

# Struggling parents and struggling children?

By Frank Kleemans

Tiresome struggling parents and struggling children. Not a nice thought at all.

Why would parents struggle?

And teachers?

Why would children struggle with their instruments?

Why is music important to our children?

When children learn to play an instrument, they develop technical and social skills, learn discipline, develop a sense of beauty and learn about our cultural inheritance.

But this daily practice?

Why should children practise?

For themselves, for their parents, for their teacher? Or for the audience ...?

And then what about the parents?

For whom are they making the effort? “Oh it seems such fun, to be able to play an instrument”, could be replied by a parent who does not play an instrument himself.

Perhaps there is another rather noble reason we should not miss: music for the sake of music itself?

There are many reasons, good and bad, why music is part of our culture.

And of course those very reasons can be “a way of living“ for some people or a ‘rat race’ for others. Music is the language of our soul.

Also, like sports, music is about stretching your abilities, both solo and as a team.

But a game also focused on emotions and expression.

It is quite understandable that learning to play an instrument with its set repertoire is demanding and requires some struggling once in a while. But struggling with what?

Struggling with a piece, struggling with their instrument, with the WHY, with themselves and with their parents. The music, the instrument, the ‘inner growth’

I hope to offer a positive perspective for parents, teachers and children, to have some encouraging words .Not all parents are able to create a good environment for learning, right from the start. Some parents are just naturals. Experienced parents (having older siblings or good memories of their own childhood,) find their experience does not necessarily apply to other child, in similar situations. Most of us have to find our own ways, by trial and error, once in a while with a little struggling. Unfortunately many strugglers or those refusing to struggle, quit musical education altogether .

Luckily, in Suzuki education, we happen to have teachers with a positive influence, a very crucial factor.

According to Shinichi Suzuki, children should learn to play their instrument with pleasure His idea of learning is a balanced combination of pleasure (a positive attitude from parents and teachers and attractive repertoire right from the start) and intensive work (guided by good teachers).

This positive approach favoured by Dr. Suzuki is not always easy in our present hectic Western world.

Especially his advice concerning the attitude of parents and practising habits. Westerners could benefit from some form of serenity, as contrast to our busy daily professional and family life. Is it really possible to enjoy the discovery of music, to master a difficult instrument and to strive for beauty when both parent and children have a full schedule with all kinds of obligations?

A possible solution can be found in a balanced combination of pleasure and challenge. Ideally finding a perfect combination between pleasure and challenge would enhance any learning situation: whether it be soccer, computing or music.

In every challenge should be elements that attract children, mostly by picturing their extending possibilities and developing an urge to excel.

Also, the extra plus of making music is the expression of our emotions, appealing to both musicians and audience.

Challenge, self-confidence and musicality. Children have to discover this balance in their own way. And I have noticed that with my own children, this approach is working out just fine! However, teachers and parents can help our children in this process:

- ✓ By acknowledging that at every moment it is possible to improve.
- ✓ By making practising part of your a normal daily routine ,thus not wasting energy all the time in arguments about start and stop of practice time
- ✓ By organising attractive elements related to the learning process.

In all of this, the legacy of Suzuki is important:

Ensure you both enjoy the process.

Without pleasure all hard work becomes a struggle!

To be continued!

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