Rising from the Ashes: Sowing a New Generation of Post-Pandemic Violin Students

Nancy Denise Ditto

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RISING FROM THE ASHES: SOWING A NEW GENERATION OF POST-PANDEMIC VIOLIN STUDENTS

by

Nancy Denise Ditto

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Major: Music

The University of Memphis
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Dedication

My dissertation is dedicated to my husband Adam, whose never-failing encouragement has seen me to the finish line. Very few women are as lucky as I am to have such an understanding and supportive husband. It is also dedicated to my children Rosemary and Basil, who willingly allowed me to teach them violin from an early age. Teaching them and reading to them as young children has been the most fulfilling time of my life.
I would like to thank the chairman of my committee, Dr. Janet Page, for her time and expert guidance. She pushed me to continue working when I needed it and showed me how to organize my writing in ways that I otherwise would not have been able to do. I want to thank Mr. Timothy Shiu for showing me many ways to improve my playing, and for being patient with me when arthritis made it difficult to perform. I am a much better player and teacher because of his instruction. I am grateful to Dr. Artina McCain, Dr. Jeremy Orosz, and Mr. Lenny Schranze for being willing to serve on my committee. The time and guidance they gave is very much appreciated.

Most of what I know about teaching I learned from my own students, and to them I say thank you for teaching me.

My parents are now gone, but I want to acknowledge their support of my music studies throughout my childhood. My father Robert Ditto and I played musical performances together for many years, and my mother Mary Anne Blackman arranged for me to begin studying violin. Her patience and kindness were invaluable to my success, and I would not be here but for her.
Preface

Probably a lot of you know the story of the two salesmen who went down to Africa in the 1900s. They were sent down to find if there was any opportunity for selling shoes, and they wrote telegrams back to Manchester.

And one of them wrote, “Situation hopeless. Stop. They don’t wear shoes.”

And the other one wrote, “Glorious opportunity. They don’t have any shoes yet.”

Now, there’s a similar situation in the classical music world, because there are some people who think that classical music is dying. And there are some of us who think you ain’t seen nothing yet ...¹

I have sometimes felt like “The Accidental Violinist,” having fallen into violin study due to the chance generosity of a church organist who gave my family a no-longer-needed instrument when I was almost seven. Decades passed before I understood how vitally important playing music was for me, deeply touching all areas of my life. Music is known as the universal language. It has the power to bring people of all cultures together, something that has become more urgent in the twenty-first century. In our world today, globalization makes it more important than ever for children to have the opportunity to experience all types of music to broaden their understanding of the world. The COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020 created obstacles for many students who were motivated to study violin, but it would also usher in a new era of fundamental change in the ways that we teach music. The pandemic could ultimately prove to be the catalyst that creates the space for children of all backgrounds to study violin.

ABSTRACT


During the global pandemic, remote violin lessons became much more widely available. Online learning was widely viewed as suboptimal at that time, but many parents preferred the online platform to in-person learning because they felt their children were safer at home. Teaching violin virtually can be challenging for teachers because they cannot provide essential hands-on instruction. There are difficulties like tuning the instrument, assessing tone quality, etc., and the inability of students to play in ensembles may handicap their motivation to practice. Some aspects of online teaching may be advantageous, such as teachers being able to reach almost all students regardless of their location, and students learning remotely are less likely to be judged or bullied by other students as some might have been in a classroom. The cost of virtual music lessons could prove to be more affordable than in-person lessons because of the availability of many more teachers who can teach from home, and because teachers do not have to pay overhead costs. Very young beginning strings students who study remotely may benefit from more preparation before starting music lessons because of the difficulties they experience when learning online. Improvements in technology will likely accelerate into the future and there will be new solutions available for the technological issues that existed for strings teachers during the pandemic.
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CHAPTER ONE

THE PANDEMIC: A TIME FOR CHANGE

The ageless song by Bob Dylan, *The Times They Are A-Changin’* would have been relevant for the year 2020. It was a turbulent year both politically and socially, and it will be remembered as the year that marked the beginning of the world pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus. The year began normally enough, but by late March the virus had spread widely throughout the United States and had infected enough people that many businesses in the United States began closing. The virus was not well-understood at that time, and no one knew the extent of its danger. During the summer, the virus accelerated and by the fall it was clear that the pandemic was worsening. Fundamental health measures such as wearing a mask in public became politicized and life in the United States felt chaotic. For many, basic needs began to go unmet, and some were having to wait in line at food banks simply to feed their families because they had lost their jobs. Many became homeless.¹ Most disturbingly, three senseless murders of African Americans by police officers took place in rapid succession, creating moral outrage and triggering protests. Tensions ramped up to almost unbearable levels as the nation moved past a highly contentious presidential election. By the end of the year, millions of people had become infected by COVID-19 and hundreds of thousands had died.

The pandemic had an especially profound effect on education. Just as many businesses closed in late March of 2020, most schools in the United States also closed. By the beginning of the fall semester school administrators everywhere were debating whether to hold classes on-site, online, or using a combination of both. Concerned with the safety of students and teachers,

Shelby County Schools Superintendent Joris Ray made the decision that Memphis public schools would hold their classes fully online. There was immediate angry dissent from some parents and organizations in the county.

Music education has typically been considered extracurricular in our culture and music educators have faced an uphill battle in sustaining school music programs since their inception. Even before the pandemic some types of music performance had been experiencing a gradual loss of interest from the public, but the pandemic exacerbated the situation. Suddenly a huge number of professional musicians found themselves losing work when performances were canceled due to the fear of the spreading virus. Major orchestras went on furlough and Broadway theaters went dark with no immediate plans for reopening. If there had been limited motivation to study a difficult instrument like violin before, the pandemic made things far worse. There had always been value in simply studying a musical instrument for its own sake without a plan of a professional career. Studies have shown that students who participate in music study have better discipline, somewhat higher test scores, certain types of enhanced brain development, and generally a more positive experience of their school years. But with the massive loss of

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employment during the pandemic many parents lacked money for non-essentials like private lessons.

