- Music’s role within the contemporary society (perception of music’s value: universal, tangible, daily commodity; different genres of music and their implication within society)

These factors in western culture underwrite the fundamental assumptions of this dissertation. Specifically, today’s world economy is not encouraging for professionally-trained instrumentalists. I believe this is a fact that ought to be taken seriously and with a dose of objective distance. As teachers, we are largely responsible for the students whom we train and who believe they will find jobs in the professional world of music performance. The number of students graduating from music conservatories and music departments at universities is rising; however, the number of jobs available in orchestras is decreasing, as many orchestras have recently suffered shut downs, bankruptcies, and mergers with other orchestras in order to save one instead of loosing both. More and more highly-skilled graduating musicians find themselves in a position as freelance performers due to the lack of possibilities for tenure-track teaching and full-time orchestra positions.

By training young people to be musically savvy without the expectation of directing them towards becoming professional instrumentalists, we can build a body of future patrons of musical institutions. Without musical education, individuals interested in music patronage may not make the best executive choices that are in the interest of music institutions. A patron who has had instrumental training in his/her childhood can much better understand the needs of music institutions which by that token can take into account
the needs of musicians. Building those relationships based on mutual understanding can greatly benefit through the knowledge derived from music education that we all share.

Similar concepts apply in regard to building future audiences. Individuals invested in music who have been exposed to music education and instrumental training may most likely respond to concert–hall repertoire with more in-depth knowledge and understanding. Thus, the lineage between the musician, the music institution, the patron, and the audience member should mutually support one another where all parties benefit and enjoy the outcome of such communication.

In my viewpoint, classical music's place in society is mirrored by what the society is being exposed to on a daily basis. What society is exposed to is by and large shaped by what music is present in social space. The executives who make those decisions base them on their own tastes. If they inherit music education experience as part of their overall early education, they may have an influence on how society will adapt to hearing classical music in a social space and by that token make society more musical.

My Learning and My Teaching Experience

I come from a professional musical family and have received much support and direction from my parents in my earliest violinistic training deeply rooted in the traditions of music education in Eastern Europe. As many of my peers, I was trained from a very early age to compete in national and international competitions (with eyes upon the ultimate goal of participating in the International Henryk Wieniawski Competition which takes place every five years in my native city of Poznań, Poland).
I have begun to wonder whether there could be another path along which a violinist might develop other than a goal of being declared a single winner among many violinists. While I have developed into a professional violinist, I can see to what extent the rigor of the very training I received may not fit the needs of all young violinists. Accordingly, I invite others like me who teach non-professional-track violin students, to consider an approach that may differ in some substantial ways from the very traditional track I, and others have followed.

In a nutshell, the foundation of my training and approach to teaching non-professional-track violin students is based upon:

- Thirty-two years of playing the violin since the age of six
- Twenty years of teaching at elementary, middle school, high school, college, and university levels
- Observation of teaching at elementary, middle school, high school, college, university levels, and master classes
- Conversations with fellow faculty and colleagues about their teaching experience, methods, and the implications of teaching a wide variety of violin students (exhibiting various ability levels, ages, backgrounds, and goals)
- Reading publications on the art of violin playing

My goal as a teacher is to use all of my experience and the experiences of those like me and implement them in my teaching and coaching, whether I tutor a five year old, a thirteen, or a twenty-five year old. In all of the instances I need wisdom and knowledge how to impact the individual child’s or young person’s thinking and approach to tackle the challenging instrument. I believe that everyone can make music if they try. However, playing an instrument such as the violin demands physical, athletic abilities, and to acquire them often means labor, dissatisfaction, and discouragement. It is my job to ensure that I can help young people not feel overwhelmed but encouraged through each and every step
of their learning process. One of the most important parts of my teaching is creating small goals particular for every student and achieving them at every lesson so that each student immediately sees the positive effects of his/her efforts.

In summary, my approach to teaching as gathered from my own learning experience amounts to the following points:

- Application of methods of practicing from my teachers
- Self-analysis and developing my own methods of practicing
- Discovering ideas and solutions to technical challenges on the violin; finding out how the mind processes information and how the body responds to it: both athletic and intellectual approaches
- Incorporating life-long lessons from my teachers: their thinking processes, analysis, criticism, positive comments, and life wisdom
- Learning from observation and active participation in master classes by nationally and internationally renowned artists

My experience of teaching came from the following venues:

- Private teaching while an undergraduate student at the University of Kansas (master of music students who wished to learn the instruments, adults who wanted to learn for a hobby, elementary school–age children)
- Faculty at the Greater Boston Youth Symphony Organization, Boston, Massachusetts while a master's student at the New England Conservatory (teaching pupils at private schools in Boston)
- Instructor at the Lone Star Music Academy, Flower Mound, Texas and at Dallas Strings, Allen, Texas while pursuing the Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of North Texas
- Teaching fellow at the University of North Texas while pursuing my doctoral degree
- Adjunct faculty at the Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas

Observance of other teachers at work has been always an important and integral part of my learning experience. This includes:
• Studio classes of Professor Julia Bushkova, University of North Texas
• Weekly “departmentals”. University of North Texas
• Master classes by on-site, university faculty
• Master classes by visiting performing artists
• End of semester juries—exams, University of North Texas, Texas Woman’s University

And last but not least, a vast learning of teaching has always come from reading (among others):

• Francesco Geminiani (1751)
• Leopold Mozart (1756)
• Pierre Baillot (1835)
• Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1910)
• Demetrius Constantine Dounis (1921)
• Carl Flesch (1930s)
• Zoltán Kodály (1935)
• Carl Orff (1950)
• Ivan Galamian (1962)
• Shinichi Suzuki (1969)

My Teaching Philosophy

My philosophy and approach to teaching students who are not aspiring to have

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3 Departmental is a weekly class held by the string faculty of the Department or the College of Music for undergraduate and graduate students in order to showcase their weekly and monthly progress in front of a public consisting of fellow faculty members and fellow students. It is held at a concert hall.
careers as musicians has been evolving over time. I first began to ask myself why the methods of teaching I knew well from my education did not yield the desired results. Even though I knew that I needed to teach not to fulfill my own goals but of those whom I was teaching, the reality of implementing that approach was not as straightforward. The truth is that teachers have been equipped with tools passed on to us by masters of previous generations who taught us with an intent to shape us into the best potential instrumentalists we could be.

It is common knowledge among violinists of today that the European traditions of violin teaching: the Franco/Belgian, old Russian, German, Italian, Polish have all drawn influence from the masters of the eighteenth century, such as Francesco Geminiani and Leopold Mozart. Through the later part of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, violin virtuosos from various parts of Europe traveled through the continent and over time, the diverse idiosyncratic approaches to violin playing and teaching overlapped. They did retain individual differences, known to us today as particular elements of the: Franco/Belgian and German violin playing schools, but the overall attention of all methods was appointed to the question of how to develop the best skilled violinist who will have no technical difficulties, will be an able interpreter of music and a skilful showman.

