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Group Class Notes

by Teri Einfeldt



As I travel around the country for workshops, it is apparent that one thing lacking in many programs is a disciplined atmosphere for learning within the group class. Perhaps we teachers do not clearly communicate our expectations for group class to parents. Here are some ideas about group lessons that I have shared with parents in our program.

Purposes

- To work on and reinforce techniques and musical concepts learned in the private lesson.
- To learn more advanced techniques through review of previously learned materials.
- To become musically flexible by accepting and reacting to differing interpretations.
- To improve direction-following skills.
- To instill discipline in following the leader (orchestral preparation).
- To become a better audience.
- To learn to work together as a team.
- To learn to offer and receive constructive criticism in a positive environment.
- To provide a social and educational environment for motivation.
- To prepare for performances.

Misconceptions

- To play through as many pieces as possible.
- A good time to review.
- A time for parents and students to gossip.
- A time for parents to run errands.
- Another opportunity for show and tell.

Role of the Parent

- To actively review with your child every day, focusing on the current review list.
- To attend group lessons and take notes on techniques and musical concepts stressed.
- To practice with your child the ideas worked on in class.
- To arrive in plenty of time for class. Late arrivals mean stopping the entire class for tuning.

- Not to distract your child with gestures and threatening looks.
- To discuss with your child the purposes of group class and appropriate behavior.

Role of the Student

- To be well reviewed.
- To practice group class material at home.
- To show respect for students, parents and teachers.
- To listen to the teacher and react quickly to instructions.
- To remain in rest position while the teacher is talking.
- To sit and watch attentively while more advanced students are playing.
- To line up for tuning as soon as the instructor enters the room.
- To sit quietly after being tuned.
- To finish snacks before tuning begins.

Parent Views of Group Lessons

Group lesson keeps my child motivated more than any other thing. —Paul, father of 7-year-old

We learn fun games to enliven home practices and it's inspiring to hear the beauty of the whole group. —Patricia, mother of 4-year-old

Group gives my daughter (and me!) a broader view of how far she's advanced (by watching the less advanced students) and a sense of where she's heading (by watching the more advanced ones). —Janet, mother of 8-year-old

It gives my son a community of like-minded musicians—other kids who play violin and know the same music. —Joyce, mother of 13-year-old

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Comments from parents of students in the Boulder Suzuki Strings program in Boulder, Colorado, directed by Amy Gesmer-Packman.