During much of the pandemic many public schools offered their music courses online, but not all schools had had strong applied music programs before the pandemic and many districts began to consider cutting certain music classes due to fears that band and chorus were more likely to encourage the spread of COVID-19. When schools approached the fall semester many school districts chose to continue to limit all classes to online study, and consequently some elementary and middle school strings classroom teachers abandoned serious efforts to teach beginning strings students due to the difficulties of teaching these classes effectively. All types of online schooling had been widely available in the years before the pandemic, but remote classes had been seen by many as a substandard method of teaching. Many strings teachers, who typically correct students’ bow holds and arms manually, had not considered teaching strings online in the past. Because playing a string instrument involves “making” one’s own intonation, much time must be invested in training the fingers to land with precision on the fingerboard. Producing a pleasing sound with rosined horsehair strung on a wooden bow stick requires long hours of training and practice, and there is much room for error if a teacher cannot monitor and physically correct the students. Even before the upheavals of 2020 some potential strings


students were discouraged from studying because of what they had heard from other beginning students. Serious violin study can be a hard sell.8

During the pandemic music teachers were forced to take a new approach. There began to be widespread utilization of videoconferencing platforms for both academic and music instruction. The hopefully temporary but long-term closure of the schools left many students feeling adrift without the structure of getting dressed and going to school. Routines from previous years were obliterated. For some children the schools had been a safer place to be than home.9 With school closures and loss of teacher oversight of students, suicide rates rose among school age children.10

In the first months of the pandemic the hope persisted that schools would reopen soon, and everything would go back to normal. But school administrators did not have enough information to make scheduling decisions during the summer of 2020 and the indecision created more stress for parents, teachers, and students. Some parents who had wanted their children to be back in school for the fall semester staged demonstrations while other parents voiced their concerns about having children in school buildings where they might be exposed to COVID-19.11 When the fall arrived and it was clear that the pandemic was ongoing, school administrators

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had to choose between holding classes fully online, implementing a hybrid model, or taking the risk of allowing students to attend classes as they had in the past. For music teachers, online classroom teaching was especially difficult because of the inability to have students playing simultaneously in ensemble. The applications available that allowed students to approximate playing together, such as Jamulus, were not widely used for classrooms and even when using the most sophisticated applications a realistic experience of playing together in a room was still unattainable. Absolute zero latency in transmission for other applications was not possible and even slight delays in transmission were an issue for music teachers.\footnote{Nickolai Hammar and Colin Marshall, “Playing Music Together Online is Not as Simple as it Seems,” \textit{NPR}, July 15, 2020, accessed Oct. 2, 2021, \url{https://www.npr.org/2020/07/14/891091995/playing-music-together-online-is-not-as-simple-as-it-seems}.}

While it is true that the pandemic exacerbated many of the challenges already present in string music education, it also provided the opportunity for positive changes to take place. The educational routines and constructs people had grown accustomed to, such as attending school each week, having access to teachers and equipment, concert attendance, etc., were in many cases upended. The longer the pandemic lasted, the more likely these changes would become permanent. Though three vaccines became available by the end of 2020 and shots began to be distributed, it was not clear how, or if, society would get back to what we knew as “normal.” By 2021, many employees who had worked outside the home began to consider continuing to work remotely and not return to the office.\footnote{Claire Cain Miller, “The Office Will Never Be the Same,” \textit{New York Times}, Aug. 20, 2020, updated Sept. 22, 2021, accessed Oct. 2, 2021, \url{https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/20/style/office-culture.html}.} Those with vision for a new reality would potentially have an opening to make positive changes in many areas, including music education. For strings education there were two areas of concern that some organizations had been working to improve: economic challenges of the many who could not afford long-term private music lessons and
expensive instruments, and the issues surrounding a lack of diversity and inclusivity. In the past, classical violin had typically been seen by many as the domain of the elite.14

In 2020 and into 2021 waves of unemployment hit record levels, and though the government occasionally sent out stimulus checks, the amount and the frequency of check distribution was inadequate for many. Battles in Congress raged but efforts to compromise often ended in deadlock. Many more people than before did not have enough food for their families and many families faced potential eviction.15 Renting or buying a stringed instrument had already been a strain on some families’ budgets in the past but it would be out of the question for many during the pandemic. Some students still had access to instruments supplied by their schools in 2020, but if they were to continue playing after graduation it would become necessary to purchase an instrument. Students who continued playing for their own enjoyment could sometimes find reasonably priced instruments at that time, but professional-level string instruments had become extremely expensive over the past few decades. For a sizable proportion of the population there had been economic concerns surrounding the purchase of smaller stringed instruments for young beginners. All stringed instruments are fragile and handing even a minimally priced instrument to a very young child would cause concern to parents who could not afford to replace it if damaged. The obstacles of having to begin studying strings exclusively online with no teacher present to manually tune or to adjust hand position, plus the expense, would possibly limit the number of successful beginners during a pandemic.


Before the pandemic many classroom music teachers had taken their students to concerts to motivate them and to introduce them to live performances, but during the pandemic these opportunities were mostly unavailable, since most concerts were canceled. Many orchestras went on furlough, so for some students the opportunity to attend local live orchestral concerts did not exist. But there remained the hope that orchestras would once again be performing when the pandemic was under control. Most other types of live performances were also canceled, though some groups did continue to perform outdoors where the virus was less likely to spread, and the number of virtual performances available online began to grow. Composer and performer Nico Muhly wrote his orchestral piece Throughline in response to the legal and physical restrictions brought about by the pandemic. The recording features eight collaborative artists from around the world, selected by Music Director of Philharmonia Orchestra in London, Esa-Pekka Salonen. The performance was recorded, edited, and presented virtually in November 2020. The lack of available live performances began to encourage educators to explore other types of performances like these to motivate their students.