Despite the fact that the first treatises and manuals were written for a selected group of individuals, the aim was clear—to enable a given violinist to become the best he/she could be for the purpose of making a living as a court musician, and later on, a

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4 The first published Violin Treatises were: "Art of Playing the Violin" by Francesco Geminiani (London, 1751) and the "Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing" by Leopold Mozart (1756).
soloist/virtuoso. Of course, there were exceptions; kings and monarchs indulged in taking instrumental lessons for the sake of entertaining themselves and raising their prowess at the courts of Europe. Aristocratic ladies from “good homes” also studied music as a way of enhancing their attractiveness as highly educated women awaiting desirable marriage suitors. Being a musician of the highest order used to be a luxurious commodity in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and roughly the first half of the twentieth centuries. To take lessons, have a teacher, and have access to a fine instrument meant one was privileged. To have been a professional musician situated one in the elite class of people who possessed a very unique gift and ability, which was accessible to few. Globalization of the world through vast technological advances during the last two decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, vast migrations of people through continents in search of higher standards of living, escaping the misfortunes of war torn zones, looking for better jobs, have all created new social standards. Competitiveness in job markets has increased, the tempo of every day life has intensified, and the diverse multi-cultural societies have seen a need for all-inclusiveness and conformity. In this newborn reality, to be an artist–musician no longer means to be one of a few privileged individuals. Music has become an accessible commodity. With that came growing issues that all of us musicians/instrumentalists face today, namely: how to find a job, one that can ensure we will make a living from it, and secondly, what is the purpose of our learning the instrument today and what role can we serve in the society as capable instrumentalists?

This brings us to further dilemmas. In the past, the acquisition of an instrument was not an easy task. It was reserved for the wealthy or the fortunate few who were given the instrument by the wealthy to play and to study. Today, to obtain an instrument is not
difficult for a vast majority of the middle class. The number of violin makers in the world is steadily increasing and the exchange of instruments at auctions is available to a good number of violinists. Buying instruments directly from dealers has become a common practice and manufactured instruments may be purchased for a fraction of cost of hand-made ones. There also exist small businesses renting violins and other string instruments for a mere $20 a month (which, for an average middle class income family, is a considerably small cost). Instrumental lessons are also much more readily available through private instruction, after school programs (Austin String Project, University of North Texas Community Music Program, Michigan State University Community Music School, University of Alabama Community Music School, Eastman Community Music School, and many others), preparatory divisions at conservatories and high school music academies (Juilliard Pre-College Program, New England Conservatory Preparatory School, Precollege Division of Manhattan School of Music, Bard College Conservatory of Music Preparatory Division, Curtis School of Music Preparatory Division, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music Pre-College String Academy, Interlochen Arts Academy, and many others), summer string programs (Interlochen Summer Arts Camp, Mark O’Connor Berklee College of Music Summer String Program, Young People’s String Program at Peabody Institute, and many others), colleges and universities. All of these developments have led to enabling a large number of children and young adults to be involved in instrumental study, for better or worse.

From those studying at preparatory schools and after school programs, only the very few of the best will become successful in music as a career and the rest will likely remain disappointed and disheartened. The disappointment will come from the sheer fact
that the unspoken expectation of a child to become a professional and his or her not reaching that goal is more and more prevalent. Professionally trained private teachers are constantly challenged to re-think and to re-create the criteria of approach to teaching music to young individuals, dependent on the individual goals associated with this education. More often than not, teachers continue to implement the tasks that have been known to them from their own professional training. It may be fruitful for teachers to adopt new ways of communicating their learned methods to the students and their parents especially as those methods may need to be modified. Secondly, I propose that at the very beginning of working with a student, teachers address the goals of training and discuss them openly. It can lead to results that are positive and inspiring for all parties involved.

Let us assume a scenario when parents in search for a private teacher express a wish for their child to start learning the instrument, and in time to come, compete in all-regional and all-state competitions. The teacher, in my mind, is then obligated to ask the parent about the intention for such a path for the child. If he or she hears that the child hopes to become a professional player, the teacher needs to explain what this path entails. At the very beginning of their relationship, the teacher’s role is to clearly express to the parents what learning to play the violin constitutes and what it demands. The teacher should also be clear about the risks and downfalls of that journey. It is the role of a teacher to take the responsibility for a clear and honest communication with the family of a potential student.

Suggested Repertoire for Teaching Non-Professional-Track Students

There exists an extensive repertoire written for the development of violinistic
technique which I use when teaching non-professional-track students. I choose specific literature that addresses those students’ needs without unnecessarily putting too high demands and expectations on them. The following repertoire serves as a point of departure for me as a teacher and allows me to work with beginning students through the basic technique-building exercises, scales, and pieces and to help them develop into intermediate-level players:

1) C. Paul Herfurth — *A Tune a day for Violin*, Books 1-3

   These books contain elementary and intermediate-level scales, exercises and short popular tunes from international folk and classical repertoire.


   The Doflein method employs duets starting with the Baroque through the twentieth-century repertoire, as well as many technical exercises combined with theoretical practice.

3) Jan Hrimaly — *Scale Studies for Violin: Violin Method*

   This method focuses on the elementary to intermediate-level student. It begins with long notes, one octave scales, progresses to two and three octave scales and arpeggios in all keys, contains bowing exercises with mixed rhythm and ends with sixteenth-note runs.

4) Barbara Barber — *Scales for Advanced Violinist*

   Barbara Barber’s scale book offers lessons in theory as part of a thorough music education: study of the circle of fifths, scales in all major and minor keys (melodic and harmonic with the exception of natural), arpeggios and
chord functions (tonic, subdominant, dominant, diminished seventh), chromatic scales, “broken” thirds, double stops (thirds, sixths, octaves and fingered octaves, tenths), and harmonics. Barber also provides exercises aimed at helping the student learn the scales and the double stops (a practice/progress chart is enclosed at the beginning of the book).

5) Ann Lawry Gray — *Just the Facts, Theory Books 1 – 3*

Ann Lawry Gray provides an indispensible compilation of musical knowledge: terms and definitions, circle of fifths, scales, arpeggios, chord functions, key and time signatures, fingering, and more. These books are directed for elementary to intermediate-level students.

6) Franz Wohlfahrt — *Sixty Studies for the Violin* op. 45, Book 1

These etudes are directed at a beginning to early intermediate student and cover almost every aspect of violin technique of left and right hands. They contain string crossing, various bowing strokes, shifting and less and more intricate fingering patterns.

7) Heinrich Ernst Keyser – *Thirty Six Elementary and Progressive Studies* op. 20

These studies address a wide variety of technique from bowing, to shifting, to fingering.

8) Jacques Fereol Mazas – *Etudes Speciales*, op. 36, Book 1

These studies cover issues of bow technique and bow division, tone production, left hand technique and the principles of phrasing.
9) Jakob Dont – *Twenty Four Preparatory Studies op. 37*

These studies are considered to be preparatory to Kreutzer’s Etudes and later Rode’s Caprices.

10) Federigo Fiorillo – *Thirty Six Studies or Caprices for the Violin*

Fiorillo’s studies are aimed for an advancing violinist and serve as preparatory material to Kreutzer and later Rode.

11) Oscar Rieding – Concerto op. 35 in b-minor, Anatoly Sergeevich Komarovsky Concerto no. 3 in D-major (opus unknown), Fritz Seitz – Concertos in D-major op. 7, G-major op. 12.

These concertos are written in the first position.


These concertos cover first to third positions.

