

Elisabeth Rossouw *Violin Studio*

(a part of the
Moncrieff Music Studio – est. 1998
Private tuition in violin, viola, guitar, vocal training,
and theory of music)

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Philosophy

We believe with Dr Shinichi Suzuki that each individual has the ability to play music, be it by means of their voice or an instrument such as violin or guitar. The principle is that such an undertaking should be fun and stretch your abilities at the same time. Fun and enthusiasm is the key to success in music.



Benefits of Music

The benefits of playing a musical instrument are well documented and span from fine motor coordination to increased memory facilities to the development of a more even temperament. Studies have found that by actively learning and practicing a musical instrument, a person raises their IQ by up to twelve points!

Violin Lessons 1 on 1:

Students of all ages are taught violin on an individual basis, in single lessons. We tailor the method to the student, mainly following the graded method and the flexible attitude of Shinichi Suzuki, but combining it with other approaches (examples: Irish fiddle, gypsy violin, traditional European teaching method, British exam system etc). As each child responds differently to the various methods, we have found this combined, flexible approach highly effective.

Adult Group Lessons (2011)

The Violin Studio offers group lessons for adults, given enough interest. There need to be at least 3 students in a group. Groups are kept small (no larger than 5) to retain the high intensity focus that typifies single lessons.

Violin Club

For children, a practice group is available on Wednesdays (enquire about time and place). All children are welcome, regardless of level; this group is designed to give children a time in the week that is set aside for having fun with your instrument, practicing pieces and getting feedback from other children. We have found that this extra session every week counts strongly towards the student's progress.



Theory of Music:

Violin Studio:

Enough theory is taught to the student to understand what he/she is playing. If you want to play exams, please arrange for additional theory lessons as the amount required falls outside the scope of the practical violin lessons.

Pure music theory:

To arrange for theory lessons in order to pass an exam, please contact Iain Rossouw.

Group:

Moncrieff Music Studio is offering a theory course on demand. All welcome.

Please arrange with Iain at 082 2907 419.

Child-friendly learning environment (Studio Policy)



Children learn music best in a relaxed environment

At the E Rossouw Violin Studio, our approach is to create a safe and child-friendly learning environment, as we teach children as young as five and occasionally, even younger.

It is well documented that a child learns music best in a playful and comparatively stress-free environment. It's not called *playing* an instrument for nothing! Our studio concerts are generally not black-tie affairs; they are smart-casual, providing just enough glamour that the older students can feel validated, but not enough to intimidate the younger players. Our students are markedly fearless on stage; we introduce them to stage from their very first semester of tuition, and they experience the opportunity of playing in front of an audience without being judged harshly by critics (as they will be often enough later in life).

Tips how to deal with your child's performance: Prepare by practicing diligently; and then, let go. You as parent have done everything you could by reinforcing your child's practicing. Whatever was not learnt

during practicing at home or in the lessons, will certainly not be learnt on stage, so it is pointless to criticise a stage performance after the fact (or worse, during the performance). It is up to the teacher to summarize the performance for the student, in the lesson following the concert; never right after the performance as this can break down a self-image to a critical point of destruction. The teacher can give detailed feedback and focus the student on the areas that need work. The chances are good however that those areas are the same as they were before the concert!

During studio concerts the younger students are often invited to sit right in front of the stage on blankets and cushions (the Taurominium's stage lends itself to this, being only slightly raised). This has two functions: Firstly, the young musicians get a prime view of the performances of other students. It is amazing how much children learn from observing each other. Secondly, sitting in front, they are generally better behaved as they aren't bored from being unable to see properly or having to sit in a chair. Children get tired very fast of sitting in chairs. The result is that they absorb much more of the concert by sitting in front of the stage than they would by sitting in the audience behind large people past whom they can't see. Keep in mind that the studio concert is for the benefit of the students in the first place.

However we do ask parents whose children are loud or disruptive during a concert, to take charge of their own child.

During lessons we ask parents to take charge of *siblings* who might be disrupting the lesson out of boredom. Take them outside and walk around with them or bring something to keep them busy. It is tough for a child to focus on learning the violin if a sibling hangs from the top of the door lintel or runs around the room. It is not up to the teacher to be strict with siblings.

We find at times that some parents have expectations of military-style discipline, which is of course incongruous with the Studio's child-friendly policies. We encourage such parents to find a studio that better suits their needs.