In the past some innovative music programs had targeted underserved children who typically would not have had the opportunity to study music. In Memphis, local programs such

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as Memphis Music Initiative (MMI),\textsuperscript{20} Prizm,\textsuperscript{21} Harmonic South String Orchestra,\textsuperscript{22} and Memphis Jazz Workshop\textsuperscript{23} had provided support and learning opportunities for the underserved in the Memphis area before the pandemic, motivating many children to begin playing orchestral instruments. The idea of inclusivity had found a foothold for a while through these groups and there had been some success before the pandemic, but these programs also had to scale back their efforts due to the necessity to socially distance.

The lack of diversity in the world of classical music and violin performance dates to its beginnings. It is not something many of us think about as young students. My first understanding of this issue took place in New York City in 1980 where I was playing violin nightly with a Latin group that included four Black string players and a Cuban pianist. Over time, a fellow musician named Lloyd began to tell me about his day-to-day experiences as an African American violinist in the big city. One of the striking things was his acknowledgment that even in a sophisticated city like New York, many people were not fully accepting violinists who were Black. Occasionally when walking down the street carrying his violin case, complete strangers felt comfortable stopping him to ask what was in the case. If he answered that it was a violin, he often had to endure rude expressions of surprise and denial. Because he was Black, he was told he should be playing something that fit within their stereotypical range of possibilities. Lloyd’s stories illustrated one of the reasons why we may see an underrepresentation of Black string


players and Black classical audience members even today. In 1980 there had been only one Black violinist in the New York Philharmonic, Sanford Allen,\(^\text{24}\) and he had retired in 1977 just before I arrived in the city.

Before 2020 there had begun to be discussion among orchestra administrators and musicians about encouraging diversity\(^\text{25}\) by holding auditions that were not behind a screen. In the decades before the pandemic when major symphonies held auditions for open positions there would often be a very large but non-diverse pool of applicants. According to Michael Cooper of the *New York Times* the music conservatories themselves lacked diversity and this contributed negatively to the issue.

Many factors have been cited as contributing to the problem, from the lack of diversity at the conservatories that make up the pipeline of trained musicians to blind auditions, which helped with gender equity but make it harder for orchestras to choose talented players of color.\(^\text{26}\)

Anthony Tommasini, also with the *New York Times*, wrote, “But ask anyone in the field, and you’ll learn that over the past century of increasingly professionalized training, there has come to be remarkably little difference between players at the top tier.”\(^\text{27}\) With so many top-notch musicians applying, it had become extremely difficult to select or even define “best” since there is little difference in quality at these auditions. With the level of musicianship so uniformly high and the limited diversity in the pool of musicians, Tommasini believed it would not be possible to


\(^\text{27}\) Anthony Tommasini, “To Make Orchestras More Diverse, End Blind Auditions.”
increase diversity until auditions were held without a screen. Originally the use of screens was instituted by professional orchestras to eliminate the gender bias that had previously excluded women from the ranks of many orchestras, but progress had been made in this area. It was not clear whether some major orchestras that were already in dire financial straits would survive the crisis, but for those that did survive some held out hope that positive changes like more diversity in orchestras would gain traction after a year of closings and social upheaval. Of the many orchestras across the nation that were not full-time there was far less competition for positions, and orchestras with smaller budgets were more resilient because of smaller funding needs. Possibly the elements of less need for funding and less competition for positions would allow these orchestras to survive and to become more diverse.

The “pipeline of trained musicians”\textsuperscript{28} that Michael Cooper referred to in his article would need to begin with the pool of young students who would hopefully be motivated to start and continue lessons throughout their school years. For inclusivity and diversity to become the norm at conservatories and auditions, we would need a diverse group of beginning students who are taught well and nurtured to help them sustain their effort for the years it takes them to become proficient on their instrument. Elementary school children, the group most likely to successfully begin and continue violin lessons long enough to achieve a high technical level if they had parental support, were also the most likely of all to not study violin during the pandemic. The youngest students need the most hands-on instruction from a teacher when learning to play the violin, something that is difficult to manage with virtual learning. The parents who were the most economically devastated, also the ones most likely to contribute to future diversity, were unlikely

\textsuperscript{28} Michael Cooper, “Seeking Orchestras in Tune With Their Diverse Communities.”
to have their children take music lessons. During the pandemic, many parents opted for the safety of online classes and the youngest students were often fatigued by the lengthy screentime by the end of the day. Parents who were forced to spend many hours supporting their children’s schoolwork were exhausted.\footnote{Elizabeth A. Harris, “‘It Was Just Too Much’: How Remote Learning is Breaking Parents,” \textit{New York Times}, April 27, 2020, accessed Oct. 2, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/27/nyregion/coronavirus-homeschooling-parents.html.} A reduction in the numbers of new young violin students had the potential to create a shortage of professional violinists within the next decade.
CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Teaching music has always been an inexact science. Though there are commonalities in the experience of teaching and learning, individual students learn on different timetables and conceptualize in unique ways, just as teachers instruct in a manner that is unique to their personalities. Still, before the pandemic began in March of 2020, violin pedagogy had been relatively standardized, and had produced plenty of skilled violinists to fill the orchestral positions that were available. The pandemic caused radical changes in the way we taught. This study seeks information about new ways to cope with the challenges of remote violin teaching and seeks ways to motivate young students from all backgrounds to begin studying violin.

Because very few violin teachers were teaching remotely before the pandemic, only limited information about the efficacy of online violin training was available during the time this dissertation was written. Much of my data was collected from a survey I designed to be distributed to American String Teachers Association members. Studio strings teachers, always creative, would provide the most valuable primary source of information.

It is said that to know where we are going, we must first know where we have been. *Essential Elements* for classroom teaching, and other method books used by studio violin teachers were used effectively in the past and provide a foundation for online teaching. Some method books have helpful suggestions for teaching pre-violin skills before a student will begin playing on the violin with the bow and these principles are useful when teaching online.

The approaches of Dalcroze, Kodály, and Orff were each designed to teach all areas of music education concurrently (rhythm, improvisation, note reading, etc.) beginning with very young students. Comprehensive music education starting at an early age prepares students for
success in all areas of music. The principles of these three systems may be applicable today and could be used to reinforce student motivation. *The Eclectic Curriculum In American Music Education*\(^1\) compares these three approaches in detail.