13) Joseph Gingold — *Solos for the Violin Player*

This is a compilation of compositions by: Schumann, Schubert, Prokofiev, Fauré, Brahms, Mozart, Bach, Paganini, and Tchaikovsky, among others.

These pieces can be performed by an intermediate to advanced violin student.

14) Shinichi Suzuki — *Violin School, Books 1 – 6*

In addition, I recommend Shinichi Suzuki’s Books *Ability Development from Age Zero*, and *Nurtured by Love: A New Approach to Education*. These books are meant for students’ parents as helpful guides in supporting the children through the process of learning to play the violin and learning music. In these books, Suzuki specifies the ways a nurturing environment can help young pupils become motivated and inspired with positive influence on the development of their talent for music and violin playing. Even though Suzuki openly
speaks about a child becoming a professional musician/violinist, it is, in my mind, his imperative narrative that can benefit all students whether or not they intend to become professional musicians. Suzuki talks specifically about a philosophy of approach through building a comprehensive support system for young students by their parents, which shapes and transforms the learning process into an organic entity where music exists as a part of the surrounding universe and therefore needs to be allowed into our lives (Suzuki, 1969a and 1969b).

If in the course of study a student decides he/she wishes to continue his/her musical journey and possibly become professional musician in the future, I choose the following, more demanding literature to further their development:

1) Charles Dancla – *School of Mechanism op. 74 for Violin*

   *School of Mechanism* contains exercises focusing primarily on the development of the left hand technique. They aim at preparing the student for the more advanced *Etudes Brillantes*, also by Dancla.

2) Henry Schradieck – *The School of Violin Technics*, Books 1 – 3

   Comprehensive technique building exercises focused on building left hand dexterity (shifting, double stops), and bowing exercises.

3) Jacques F. Mazas – *Etudes Brillantes op. 36*, Book 2

   I use Mazas Etudes Book 2 as comprehensive studies/pieces for more advanced students. They are composed as small pieces and demand an intermediate-level ability on the violin both technically and musically.

4) Rodolphe Kreutzer – *Forty Two Studies or Caprices for the Violin*

   These etudes are very comprehensive. They begin with elementary tasks and
eventually cover a wide spectrum of technical issues. The studies: 2, 3, 5 can
be used for beginning students, 1, 4, 6, 7 – 13 for more intermediate students,
14 – 22 for yet more advanced, 23 – 30 advanced, 31 – 42 most advanced.

5) Pierre Rode – *Twenty Four Caprices for Violin Solo* (no opus number available).

6) Jakob Dont – *Twenty Four Etudes and Caprices op. 35 for Violin Solo*
   
   These Etudes serve as preparatory studies to Paganini’s *Twenty Four Caprices*. They are advanced and focus on all aspects of technique having become a staple of mainstream violinistic repertoire.

   
   These compositions cover first – third and first – fifth positions.

8) Giovanni Battista Viotti – Concerto no. 23 in G-major, Pierre Rode – Concerto no. 7 in a-minor, Louis Spohr – Concerto no. 2, Arcangelo Corelli – Sonatas in e-minor and A-major, Charles Auguste de Beriot – Concerto no. 9, George Frideric Handel – Sonata no. 4 and 6, Johann Sebastian Bach – Concerto in a-minor

   These are concertos and pieces in order of increasing difficulty for more advanced students.

   The above is a selected list of repertoire I use; however, there is still more literature from which I may draw according to the needs and goals of individual students.

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**My Approach to Teaching Non-Professional-Track Students**

To be specific, I invite others like me who teach non-professional-track violin students to consider the following guides and pedagogical criteria in the approach to teaching:

1) Quantity and quality of pedagogical material for weekly instruction:
a. An appropriate choice of a scale system
b. A choice of an etude or a part of an etude
c. Additional technique-building exercise(s) based on an individual child's needs
d. A short piece
e. School orchestra assignments and audition repertoire (if applicable)

2) Pacing and sequence of pedagogical material:

a. A choice of a technique-building regimen (scales, etudes, exercises) according to an individual child's level of advancement and available time frame for the child's weekly practice
b. Sequence of new assignments according to an individual child's progress, dependent on child's level of advancement and available time frame for weekly practice

3) Associations with subject matters outside of musical context:

a. Language (Italian, French, German, as applicable dependent on the score in use)
b. History (background of composer's country of origin and interesting and relevant highlights from the composer's life)
c. Geography (composer's country of origin: study of continents, geographical associations between culture)
d. Culture (significant general and specific characteristics of various nations and cultures)
e. Logic and analysis (teaching critical thinking and decision making; helping the child notice connections between math and music; developing problem solving skills)
f. Memorization (clarifying the importance of training the skill of memorization in small stages with an emphasis on recognition that it allows for greater ability of concentration on the important task at hand)

4) Readjusting the criteria for learning and performing specific works:

a. Allowing a child to choose repertoire (with the teacher's knowledge that the child may possess limited technical ability to fully realize all the dimensions of the chosen piece of music)
b. Allowing the child to perform as frequently as they express a wish to do so, even if the teacher’s concept of preparedness is not met.

5) Establishing teacher-parent-child (student) platforms as the basis for comprehensive communication and articulation of mutual goals, hopes, and expectations.

All of the above mentioned sequences of approach in my teaching have a primary goal—helping the student him/herself become the best they can be. I believe that the student’s positive experience of learning something as complex as violin playing must be the primary goal. My experience has shown me that students process a sense of accomplishment differently than their parents. Therefore, I strongly believe that the most imperative task I have as a teacher is to help my students define their own understanding of why they are learning to play the violin. I want them not only to be able to tell me what music means for them, but that they do it in an original way, not through their teachers’ and parents’ voices. Through the course of studying to play the violin and learning music, I want my students to recognize their own potential, traits of their personalities, their inherent predispositions, and acquired abilities. I want them to discover something new and valuable about themselves and the world around them. It is my wish for the students to acknowledge that music translates into more than skill alone and that acquiring competence on an instrument is a part of a journey of learning to play but not the goal in itself.

In my teaching, it is important that I promote short and long-term goals. I strive to clearly and deliberately state the difference between them to my students at all times. Firstly, my aim is that the results of working together in the lesson are seen immediately. I stress the individual student’s strength pointing attention to it and letting them know that they possess a quality which is unique. Then, I explain to each student in a specific way how
to solve a given issue. In doing so, I put an emphasis on how vital it is that they may solve the issue at hand. The following are examples of my approach to teaching that have yielded positive outcomes in my experience. I invite others like me to consider the following pedagogical imperatives:

- The importance of explaining through example that a lesson is a collective effort and everyone has his/her part in it (teacher and student).
- Looking for small but significant results, which invariably yield positive energy and attitude in a student.
- Rewarding students with compliments as often as possible. A young person needs to be acknowledged and praised while working hard.
- Making sure it is the student’s objectives that are the center of focus through the lesson and not my ambition for the student.
- Suggesting different intensity of challenges for every student and moderating types of challenges dependent on each student’s capacity to absorb, respond to, and follow up upon my instruction.

I believe that creativity of all kind can be born, developed and enhanced through the study of music and learning to play an instrument; therefore, I strive to inspire it in all forms by using comparison to every day life (sport, food, movies, pop music, color, smell, mood, like and dislike, and more). I use metaphor as one of the most vital tools in my teaching. I am also aware of the psychological and emotional impact I have on the student in the lesson and do my best to be vigilant to his/her reactions. I further believe a student ought to seem happy, stimulated and motivated by the lesson and naturally show a clear and unforced contentment at the end of it.