Concerts and Ceilidhs:



Studio Concert October 2009

Every year, the Studio holds two Studio Concerts and several Irish-style musical functions called Ceilidhs.

It is expected of students to attend the Studio Concerts and Ceilidhs. After all these are arranged as a part of our teaching program. Ceilidhs may be casual parties but are nevertheless significant to a young performer's abilities.

In true Irish tradition, the students themselves host the Ceilidhs. Ceilidhs promote the freedom to perform without

fear, in a casual setting for friends and family. The results are audible in the concerts.

Concerts are usually recorded, and the student is encouraged to buy the resulting DVD as it is a prime feedback system for learning from one's own mistakes.

More occasionally the Studio will arrange a House Concert, which is usually hosted at one of the students or a friend of the Studio. To be invited to play at a House Concert is an honour as only students who play at a significantly advanced level, are asked to perform at these. Guest performers are also at times invited. The level of professionalism at a House Concert is considerably higher than at the Studio Concert, where everyone plays from the second they master three notes.



Ceilidh at Sharon

Exams, Eisteddfods, competitions:

We *don't* compel students to participate in any exams or similar competitive events. If a student decides to play an exam or competition, we support by helping him or her to master the work and by preparing him or her for the event. Nevertheless, these activities are always subordinated to the complete musical development of the student, and the responsibility for performing well or passing the exam remains with the student. To paraphrase an examiner: The exam is merely a snapshot of a single day. It's the whole musical path that matters.

Policies regarding Exams:

The Violin Studio uses ABRSM, the Associated Board of Royal Schools of Music, exam system for students who wish to play. This is an internationally recognized system.

However please note that exams do *not* form a part of our regular teaching program. Exams take a lot of time and effort, which could be more constructively applied to working on the solid technical and musical foundation. The danger is too, to measure the student's whole progress by the mark attained in the exam, which is particularly dangerous and can lead to the student focusing on *nothing but* the exams during the whole year of taking violin. Seeing that the exam consists of three pieces, a few scales and some general music ability and knowledge (sight reading, ear training), to devote a whole year only to that is rather sad; however, to cut down on time spent on exam preparation is to risk failing, due to the levels of perfection demanded by the system.

Another danger about exams is that the young musician's self-image is affected. There is no way to get 100% in a practical music exam; to pass, you have to achieve 66%, and the

marking is negative. For violins this is particularly difficult, because as opposed to guitarists and pianists, we lose marks for every intonation error and every wavering in tone production. Additionally there is no check-point: The student is alone with the examiner (teachers are not allowed to sit in), and the decision of the examiner is final. In other words, the *subjective* judgment of *one* examiner puts a stamp on a whole year's work. The Studio feels that applause or a DVD of a concert performance is a much better feedback system.

Having said this, Grade 6 practical music counts for a matric subject in South Africa, and Grade 7 is a requirement to study music at Pretoria University. It is advisable for any student wishing to take that route, to play at least Grade 5 before Grade 6, to get used to the exam system.

We have noticed a definite statistical trend with exam students. **If you practice an hour a day, you will probably pass. If you are not prepared to practice an hour every day, don't enter for exams.**

Those who fail to prepare, prepare to fail.



Ceilidh at Sharon

Policy regarding Practicing:

Guitar, violin and viola are all European instruments that have a centuries-old history. There is nothing quick about learning these instruments. They predate 10-second advertisements and Playstation games; they date back to a time when music was an art that had to be learnt and there was no quick-fix to entertainment.

Unlike ball sports, which are learnt in teams and groups and only practiced during sports practice, music practice happens at home. The student learns by playing – there is no other way to learn an instrument. It follows that the more a student practices, the faster he/she will learn.

Sadly, in South Africa the greatest time factor that interferes with regular practice, is in fact sports practice. Schools are ambitious to show off “their” students, without realizing that they don’t “own” those children. If you sign on for two different sports, the chances are that you will be kept busy with these for five afternoons a week plus Saturdays.

A half-hour a day for under-twelves, and an hour a day minimum for over-twelves, is the minimum practicing requirement to master an instrument. That is, *every* day. If you can’t find that in your busy school and sports schedule, you need to consider carefully whether you really want to learn the instrument.

Contact us:

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Also visit our studio website at <http://www.pkaboo.net/studio>