The Suzuki method has been used successfully by many, and though it has its areas of weakness there is much that is valuable in the method, especially for the very young. Books such as *To Learn with Love*\(^2\) provide tips for parents supporting their children’s Suzuki method study at home. Online learning typically takes place in the home and these suggestions may be particularly effective for online students.

One of the most basic ways that children learn is through play. For beginning students who are studying virtually, play may be especially important during stressful times. The use of a toy or stuffed animal may help overcome the feeling of isolation when studying online, which would reinforce learning. Some mental health experts believe that transitional objects can serve as coping mechanisms.\(^3\) Though research about using puppets for teaching young students is limited, some studies suggest that the use of puppets in education can enhance learning by improving communication, supporting a positive classroom climate, enhancing creativity, fostering student integration into a group, and changing attitudes.\(^4\) With the pandemic came a pronounced rise in the anxiety level of our society and children were especially vulnerable. In

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her book *Imaginary Companions and the Children Who Create Them*\(^5\) Marjorie Taylor addresses the concerns of parents who have children with imaginary friends and suggests that this coping mechanism can be a healthy one. There are resources for children who want to create their own stuffed animal for support.\(^6\)

Because of the unprecedented necessity for many students to study music virtually, new approaches must be taken to strengthen any weaknesses in online music teaching. Children have not changed the way that they learn, but teachers will need to develop an understanding of the best ways to teach them remotely.

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CHAPTER THREE

HOW DO CHILDREN LEARN TO PLAY THE VIOLIN?

Since the first violins were made, violinists have taken many paths to learn how to play them. Some have been self-taught, some learned as apprentices with family members or others who taught them, and more recently some have studied in group classes. Many have learned using a combination of these methods. Success with violin depends on factors such as the competence of the teacher, the quality of equipment, and perhaps most importantly, the level of motivation of the student to practice regularly and effectively. For most students ages three to five, motivation to study the violin and to practice regularly often correlates with the motivation of a parent figure to introduce the violin and support a practice routine. Since more years of studying typically yields better results, success is more likely the earlier a student begins playing. Many studio teachers know that it is beneficial to prepare students with an introduction to music before they begin to study a musical instrument, but this is something that is sometimes neglected.

In the early part of the twentieth century three well-known European musicians saw a need for improvements in preparatory music education for students in their countries. Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, Zoltan Kodály, and Carl Orff all created music education programs designed to provide a thorough musical foundation for students in their respective cultures. The three systems share a common principle of preparing students for applied music study by first teaching them the basics in all areas of music education: rhythm, solfege, reading, writing, etc.

Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950) developed an approach that is most widely known for its dancelike training called eurhythmics. The physical movements of eurhythmics combined with improvised music is designed to be taught to all ages and can be effectively used as
foundational music instruction for elementary school students. Dalcroze believed that rhythm with movement is the basis of all music learning. He noted that music students often found it difficult to perform correct rhythms when playing music on instruments, even when they were able to perform the movements in the correct time using ordinary physical movements.\(^1\) The Dalcroze approach combines three areas of study: eurhythmics, solfege, and improvisation. Dalcroze’s philosophy was that educators should be relating these areas together in higher level music education classes, a principle he observed local schools were lacking during his lifetime.\(^2\)

Zoltan Kodály (1882-1967) developed an approach for teaching choral musicianship that was widely used in the public schools of Hungary. He, like Dalcroze, believed that basic knowledge of music should be accessible to everyone, not just those labeled as talented. Kodály’s approach was meant to be used for all ages beginning as young as three, and he believed that it came naturally for the youngest students to combine movement and singing. His program was like Dalcroze’s in that it used movement and dance. The most defining feature of his system is that it used the traditional music of Hungary, progressing from very simple pentatonic songs to more complex ones. Students were taught to read music and sing solfege using the songs they were already familiar with.

A third approach that is still widely used was designed by Carl Orff (1895-1982). The central idea of his system was that speech, music, and movement were inseparable, and it was his


belief that music should be taught from the earliest possible age. A modified Orff approach is
used for music students in the Shelby County Schools of Memphis today.³

Some music educators believe that all three of these systems have value for music
classrooms, and that they could be adapted for both elementary and secondary levels for schools
in the United States. Douglas Turpin’s article “Kodály, Dalcroze, Orff, and Suzuki: Application
in the Secondary Schools” speaks of his belief in the principle of broad early preparation for
music study at all levels.

What is truly unfortunate is that the pedagogies of Orff, Kodály, Suzuki, and
Dalcroze all espouse techniques that enhance, rather than detract from, the
development of musicianship qualities in high school students. Teacher training at
the university level could have a significant impact on secondary music instruction
if a working knowledge of these methods were included as an integral part of the
preparation of prospective teachers at all levels.⁴

Research has been done to determine the efficacy and applicability of these approaches
for classroom education. One such study organized by Cathleen M. Ardrey was implemented to
determine whether there are benefits to introducing elements of Orff, Kodály, and Dalcroze into
classrooms for middle school students. She concluded, “the most effective teachers gravitated
toward the principles of the three methodologies [Orff, Kodály, and Dalcroze] naturally.”⁵ For
students who are studying instruments through online platforms, violin teachers could draw on
these approaches to find ways to prepare their beginner students for applied study. The systems

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³ Heather L. Klossner, “A Wildflower Takes Root in Memphis: The Adaptation of Orff Schulwerk to the
Memphis, Tennessee School Of Curriculum” (PhD diss., Eastman School of Music, 2018).
Educators Journal 72, no. 6 (February 1986): 56-59, accessed September 15, 2021,
⁵ Cathleen M. Ardrey, “Middle School General Music: Kodály, Dalcroze, Orff and the Developmental
Needs of Adolescents” (DMA diss., Temple University, 1999), 184, accessed January 9, 2022,
file:///C:/Users/user/ Desktop/out.pdf.
of Kodály, Dalcroze, and Orff were intended to be adaptable, and their principles are of timeless value.