It is extremely important to me that I do not inspire doubts in my students in terms of them possessing enough talent. We are all endowed and predisposed to do something well to a certain degree and then with the help of our environment (parents and teachers)
and circumstances we can develop that talent and nourish it. Learning itself is the means to happiness, success, and sense of self-worthiness. Development of musicality and/or appreciation for music is equally important and valuable as becoming a virtuoso on the instrument.

To my mind, the method of communication between the teacher and the student ought to be entirely focused on shaping the student’s character along with a broad-minded, keen, and creative disposition. I also think that through the study of music itself, the skill on the instrument, the lives of composers, and multiple aspects in areas of history, geography, linguistics, mathematics, and others, a student is directed to become a versatile, accomplished, and erudite individual in the future.

In my approach to teaching non-professional track students, I draw additionally from the knowledge of Shinichi Suzuki, Zoltán Kodály, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, and Carl Orff. I regard their methods particularly rich in contextualizing the importance of music and instrumental education and their relationship to life. Their systems of teaching are as much oriented on acquiring a skill as they are directed toward stimulating the overall development of a child. The difference in my approach to teaching non-professional track students is that I depart further away from those methods in favor of subjugating a perfected skill to an overall musically savvy child who is intellectually motivated and comprehensively evolved.

As explained in the course of this paper, in today’s fast-paced world of the twenty-first century, there are more children receiving a musical education, but there are not enough possibilities for professional music jobs. Another part of the reason to train musically savvy children is that they will become an indispensable part of society. We need
a society where many can read, sing music, and possibly play a musical instrument, even if
not very proficiently. It is crucial to recognize the needs of a contemporary Western society
and apply the instrumental training according to those needs. I believe that we as teachers
have a responsibility to bridge the gap between the professional musicians and the non-
musically educated members of society. My approach signifies the need for more emphasis
on expanding musical and instrumental education to a vast population of children. As a
teacher, I wish for my students to become, as Suzuki said, better people with a good
character—healthy, responsible, and happy.
CHAPTER 3

SELECTED TWENTIETH-CENTURY PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES TO TEACHING MUSIC

AND VIOLIN TO CHILDREN

The destiny of children lies in the hands of their parents
Shinichi Suzuki

Shinichi Suzuki’s input in the development of pedagogical approaches to teaching
the violin to children in the second half of the twentieth century has been paramount.
Suzuki’s mottos best describe his philosophy of teaching. To showcase it, the following is a
list of some of his many insightful concepts. Some of them are best manifested when
juxtaposed with one another:

- Talent is no accident of birth./ Talent is not inherited.
- Good environmental conditions produce superior abilities./What does not exist in
  the environment will not develop in the child.
- Will he amount to something?/No. He will become "something."
- Natural ability is brought out by training./Any child can be trained, and there is but
  one way.
- I learned the foolishness of lamenting lack of ability./To surrender to the
  thought of having no talent and give up effort is cowardly.
- Music, the language of life/Education rather than instruction/Talent education is life education

And last but not least:

- My dream for the happiness of all people/To make my dream not just a dream but a reality (Suzuki, 1969b).

Suzuki stressed in his teaching philosophy the importance of realization that “ability
breeds ability” (Suzuki, 1969b: 15). In other words, he firmly believed that teachers and
parents should not judge the children as talented or non-talented as that judgment was
going to unnecessarily mark the children’s perception of themselves well before they had
the opportunity to learn a skill and develop their ability. Suzuki strongly advocated that all
children should be able to demonstrate their capabilities if they were brought up in a
nurturing environment that provided favorable circumstances for them to learn and to
grow. The following story beautifully describes Suzuki's principles of life and learning:

The mother of one of my students came one day to inquire about her son. This
student had good musical sense, practiced very well, and was a superior child.
"Sensei [Professor], will my boy amount to something?" When the mother asked me
like that, I answered laughingly, "No, He will become "something." It seems to be the
tendency in modern times for parents to entertain thoughts of this kind. It is an
undisguisedly cold and calculating educational attitude. If I hear things like this, I
want to reply in a joking way. But the mother was alarmed and surprised by my
answer. So I continued, "He will become a noble person through his violin playing.
Isn't that good enough? You should stop wanting your child to become a
professional, just a good money earner. This thought is concealed in your question
and is offensive. A person with a fine and pure heart will find happiness. The only
worry for parents should be to bring up their children as noble human beings. That
is sufficient. If this is not their greatest hope, in the end the child may take a road
contrary to their expectations. Your son plays the violin very well. We must try to
make him splendid in mind and heart also." (Suzuki, 1969b: 25, 26)

I think what Suzuki tried to convey in his message was that being a musician is a state of
being and not only a job.

Ability is Not an Inherent Asset. It is a Fruit of Nurturing, Training, and Learning

\[ Ability \text{ is life } \]

Shinichi Suzuki

Suzuki continues:

Man is governed by life force. The living soul with a desire to go on living, displays
great power in adapting itself to its environment. The human life force, by seeing
and feeling its surroundings, trains itself and develops ability. This ability by further
constant training overcomes difficulties and becomes a very high ability. This is the
relationship between the human being and ability. The development of ability
cannot be accomplished by mere thinking or theorizing, but must be accompanied
by action and practice... Only through action can the power of the life force be
displayed. Ability develops through practice. An idle person will not develop ability.… (Ibid.)

Suzuki stresses that through violin playing and memorizing, the brain and body activities are encouraged and it is this activity that makes the child mentally and physically sound. (Ibid.)

I agree with Suzuki’s premise that training a child to become an exceptional instrumentalist, who is striving for success through his musical education, is not necessarily the most sound and noble (Suzuki, 1969a). I support Suzuki’s idea that the virtues of our character are more important than the success of our accomplishments in our chosen profession.

I also agree with the notion that music can be a means and not an end in itself. It can promote an overall well-being of a child and his/her comprehensive growth and happiness. As Suzuki teaches us, I believe this philosophical attitude ought to be the superior motif for children to learn music and to play an instrument. I fully promote Suzuki’s ideas and strongly encourage the concept that children’s musical and instrumental learning may be regarded as rewarding by itself.

The “Talented” versus the "Untalented"

“Talent is not inborn, it has to be created” (Suzuki, 1969: 46). This thought is one of the most beneficial concepts in pedagogy a teacher and parent can implement. It can yield positive, motivated and inspired action among all children, and especially those who doubt their ability to learn. This belief not only pertains to learning instrumental playing but any other skill. Suzuki writes:
From the time I left Japan it was not my objective to become a performer. Fascinated by music, I wanted to learn the secret of this man-made art. What is art? I wanted to know. Despairing and disillusioned by my lack of performing ability, my hurt pride spurred me on in my quest for the secret of art. And it cured my despair. Even if I had no talent, and even if my progress was slow, I determined to plod on step by step toward my goal of becoming a whole, well-rounded human being. I did not hurry, but I did not rest either. I endeavored ceaselessly. And it gave me both peace of mind and something to live for. My devotion to art helped me to develop and educate my own ability. "I have no ability" — what sadness and despair are occasioned by this nonsensical belief! For years people everywhere have succumbed to this false way of thinking, which is really only an excuse for avoiding work.... Every child can be educated; it is only a matter of the method of education. Anyone can train himself; it is only a question of using the right kind of effect. (Ibid. 46, 47)

Suzuki’s fierce stance on the subjectivity of possessing versus not possessing an inborn ability or talent is a powerful conviction worth contemplating and implementing. If this philosophy has so far aided multitudes of children across the world, perhaps it is worth continuing and pursuing with ever stronger and more faithful observance. It may be beneficial for teachers and parents periodically to revisit Suzuki’s philosophy and hypothesis to make sure that we do not potentially impose ideals and expectations on our students that fulfill our egos, rather than the well-being and well-roundedness of the pupils we teach.