Being a successful classical violinist today generally requires years of study using proven methods with an adept teacher. There are many method books used today for students who take private violin lessons. The predominantly used methods largely fall into two categories: the traditional method, which is a loosely defined category of similar approaches by a variety of teachers, and the Suzuki Method. The main distinction between the two has to do with whether the skill of reading music is immediately taught or delayed until after a student has become more proficient on the instrument. Traditional methods usually teach the student to read music immediately. The Suzuki Method requires students to play only from memory from the start and provides weekly group lessons where students review their pieces together by memory.

Many teachers have used traditional method books of Maia Bang, Samuel Applebaum, Müller-Rusch (J. Frederick Müller and Harold W. Rusch), and others that were published during the twentieth century. These books generally begin with study of hand/arm positions along with simple reading of very basic tunes. When using traditional methods, the pace of attaining technique on the instrument is coordinated with the pace of learning to read and play using the sheet music. Because playing the violin while reading the music reinforces the skill of reading, it would be unlikely that a student’s reading level would far exceed the ability to play unless the student had developed a more advanced technique on another musical instrument or voice.

The Suzuki Method came into being after World War II and it is now widely used. Shinichi Suzuki (1898-1998) painstakingly designed his system after being asked to teach a very young student, something he had never done before and felt himself ill-equipped to manage.

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This method can enable a very young child to accomplish a high level of technique on violin before being able to read music. Note reading is introduced only after a certain amount of technique is attained. One of the most important principles of this system is that a caregiver attends all lessons with the teacher and learns to play the violin along with the child. The caregiver becomes an at-home teacher who can effectively guide the student daily with practicing. Having the caregiver as a role model can be very motivating for the student and when done well this principle supports rapid success. The potential drawback of this system is that young students are delayed in reading music as violin technique increases. This can be problematic if the student is not motivated to learn to read music later.

Because human hands and arms come in different shapes and levels of flexibility, meeting in person with a teacher is important to help students find what works for them individually in terms of equipment and position on the violin. Most students will need manual correction by the teacher to form functional hand position on the instrument and bow. Explaining points involving hand/arm position is more easily accomplished with physical patterning by the teacher. Having a teacher supervise experimentation with different equipment can also make a huge difference in a student’s level of success.

Many of the most celebrated violinists today began studying at a very young age. Hilary Hahn\(^7\) was admitted to Curtis Institute at age ten, Sarah Chang\(^8\) played the Bruch Concerto for her Juilliard audition at age five, and Midori\(^9\) was performing Paganini Caprices at age six.


Hilary Hahn’s early training was through the Suzuki method while Sarah Chang and Midori both had parents who were themselves accomplished musicians. The Suzuki principle of the home teacher, a figure who could supervise practice daily, can be very effective.

There are programs that have shown success with group learning. El Sistema is a music education program that was created to enable impoverished students in Venezuela to learn to play in orchestras. Its mission is to encourage children to learn to play in ensembles rather than succumbing to the negative influences that many poor children face. The students are given an instrument as well as the opportunity to study and rehearse several hours per week. The program has been successful and has spread to other countries including the United States, where programs can be found in the larger cities in California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia. Another successful program with a similar mission is the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura, in which students play instruments made from recycled materials to save costs. Both of these programs promote inclusion.

Many private and public-school districts across the United States offer strings classes, but not all. Shelby County Schools offers classes mostly to students in middle school and high school. Learning violin in a class setting can foster motivation since students tend to enjoy the social aspect of playing in ensembles. One drawback of learning strings in a class is that


students may not receive very much individual attention (depending on the size of the class), something that is extremely important when setting up hand position in the beginning stages of study. It is helpful for strings students learning in a classroom to also attend private music lessons to get the attention that they need to excel, and some classroom strings teachers require that their students also study privately. Learning to play violin in a classroom is often the first exposure some students get to string instruments, and many do not have parents who play any instrument nor have time to practice with them to provide motivation. But classroom strings learning serves the important function of supporting diversity and inclusion by providing exposure to strings for students who may not have had the opportunity to study otherwise.

During the decade before the pandemic there were auxiliary programs in Memphis that were designed to support music students and address the need for more diversity and inclusion. Memphis Music Initiative (MMI)\(^{13}\) and Prizm\(^{14}\) were two programs that were intended to support music students in underrepresented communities in Shelby County. MMI employed accomplished musicians from diverse backgrounds who were hired to go into the classrooms of the Shelby County Schools each week and support band, strings, and chorus teachers with their SCS classes. They were to provide whatever support was needed by the instructor and hopefully help to motivate the classes to reach a higher level of musicianship.\(^{15}\) It is especially difficult for strings students in a classroom to get the individual attention they may need with hand position.


These aides were available to give individual attention while the class teacher addressed the needs of the classroom. This would have compensated somewhat for some students’ lack of having private lessons. The Prizm organization enabled schools to form classes that were taught by dedicated music teachers who may not have had state teacher certification. During the school year before the pandemic (2018-19) I worked for Prizm as a strings teacher at De La Salle Elementary School in Memphis. Prizm provided instruments free of charge to these elementary school students who otherwise may not have had the opportunity to study. Both programs addressed the need for more student diversity by providing instruction for students who may not have considered studying orchestral instruments. During the pandemic these programs were less active because school music classes were mainly held online. Prizm strove to keep students interested and motivated to practice by offering virtual workshops and by having students videotape themselves performing challenge pieces.16 MMI coaches continued to support students by joining Shelby County School classrooms virtually and assisting teachers in various ways.17

Online strings teaching was not new at the start of the pandemic. There had been numerous videos offered for free on YouTube about learning the violin. For a fee, Violin Lab18 offered an extensive listing of online modules for students to access and learn to play without the benefit of a live teacher. Online services like lessons.com19 and Thumbtack20 have enabled teachers to sign up and connect with violin students for both in-person and online lessons on

certain instruments. Like many other studio teachers, I used both lessons.com and Thumbtack to connect with students before the pandemic. From my own experience, lessons.com gave violin teachers the option to locate students who wanted to study online, so it allowed me to connect with one student using Skype for a short period of time to see how it worked. My online account with Thumbtack did not display an option for violin teaching online. Interestingly, when I questioned Thumbtack to find out why the online option was not available for violin students, I was told that the administrators did not believe it was possible to teach violin online, though they allowed the online option for other instruments like piano.
CHAPTER FOUR

SURVEY RESULTS

Because my dissertation was written during the pandemic, there was little research available about teaching strings remotely. Many studio teachers who decided to continue teaching during the pandemic began teaching online and it became necessary for them to learn on the job. The challenges teachers faced were similar, but their solutions were varied. Many teachers reported feeling unprepared to teach remotely during the early months of the pandemic and some continued to feel uncertain, but most began to feel more competent as time went on.

My survey was completed on October 18, 2021, and it yielded 152 responses from studio teachers across the United States. Most of the respondents taught violin (53%) but answers from viola, cello, bass, piano, fiddle, and harp teachers were included to gather potentially useful information from all areas. As expected, most teachers had taught online for fewer than three years (76%) and only one reported teaching online for as long as fifteen years. The second largest group of teachers (12%) had taught for over six years. One teacher responded, “I have only taught virtually during this COVID Pandemic and now ONLY when a student is in quarantine or must be away” which may indicate there are some who have a strong preference for in-person lessons.

One hundred fifty teachers responded when asked what age groups they teach. The largest number of teachers (96.7%) indicated they teach thirteen- to eighteen-year-old students, and the second largest number (89.3%) were teaching ages six to twelve. Twenty-eight teachers said that they had raised the minimum age of students they would teach during the pandemic. Only 31.3% of the respondents were teaching ages three to five. Since more years of study correlates with more advanced levels of performance, it is helpful for students to begin studying
as early as possible. A reduction in the number of the youngest students would mean that fewer students would be studying for as many years as some had been studying before the pandemic. This could reduce the level of proficiency for some students.

When asked which string methods they use, 136 of 150 respondents (90.7%) replied that they taught traditional method, and sixty-nine (46%) use Suzuki method. It should be noted that the total number exceeds the 152 who took the survey, indicating that some teachers use a variety of methods. Other methods mentioned (.7%) include Sylvia Woods, All for Strings, Old Time Fiddling, East European Jewish Instruments, FiddleQuest, fiddling, Rolland, Mimi Zweig, Grandjany (harp), modified Suzuki, O’Connor method, and combinations of methods. When teaching elementary school age students or younger, many string teachers use Suzuki method books rather than traditional materials because they are better suited for the very young since students are not required to read music at the beginning. Suzuki method books are suitable for older students as well and the last two books present two Mozart concertos. That there were only sixty-nine of the total 150 respondents using Suzuki method may suggest that fewer of these teachers are teaching younger elementary age students.

The teachers who were teaching group lessons before the pandemic were asked to answer whether they were still teaching during the pandemic. Of the ones who responded to the question (ninety-nine), 55.6% were still teaching group lessons and 44.4% were no longer teaching groups. They were then asked how they were managing social distancing issues. For physical safety, most responded that they spaced the students apart from each other and many had them wear masks. All respondents reported taking precautions to avoid infection.

When asked whether they were teaching mostly online during the pandemic, there were one hundred forty-nine responses and 70.5% were teaching mostly online. Between one third and
one fourth (29.5%) responded that were not teaching mostly online. No one responded that they were not teaching. There was no question in my survey about the reasons for their choices but because teaching in person posed some risk to their health one might gather that some teachers found virtual teaching less effective, so they were willing to take the risk. Some may have felt that there was no risk to their health since the pandemic had become politicized.

One hundred four teachers selected Zoom as their online application of choice (82.6%), followed distantly by Skype (20.1%), Facetime (24.1%), and Facebook (14.8%). Other answers included Teams, Google Meet, Google Hangouts, Discord, and Rock Out Loud. Some individual teachers named several online applications. Teachers graciously shared advice about equipment, applications, and setups that they use and these suggestions may be found listed in Appendix A. Teachers who were more experienced with videoconferencing made suggestions about the best settings for volume and explained how music can sometimes register as “background noise.” Some recommended using two computers simultaneously, with remote microphones and lighting. They described how students’ equipment can limit the quality of sound and recommended asking students to purchase the best possible equipment. Some teachers make extensive use of scheduling applications for their teaching, and many use recordings online to aid learning. Some send recordings of themselves for students to watch before the next lesson and request the students to make and send recordings of their practicing.

Most respondents reported difficulties with internet access for teachers and students (66.4%). When the pandemic began in 2020, online videoconferencing platforms were not yet widely used and many people did not have access to reliable internet. It is likely that vast improvements in online applications and internet access will be made in the future.
When asked which age group of students was most likely to quit studying during the pandemic, 119 teachers responded and 42% chose the thirteen- to eighteen-year-old age group as the most likely to quit, followed by those ages seven to twelve (30.3%). The age group from three to six years was selected by 22.7% of the respondents and those over eighteen were chosen by only 5%. The teenage years are especially stressful regardless of social climate so it is understandable that this group would be chosen as likely to quit during a time of upheaval. Since students of this age are more focused on peers and social interaction, offering more online music group experiences might keep them engaged. Younger age groups would be more likely to have parental support and supervision during lessons and therefore might have been expected to continue. Since the three- to six-year-old age group was chosen by 22.7% as likely to quit and because there was a smaller percentage of teachers who are teaching this group (31.3%), the percentage who thought this group might quit studying seems more concerning.

Most of 148 who responded to the question reported being aware of increased student stress (62.2%). As noted earlier, the pandemic created great financial and emotional stress for many families with children so the high percentage is not surprising.

Teachers were asked to rank four age groups (ages three to six, seven to twelve, thirteen to eighteen, and above eighteen) in order of difficulty to teach virtually. Respondents ranked the youngest students (ages three to six) as the most difficult to teach online. As the age of the groups increased, students were ranked as easier to teach. It should be noted that before the pandemic seventy-one teachers accepted students under the age of six, but during the pandemic that number fell to fifty-five. Some teachers of older students also raised the age of students they would accept during the pandemic. If the youngest students are more difficult to teach and fewer teachers are willing to accept them into their studios as online students, it is important to find
other ways that we can reach, prepare, and train young elementary age strings students virtually. As the world becomes more globalized there may be more pandemics in the future, which would necessitate music educators to teach mainly online once again.