"Music, the Language of Life" (Suzuki)

According to Suzuki: “[For Buddha] Children in their simplicity seek what is true, what is good, what is beautiful, based on love. That is the true nature of man” (ibid.). In this assertion, Suzuki speaks of the natural flow of good energy and harmony as the basis for a healthy, happy existence. If we assume that music is a gift given to us, then we can also accept that creating and making music are also our privileges. If music is a gift then perhaps we could marvel at its potential by allowing ourselves and those we teach to apply its
potent capability by letting it guide us toward benevolence, humaneness and integrity in place of self-proclaimed pseudo values, such as: price of success at all costs, aggressive competitiveness, “the more and the faster, the better,” or skill before character. Music, with its innate gift of unlimited potential can thus bestow on us an unlimited potential for growth, change, and transformation.

Dream versus Reality

Suzuki writes in his book *Nurtured by Love* (Suzuki, 1969b) about the necessity of believing in the outcome of his ideas which have permeated his entire life, thus leading him to see the results of which he has dreamed: “I know that what I conceive is possible” (ibid.:119). He also brings to our attention the persona of Pablo Casals who believed in similar values pertaining to music and music education for children, and who spoke on world peace at the United Nations. Suzuki points our attention to the fact that his input is embedded in implementation of talent education. "What I am trying to do now is to apply talent education to all areas of life. I am trying to get sympathetic primary-school principals to try out methods of education that will ensure that not even one student fails in school. I am also trying to get something done about mentally retarded children, and to persuade sympathetic politicians to clarify national policy with regard to children” (ibid.).

Today, the United Nations and UNESCO representatives and ambassadors for culture are doing much for the promotion of the arts in the world’s societies everywhere.5 UNESCO Goodwill ambassadors for culture travel around the world and advocate various

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initiatives promoting arts and education. The projects encompass: the importance of preservation of cultural heritages, promotion of racial diversity, promotion of culture of peace and tolerance, human rights, and promotion and tolerance through music, among many others. Their efforts are extensive, commendable, and fruitful. However, it is imperative that on every level of education, teachers and parents can be proactive in ways that will be equally affirming, influential and consequential. Thus, making the essential—child's comprehensive well-being—an integral part of our primary care for our children, our students, and all children. In Suzuki's words: “If the world (finally) lives up to the Children's Charter, which states that all children must be cared for, then my dream will not have been just a dream” (ibid.: 120).

"Music is Spiritual Food for Everybody" (Zoltán Kodály)

Zoltán Kodály, the Hungarian composer, based his philosophy of music education on singing. He firmly believed that it is singing in place of instrumental learning that allows children to achieve musical literacy. Kodály's philosophy was based on a premise that “music belongs to everybody” and that it could help develop the “person’s entire being”: personality, intellect, emotions, and spirituality (Howard, 1996: 27). Kodály put an enormous emphasis on the development of the inner ear as the “most important musical goal of all”. Singing a cappella was to follow as a tool to further sharpen the ear. Then, the child ought to be exposed to such fundamental musical instructions as: sight singing,

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dictation, ear training, part hearing, harmony, form, memorization, and finally, rhythmic system of mnemonic syllables as an aid to counting (ibid.).

Kodály’s method promotes a child’s musical education to begin in the womb, so that he/she will already have some exposure to music by birth. Since children learn best by being actively involved, Kodály emphasized that children’s music education should be well designed, sequenced and the curriculum ought to foresee the optimum learning result. Very important to Kodály was the study of folk songs and games of a child’s culture as well as of other cultures. Kodály advocated the movable Do system as well as the pentatonic scale for early training (as most folk songs are based on the pentatonic scale: Do, Re, Mi, Sol, La).

Application of Kodály’s Method

The basic principles of Kodály’s method can be incorporated into instrumental teaching as well. The following are the fundamentals of Kodály’s method:

1) A child ought to sing the pitch of each string before tuning the instrument

2) A child ought to listen to recordings of folk songs and, if not available, should listen to the teacher play in a soft, non-vibrato tone and try to learn the songs through auditory means

3) A teacher ought to apply solfège syllables to songs and exercises and teach small fragments, according to the difficulty

4) Teacher and child ought to sing and sign together (see Fig. 2)

5) A child should become familiar with syllables, finger numbers, and letter names of notes

6) A child should use songs with texts to supplement learning development
7) A child should speak and/or march to rhythm of the piece: “walking the beat”
   (Howard, 1996: 28)

8) A teacher should write out rhythmic patterns on the board and have children
   use the vocables “ta” and “ti”

9) A teacher should teach a child to utilize pizzicato before arco

10) A teacher should teach a child to utilize the “rhythm to note” technique: playing
    rhythm on one open string and then involve two open strings (fingers should not
    be placed on the string yet)\(^7\)

11) A teacher should teach phrasing as a means to developing inner hearing
    (memorizing short passages)

12) A teacher should teach composition (ABA form as a start)

13) A teacher should teach part playing: have the children play pizzicato and the
    teacher play arco and then change; have some students sing, some play and then
    change roles.

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\(^7\) This pedagogical principal is in accordance with Suzuki’s teachings.
“To hear music, move to it, sing it, write it, and finally read it” was Kodály’s motto (Howard, 1996). His method is crafted for young children but can also be applied to middle school pupils and children of all ages as well. His method can be used as a part of general music pedagogy aimed at children who intend to become professional musicians in the future, as well as those who want to develop comprehensively through music education but do not plan on careers in the music profession.

**Emile Jaques-Dalcroze: “The Influence of Eurhythmics Upon the Development of Movement in Music Education”**

According to Jaques-Dalcroze, an early twentieth-century Swiss musician and educator:

Musical rhythm cannot be judged except in relation to silence and absence of movement. If we study the conditions of silence we feel spontaneously the need—by nature aesthetic and human—of giving it a natural counterpoise, namely, that of the sound which breaks it and enables us to realize its great reconstructive and consequently emotional value. Musical rhythmics is the art of establishing an equilibrium between the sound movement and the static silence, of opposing one to the other, of preparing one by the other, according to the laws of contrast and counterpoise which give birth to and establish style, according to the shades of duration and of force which constitute individuality and the shades of timbre-intensity and tone-acuity which constitute in musical art that higher element of mystic and impersonal kind which unites nature to the individual. (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1917: 193)

Eurhythmics lies at the foundation of Jaques-Dalcroze’s philosophy of music education, which stresses the learning of rhythm, structure, and musical expression through
kinesthetic movement as the ultimate experience of music. The approach calls for connecting music, movement, mind, and the body and fosters the idea of the body as the main instrument (Esterella, 2012).