Teachers were asked to rank a list of challenges that might happen when teaching online. The highest number of respondents (23) ranked strings going out of tune as the most difficult challenge to manage. Other difficulties named were transmission failure (ten respondents), fidelity of sound (nine), and other instrument equipment failure (seven). The remaining six answers ranked in order here of descending level of difficulty were waning student motivation to study, tone production, rhythm training, assessing left hand/finger position, determining if bow is drawn properly, and reading music. It is impossible to teach a student when the student’s instrument is badly out of tune, and it is difficult for both students and parents to learn to tune a violin. Because violins are built and sold by many different luthiers and companies, the pegs vary considerably in how easily they turn and how well they are fitted. Violin pegs are made of wood, which makes them susceptible to changes in temperature and humidity. Wood can shrink and swell. There can be variance in the tension of the strings on the pegs because of the variability of the construction and material of the strings. Some parents and students have difficulty hearing pitch. Beginning students are the most likely to have difficulty getting their instruments tuned, especially if they are studying virtually.

Respondents were asked to offer suggestions for those teaching online and they were generous with their tips for online teachers and students. Tips for helping teachers communicate online include setting a positive tone in the lesson, eliminating distractions, making goals, tuning, preparation for lessons, equipment, recordings, online set-ups, using simple language, smiling and nodding, keeping a sense of humor, including family members in the discussion,
making lessons exciting, having social time, and telling stories. One teacher recommended remembering that students are human first, students second, and achievers last. Goals when teaching online were often more practical than extreme to make it possible for the student to achieve them. For tuning it was recommended to teach parents to tune, or to take instruments to a music store for tuning, and to make it mandatory that violins have tuners (metal screws on the tailpiece that can make small adjustments). There were suggestions for preparing fingerings and bowings before the lesson, and for using items like *Don’t Fret* decals for ease of finding finger position. One teacher recommended having only a few goals to reduce anxiety and another recommended sending recordings so students could hear what they are working on. Sending fingerings for pieces before students began to learn them was also recommended, rather than fingerings pieces during the lessons.

Of the 144 respondents that answered whether online learning was more effective, less effective, or about the same, 54.9% believed that online teaching is less effective and 39.6% thought it is about the same level of effectiveness as in-person teaching. Attitudes towards online teaching could change in the future as we become more familiar with it and as technology improves, but with the majority viewing virtual learning as less effective, teachers should be searching for ways to optimize their online teaching skills. Only eight respondents felt that teaching remotely was more effective than in-person.

Teachers were asked if they intended to return to in-person teaching after the pandemic and 90.1% said they would return to in-person, another indication that we may need to find ways to optimize and promote virtual strings teaching, possibly by creating programs that prepare students to study strings before they begin studying their instrument of choice.
Of those responding to my question about how they measure their success as a teacher, many teachers equated their own success as a teacher with the success and satisfaction of their students. Student retention, keeping student engaged, finding ways to reduce student stress levels, and helping students remain grounded were all mentioned. Seemingly, it was generally less important to teachers that students would pursue a high level of technique during the pandemic, but more important that they were making progress and enjoying learning.

Several teachers responded to my question about what they still want to learn about online teaching, and these appear at the end of the survey and possibly provide questions for future research. One teacher wanted tips on how to manage ages four to seven, because this age group is extremely difficult to teach. Many of these answers were about wanting more information about online technology. It is likely that strings teachers will continue to share what they are learning about teaching online and technology with professional organizations like American String Teachers Association through journal articles and through presentations at their yearly conventions.

As stated above, the survey revealed that many teachers find it difficult to teach students younger than six remotely and some have raised the age of students they will accept. This movement towards delaying online violin lessons until students are older might represent the most important change in how violin students were taught during the pandemic. Since it takes many years to learn to play musical instruments like violin, an earlier start is optimal. Therefore, we as teachers need to find ways to encourage and invite young violin students to study the violin and ways to help them succeed when studying violin remotely.
CHAPTER FIVE

CAN WE TEACH VIOLIN ONLINE?

Because of the sudden closures of schools and businesses in late March of 2020, studio teachers who wanted to continue meeting with their students began to teach online. Virtual teaching was widely used by both academic and music teachers throughout the remainder of 2020 and into 2021, even after the time that the vaccine became widely available for older age groups. Opinions about the general efficacy of online learning were mixed.¹

Schools began to reopen in the fall of 2021 though some parents opted to keep their children enrolled in online classes, partly because the new COVID-19 Delta variant had become widespread in the United States during the summer. Parents who considered online schooling substandard sent their children back to school.² The results of the most recent student testing seemed to indicate that virtual learning was less effective than in-person learning. Results showed lower test scores in some areas than would have been expected before the pandemic.³ Some students had fallen behind academically during the previous year and though there were other contributing factors many blamed online schooling.

Online violin teachers had been available to accept students for at least a decade but there were not yet any renowned violinists who claimed to have learned violin solely online.


Broadly there has been a correlation between wealth and academic success. Students in wealthier school districts tend to graduate with higher test scores.\(^4\) Strings classes in wealthier school districts have students who may also enjoy greater success in their music. Students from families with greater wealth can afford to purchase higher quality instruments. Wealthy students could play in ensembles at school with others from a similar economic background, raising the overall quality of performance. Being from a higher socioeconomic group makes it possible to afford private lessons with better teachers. During the pandemic many students no longer had a chance to play with ensembles and those who wanted to study privately often found it necessary to study online. Interestingly, the pandemic somewhat eliminated two of the advantages of wealthier students: playing with better quality ensembles and having access to private in-person lessons.

**In-Person vs. Online Violin Study**

There are advantages for both in-person and virtual study on the violin.