For Jaques-Dalcroze:

To realize the freshest, most beautiful, and most complete thought-picture, adequate organs are necessary. Unfortunately, many conceptions and ideas cannot be realized, owing to the lack of an organism sufficiently elastic and trained. A musician rooted in the classical traditions of rhythm and time cannot make use of the fresh powers given by eurhythmics unless he consents to assimilate the means of realization created by my method. Artists of today do not possess the sense of time-duration nor shades of time-duration. They revolt, and rightly, against false harmonies, but never against the mistake which consists in not respecting the duration of sounds. Do we ever meet criticisms protesting against such faults? And yet for musicians who have studied eurhythmics and possess the feeling for time-duration, the various time-values form a series of shades to be observed as strictly as those variations in pitch. (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1917:197)

Jaques-Dalcroze also emphasized ear-training and was an advocate for improvisation as a means of developing and improving musical abilities. His ideas can work well for any pedagogical setting, which employs music education, and certainly for those children who want to learn through music to become versatile and well-rounded, well-adjusted, and agile, both intellectually, and emotionally.

Orff-Schulwerk or the Orff Approach

The Orff-Schulwerk, in other words, the Orff Approach, is a compilation of principles and an explanation of basic processes rather than a method. Founded by the German composer Carl Orff and his colleague Gunild Keetman in the 1920s, the so-called Orff-Schulwerk refers to “elemental music making” concentrated on four elements: imitation,
exploration, improvisation, and composition. These elements comprise three stages of learning with the goals: “Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand” (Demenescu, 2011).

The fundamental principles of the Orff & Keetman philosophy allow the child’s natural behavior of play to be the source of the child’s learning experience. Singing, dancing, saying, and playing combined create an organic path for children to learn music in the process (Shamrock, 1997: 41). The approach calls for a simple system employing natural materials and ideas that are close to a child’s world of thought and fantasy. It was particularly conceived for elementary-age children but has been successfully applied to all who wanted to benefit from a creative musical experience: preschoolers, older children, college students, adults, senior citizens, as well as mentally and physically handicapped children (ibid.: 42).

Orff and his colleagues strongly felt that their ideas for active, creative music making could be relevant for music education throughout the world; each country would simply need to adapt it according to its own musical heritage and cultural traditions. Adaptations of the original German edition of the Orff Approach were published in many countries, including: Canada (1956), Sweden (1957), Flemish Belgium (1958), England (1958), Argentina (1961), Portugal (1961), Japan (1963), Spain (1965 and 1969), France (1967), Wales (1968), Czechoslovakia (1969), Taiwan (1972), Denmark (1977), Korea, and the United States (1977-1982) (ibid.).

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9  For the clarity of the prose, I propose to abbreviate the Orff-Schulwerk/ approach to Orff & Keetman, since Gunild Keetman was a co-author of the discussed ideas.
The most important condition responsible for the fact that the approach exists in so many cultures is the incorporation and utilization of the speech, language, song heritage, proverbs, and games of each society. “A successful adaptation of the Orf-Schulwerk idea requires great musical and cultural sensitivity” (ibid.).

The following grouping of ideas can best explain the Orff Approach and allow for an easier adaptation to various cultures:

- **Exploration**: discovery of possibilities through sound and movement
- **Imitation**: basic skills in rhythmic skills and body percussion (finger snapping, clapping, foot stamping and more)
- **Improvisation**: allowing the child to invent their own combination including: bodily movements, percussion sounds, playing of other instruments
- **Creation**: composing a small form such as theme and variations, rondos, suites of all the learned combination of musical activities

With all of the above, “the teacher must always be prepared to assume a leadership role” (Ibid.: 43). The process of learning is the most significant premise behind the Orff ideology.

The Orff process easily translates into instrumental learning, however the development of highly skilled musical performers is beyond the scope of this method of teaching (Shamrock, 1997). The Orff Approach is aimed at helping children become well-rounded musical people who can find their way through various school ensembles, and other educational activities. It creates a framework for excitement in learning, it breaks in routine, and it helps to discover new fascinating ideas, by making the child happy in the process.

The ideas of combining music and movement prevalent in the Jaques-Dalcroze method, the Orff & Keetman approach, the Kodály method through simultaneous sign gestures and singing, Suzuki’s early instrumental training, can prove that music education
for children of all ages can have surmountable benefits. Music education and instrumental learning, no matter at what age it takes place, allow the child to grow, develop, and become a wholesome human being.

Auer, Dounis, Flesch, Galamian, Menuhin, Ševčík, Szigeti

Many great violin virtuosos of the twentieth century have written books on the art of violin playing, all of which have been directed at the young violinists aspiring to become violin virtuosos. Among those who have left prominent literature on the subject include:

- Leopold Auer (*Violin Playing as I Teach It*, 1920; *My Long Life in Music*, 1923; *Violin Master Works and Their Interpretation*, 1925)

- Carl Flesch (*The Art of Violin Playing*, Books 1&2, 1924; *Scale System for Violin, Urstudien* (basic studies) for violin, Fischer, 1970; *Problems of tone production in violin playing*, 1934)

- Ivan Galamian (*Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, 1962; *Contemporary Violin Technique*, 1962)


There were also several other violinists, pedagogues, and important teachers, who have left an influential mark on the anthology of violin playing. They wrote a substantial amount of guides for specific violinistic technical problems, providing exercises and methods for practice. Again, they were directed at shaping future professional violin performers. Some of these pedagogical guides include:

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10 Both Volumes of *The Art of Violin Playing, Books 1&2* have been re-edited and re-published by his former student, the late Eric Rosenblith, professor of the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, and Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts, by Carl Fischer, in New York, in June 2000, and March 2008.
• Demetrius Constantine Dounis\textsuperscript{11} (The Artist’s Technique of Violin Playing: A New Scientific method for Obtaining, in the Shortest Possible Time, an Absolute Mastery of the Higher Technical Difficulties of the Left Hand and of the Bow, 1921; The Absolute Independence of the Fingers in Violin Playing on a Scientific Basis, in two Books, op. 15, 1924; Preparatory Studies in Thirds and Fingered Octaves on a Scientific basis for Violin, op. 16, 1924; Fundamental Trill Studies on a Scientific Basis for Violin, op. 18, 2925; The Dounis Violin Players’ Dozen to Keep the Violinist Technically Fit for the Day’s Work: Twelve Fundamental Exercises for the Left hand and the Bow, op. 20, 1925, among many others

• Otakar Ševčik (The Little Ševčik, An Elementary Violin Tutor, 1901; Changes of Position and Preparatory Scale Studies, op. 8, 1905; Elaborate Studies and Analysis of Paganini Allegro Concerto no.1 op. 20, 1932; Studies on Wieniawski’s 2nd Violin Concerto, op. 17, 1929; Preparatory Excercises in Double-Stopping, op.9, 1905; School of Bowing Technique, op. 9, 1901, among others.

The above-mentioned list of names of significant violin figures of the twentieth century and their works signify the strong divide between the world of professional-track and non-professional track violin students and preeminently showcases the need for distinguishing between the two groups and understanding that their comprehensive and notable works may not always serve as the proper guides for teaching non-professional track students.

\textsuperscript{11} Demetrius Constantine Dounis was a violinist as well as a physician, specializing in neurology and psychiatry. His system for violin technique is a highly scientific one but also practical for the violin. My thanks to professor Julia Bushkova for providing me with this information.
CHAPTER 4

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHILD’S DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH MUSIC EDUCATION AND LEARNING TO PLAY THE VIOLIN

Character first, Ability second
Shinichi Suzuki

It must be frequently re-articulated how vital the parental input is in their child's daily and long-term progress and satisfaction from the experience of learning about music and playing an instrument. None other than the famous Japanese violin teacher Schinichi Suzuki made claims to this belief in his publications from 1969: Ability Development from Age Zero and Nurtured by Love (Suzuki 1969a, 1981: 1969b). One of his most famous mottos was: “the fate of a child is in the hands of his parents” (Suzuki, 1969a, 1981: 13).

Since the second half of the twentieth century, Schinichi Suzuki’s philosophy has by far permeated the approach to teaching the violin in the United States. Suzuki’s method, which he described as “Talent Education” (Suzuki, 1969b: 11, 19, 75, 90, 96-97, 115), is based on the premises: the importance of providing the right environment for children to learn (Suzuki 1969b: 20-23, 47), “character first, ability second”\(^\text{12}\), and the notion that all children can be well educated (Suzuki 1969b: 32-33). Suzuki promoted a belief that a child can become a highly developed human being and an excellent musician through nurturing and the correct form of education (Suzuki 1969b).

Suzuki believed that the music education of a child should start at a very early age, in fact, at infancy, where the child could be listening to music and be sung to by his parents.

\(^{12}\text{This expression comes from the motto of a school where Suzuki studied as a child. The phrase pervades Suzuki’s writings (Hermann 1995: 6).}\)
He put a paramount emphasis on the fact that the parental input in the child’s development is non-negotiable. In the foreword to his “Ability Development from Age Zero”, Lorraine Fink writes:

Suzuki’s book places emphasis on the responsibility of the adult to improve everything under his control and create an environment worthy of the noble spirit with which every child is born....This book was written in the late 1960’s, primarily for parents, and without benefit of scientific clinical studies. Nevertheless, its message is clear and valid. Ultimate ability, or potential, simply cannot be determined at birth. Suzuki asks us to assume that the newborn baby has limitless capabilities and it is in the hands of the parents to provide the environment which will lead to full development of that potential. (Suzuki 1969a, 1981: v)

Though Suzuki was clearly addressing the development of a very young child, and as mentioned by Fink, lacked the scientific benefit of scholarship, his philosophy of parental responsibility and involvement may be well applied to older children as well. Today, supported by scientific scholarly research, we can explain and understand what happens to the minds, psyches, spirits and bodies of children when they are exposed to music and go through the experience of learning to play an instrument.

The Significance of Nurturing the Home Environment

In his article “The role of parents in children’s musical development”, Gary McPherson speaks about the children’s psychological functioning and achievement through the process of socialization that occurs at home due to a positive effect of parental influence on the child’s attitudes, achievement, behavior and learning (McPherson, 2009: 91). McPherson states: “As with other areas of children’s development, the home environment is crucial in early musical development (Asmus, 1985, 1986: Brand, 1986). Beginning at a young age, children develop resilient attitudes, beliefs and expectations about their potential to learn music, ones that have been instilled in them through
interactions with their parents (McPherson & Davidson, 2002, 2006). Parents are critical to
a child’s ongoing success in all areas of their education and this is particularly true in
music, a subject that involves particularly high demands “(McPherson, 2009: 91). The
author talks about “the ‘emotional climates’ that occur separately from, or in conjunction
with, formal and informal music learning” (McPherson, 2009: 92) as a ground for a
constructive relationship between the child and the parent in the pursuit of instrumental
training. Further, McPherson points the attention to the differentiation of educational and
developmental psychology with what is known in music, in order to propose a model of
parent-child interaction, which will have a positive and constructive impact on the child’s
learning of music and playing an instrument (McPherson, 2009: 92).

The many aspects of children’s ability to learn in the social context are based on
basic principles of a child’s psychological needs. McPherson lists them in consecution:
competence, autonomy, relation or connectedness, and purposefulness (McPherson, 2009:
92). All of the above-mentioned elements can be directly achieved through learning to play
the violin.

1) Competence is born through diligent discipline of practicing from lesson to
lesson, not unlike regular daily homework, with the difference that the lessons
offer an individual, one-on-one check up and communication with the teacher. Children feel competent if they regularly fulfill their lesson requirements and, when supervised by the parent, receive support and confirmation of their effort and achievement (McPherson, 2009: 92). Then, the teacher’s approval and acknowledgement of their preparedness also adds to the establishment of their sense of competence.

2) Autonomy is fundamentally linked to the innate need for independence. The more parents encourage and support a child’s development of autonomy, the more the child will become self-reliant, responsible, trustworthy, and will be more prone to grasping difficult tasks (McPherson, 2009: 92). Autonomy in the sense of self-reliance enables the child to practice on his or her own and prepare for the violin lessons willingly and diligently.
3) Connectedness exemplifies a strong bond between a parent and a child in a warm, caring, and non-threatening environment, which encourages a strong motivation for practicing and learning. Parental interest in a child’s work and progress is crucial (McPherson, 2009: 92).

4) Purposefulness comes from both the teacher’s and the parent’s confirmation that the activity of practicing is a meaningful and valuable task, which will help children achieve their goals. A sense of purpose also eliminates a potential for boredom and “enhances chances for experiencing success” (McPherson, 2009: 92).

When all the psychological needs of children are met, the basis for achieving a productive and positive outcome in children’s educational journey is met.

**Relationships and Creativity**

“The American National Commission for Excellence in Education (1983) identified parents as children’s first and most influential teachers, emphasizing parents’ roles in fostering children’s inquisitiveness, creativity and self-confidence while actively participating in their schoolwork” (Creech & Hallam, 2003: 31). Research has been conducted among seventh- and eighth-grade violin students (Doan, 1973) to show the relationship between parental supervision during a student’s practice and student’s performance in recitals. It is no surprise that “a strong relationship has been observed between the amount of time a student spends practicing, the student’s achievement in performance and the amount of time spent by parents in supervising home practice. It has also been determined that parental involvement is even a better predictor of successful achievement in the initial stages of child’s development” (Creech and Hallam, 2003: 32).

Furthermore, parents believing in their presence and effort as important in effecting their child’s achievement tend to act on this belief, and take control and facilitate the development of the child’s interests (Creech & Hallam, 2003: 34). Additionally, research
has shown that self-efficacious parents regard education as a shared responsibility (Bandura, 1997): “The higher their sense of efficacy to instruct their children, the more they guide their children’s learning and participate actively in the life of the school. In contrast, parents who doubt their efficacy to help their children learn turn over their children’s education entirely to teachers” (ibid.: 246).

Referencing children’s violin study, research (Creech, 2001) has suggested that parents who, irrespective of their own musical ability, possess a strong sense of self-efficacy construct a role for themselves, whereby in addition to choosing the instrument and facilitating the child to receive tuition, they may engage in behavior and activities which, as noted earlier, have been linked to musical achievement (i.e. providing external motivation for the child, supervising practice, instilling focus and discipline in practice, attending lessons, communicating with the teacher, and responding to the child’s wish for parental help and support). (Creech & Hallam, 2003: 34)

The research has indicated that fifty-per-cent of surveyed parents agreed that they felt less efficacious as the child progressed and matured past age 11, while eight per cent of the surveyed parents believed that the child would have progressed equally well with or without parental involvement (ibid.: 34). The above results show that parental efficacy may be a factor in sustaining their children’s interest in learning the violin throughout the early stages of learning. At the same time, it suggests that parental self-efficacy may change during the child’s transformation into adolescence, and later diminishes when the child’s musical ability advances (ibid.: 34-35).
CHAPTER 5

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER, STUDENT AND PARENT COMMUNICATION

Communication Platforms

A significant contribution to the existing research discussed in the previous chapter lies in the applied method of communication between the teacher, student, and parent. To yield the best result, this communication should be established at the start of the violin lessons and then be continued as a vital part of the journey of the child’s music education. The teacher−parent−student communication ought to serve as the basis for a comprehensive articulation and understanding of mutual goals, hopes, and expectations.

Thus, I am proposing the following platforms of communication as the foundation of a successful and comprehensive approach to teaching:

1) A teacher−parent platform during the initial lesson with the student that specifies the parental goals regarding the child in terms of their musical and violinistic development. This platform should develop in the course of the student’s study as the parent will be asked to actively partake in the student’s practice routine, or otherwise make sure the child obeys his/her practicing routine and fulfills the requirements of the teacher on his/her own.

2) A student−teacher platform during the initial lesson in the parent’s presence that concerns the student’s hopes and potential goals for his/her musical and violinistic path. At the onset, as well as over time, the student needs to be assured by the teacher that he or she is able to fulfill their musical hopes and aspirations without having to fulfill the standards of the teacher’s professional expectations.
3) A teacher–student platform that develops over time with an aim of building an ongoing dialogue between the teacher and the student regarding the progress of the student and the needs for improvement.

4) A teacher–student–parent platform that articulates the teacher’s individually crafted requirements and goals for the student at the onset and over time. This communication will both require the assistance of the parent, as well as allow for the absence of it. A particular emphasis will be made toward pre-teenage students who may not seek or want to avoid guidance from their parents. In that instance, an indirect parental role will still be recommended.

In reference to the teacher–parent platform, I propose that during the initial lesson with the student the parent be present. This stage, not infrequently overseen, is crucial in building a strong relationship between the teacher and the parent and poses significant repercussions on the child’s education. This stage of communication should include a clear articulation of parental goals and expectations for their child’s future musical development. The parent is also encouraged to articulate his or her expectations to the teacher. This is particularly important so that the teacher will have the opportunity to hear the expectations stated openly and directly, which will further allow him or her to craft the requirements adequately toward the student. Over time, the parent will also be asked to actively partake in the student’s preparation for a lesson or to indirectly supervise the child’s practice. Oftentimes, the goals between a student and a parent are not substantially articulated at home prior to engaging in private violin instruction. Here, the parental goals will be displayed in front of the teacher and the student, allowing the student to further discuss the issues at hand with the parent, outside of the first meeting–lesson.
I intend the student–teacher platform to encourage the student’s freedom to express his/her own hopes and ideas for a musical path. This stage is absolutely crucial as oftentimes students may not have the opportunity to tell their parents how they feel about the instrument, the idea for their tutoring, and what their personal goals are until they meet the teacher. Even at the tender age of 11 and later through 15 (the middle school-age period), it is fundamental that the child is given an opportunity to build a solid ground for communicating his or her own attitude toward the music and the violin to the teacher and in front of the parent. It may happen that only after that communication takes place the student will be able to evaluate his or her attitude toward this new experience.

The teacher–student platform is probably the most consistent work-in progress stage of communication where an exchange occurs between the student and the teacher regarding the short and long-term progress and the need for improvement.

Finally, the teacher–student–parent platform with a focus on the teacher stating his or her requirements and goals and making the expectations very clear. All the earlier stages meet in this one. Perhaps the most significant outcome of this stage of communication is the understanding of the interdependence of all the previous stages. This platform gives an opportunity for all the parties to confront each other’s modalities, and to arrive to a consensus, which is vital for a productive and positive teaching and learning experience.

The Influence of Inter-relations among Teacher-Parent-Student

The “microsystem” (Creech & Hallam, 2009: 39) of the teacher–student–parent is a complex universe consisting of ever-changing modalities of behavior between the teacher, the parent, and the student. “When individuals communicate, their behaviors will mutually
influence each other” (Van Tartwijk et al., 1998: 608). The relationship between the teacher and the parent (during or after the lesson) does not happen in isolation (Creech & Hallam, 2003: 39), but rather it takes place in front of the student and reinforces the authority of the teacher’s requirements of the student. The student’s reaction to this reiteration will be different than if it were stated to the student alone. And vice versa, the reiteration of the requirements by the teacher will be taken more seriously if they are stated in front of the child rather than in the solitary conversation between the teacher−parent.

This circular behavioral involvement is an integral part of the relationship between the parent−teacher−student (Creech & Hallam, 2003: 39). It implies that all parties are inter-related with one another and that the behavior of one individual in this system may change the modality of the entire group (ibid.: 39). Figure 3 below illustrates the inter-relations among teacher-parent-student.13

The analysis of the communication platform among teacher−parent−student can be approached through the Tubbs (1984) model of understanding “how the many variables of human behavior and communication work together” (ibid.: 40). The Tubbs (1984) system shows the behavioral and communication patterns of a small group (ibid.: 39). The system defines a small group as “a collection of individuals who influence one another, derive some satisfaction from maintaining membership in the group, interact for some purpose, assume specialized roles, are dependent on one another, and communicate face to face” (Creton at al., 1993: 8).

13 By “ecological transitions”, I believe the authors refer to changes in environmental conditions that affect the development of children. The three phrases “responsiveness, mutual control, involvement”, “self-efficacy, motivation”, and “conflict resolution” refer to responses involving the pupil-parent-teacher relationship.
Figure 3. The interaction of human variables within a musical context (Creech & Hallam, 2003: 40).

The teacher−parent−student context of musical learning defines the above criteria and offers a rich source of data for understanding complex group interaction (Creech & Hallam, 2003: 40). Since the system describes various age groups (ibid.: 40), in this configuration relating to musical context, it may be applied to the middle school-age children group as well. It offers a transparent picture of the otherwise complex and intricate interweaving of relations among the teacher, parent and student and can serve as
a guide for teachers and parents to better their communication. The Tubbs model can be equally applicable to groups of professional-track and non-professional-track students.

Conclusion

In summary, the essential elements of my philosophy and approach to teaching non-professional track violin students include: 1) balancing instrumental skills and a child’s comprehensive development, 2) analysis of selected twentieth-century pedagogical approaches to teaching music and violin to children, 3) importance of parental involvement in a child’s musical training, and 4) student-teacher-parent communication. My research suggests that it is imperative to establish an equilibrium among the above-mentioned elements. The re-evaluation of approaches to instrumental pedagogy is continually necessary in order to meet the demands and realities of the evolving social, economic, musical, and institutional contexts of the twenty-first century.
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