Advantages for In-Person Learning:

- Teachers can manage equipment, tune violin, check for problems, do minor repairs, recommend more appropriate equipment, monitor how well a student is doing with their equipment and recommend changes, etc.
- Teachers can manually adjust and pattern a student’s hand/arm position.
- Teachers can more easily assess a student’s tone quality and make changes to improve.
- Teachers can play in real time with the student for more accurate rhythm.
- Teachers can write corrections in music.
- Teachers can encourage and facilitate concert attendance when it is available.

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Classroom students can play together in ensembles.

Advantages for Virtual Learning:

- Anyone may study regardless of location, with the only requirement being that they are connected to the internet. Commuting to a lesson location is not necessary.
- For classroom learners, students are protected against bullying by other students.
- Asynchronous learning is possible with online videos.
- Online lessons and classes may prove to be less costly than in-person classes because of fewer expenses for the teacher and more teachers being available.
- Many high caliber performances are available online.
- Lessons may be recorded and then reviewed easily.
- Students who use online pre-recorded accompaniment must learn to adjust to the tempo rather than having an accompanist adjust to them, just as they must when working with a metronome.
- Teaching theory to violin students is simplified by using screen sharing and online programs, which often have ear training capability that is not available in textbooks. These programs would also be available for in-person students if their teachers have computers in the studio.
- Teachers can direct students to utilize high quality online forums to find answers to questions. In-person students with internet access can also explore these forums.
Supporting Successful Online Violin Study

Motivation to begin and sustain the effort of studying has been one of the most important elements for the success of violin students. Many families can become preoccupied with job loss, food insecurity, and psychological stress when living in unsettled times. Studying a musical instrument often loses importance when a student’s living circumstances become less than ideal. A “hierarchy of needs”\(^5\) somewhat controls student motivation. Typically, most music students are interested in playing their instrument when they first begin to study but sustaining interest over months and years can be a challenge.\(^6\) When studying remotely, the difficulty of sustaining motivation is compounded by the isolation of studying online. Many students have been motivated by the social aspect of ensemble playing but during the pandemic opportunities were limited.

In general, when students start their first violin lessons, preparation for study eases the challenges and helps to sustain motivation. Even in pre-pandemic times preparing for the first lessons with the teacher was a good practice.\(^7\) Some teachers assigned books for the parents to read so they could understand what needed to be done for success,\(^8\) and students who were not prepared sometimes found the intensive study difficult. Suzuki teachers refer to “pre-Twinkle” exercises, a term that describes exercises to be done before beginning to study Book 1, which begins with Twinkle Twinkle Little Star variations. Teachers often assigned exercises and games


\(^6\) Edmund Sprunger, Helping Parents Practice: Ideas for Making it Easier (St. Louis, MO: Yes Publishing, 2005), 44.


without the violin to help form rudimentary hand skills before starting to play. Pre-Twinkle exercises usually consist not only of listening to recordings but also learning hand position by holding a box violin\(^9\) made of cardboard, and a dowel stick bow. This preparation can go on for several weeks or longer. Under the best of circumstances, beginning violin students sometimes balk at using a box instrument and many want to hurry through this step so that they can begin to play a real violin. Using the box violin may feel like an obstacle to some online students because it makes no sound. It may not be realistic to assume that young violin students learning remotely would remain motivated to practice while using the box. Consequently, because some online students may not like using the box violin, they may never practice enough to build the pre-violin skills of holding the violin and bow properly.

One alternative to teaching remotely using the cardboard box violin would be to have students first begin learning to play using another string instrument that is similar to the violin. The ukulele is an instrument that is easy to learn and could be used to prepare students for playing the violin. Ukulele strings are flexible and can be tuned to G, D, A, and E, and early training on that instrument would transfer more readily to the violin than some other instruments. Mandolin is another option (already tuned to G, D, A, and E) but mandolins tend to be much more expensive than ukuleles, and mandolins have double courses which makes it necessary to place the fingertip on two strings at once. This can be uncomfortable for new students who do not yet have calluses. Inexpensive ukulele strings are made of nylon polymer, which is much easier on the fingertips. Holding the ukulele in guitar position encourages the left wrist to remain slightly arched and the fingertips to be placed on the fingerboard, which simulates correct violin

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left hand/wrist position and discourages the collapsed wrist that some students present when starting to play violin. This mode of preparation might be a more effective approach for pre-beginner violinists studying online, rather than teaching violin posture by using a box violin that makes no sound. Violin posture with the violin on the shoulder, head facing left, with left arm under the instrument can be uncomfortable at first, and plucked instruments like the ukulele are easier to learn than the violin because playing them does not necessitate learning how to draw a bow on the strings. Using a ukulele rather than a box violin, students would be able to preview the pieces in a violin method book like Suzuki Volume 1, and would have the advantage of hearing their music as they play. It is my belief that students’ left hands and fingers would develop some strength and dexterity as they play on the fingerboard, and their wrists would become skilled in using a basically transferable position that could be applied to the violin later. Another potentially educational advantage with ukulele is that the student could sing while playing the instrument, something that would be very difficult with violin playing since the jaw is cupped in the chinrest.

Preparing students to hold instruments and bows before playing on them has been an important principle in the view of classroom strings music educators as well as studio teachers. The Essential Elements books, widely used for classroom strings education in some parts of the United States, begin with having students prepare bow grip skills using exercises with pencils and bows before applying the bow to the strings. With that method, students first learn violin posture and left hand by plucking short tunes without the bow. The violin and viola books suggest the option of first holding the violin like the guitar. The students do not touch the bow to the strings until the bow hand is basically formed.10

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Because some school music programs were cut indefinitely during the pandemic, another potential resource for borrowed instruments was lost. Violin, viola, cello, and bass outfits purchased from reputable dealers for school students started at a minimum cost of around $200 in 2022, and often cost more. By contrast, ukuleles could be bought for as little as $20 on eBay at that time. For beginners, violin pegs tend to be difficult to manipulate when learning to tune. The least expensive instruments sometimes have ill-fitted wooden pegs that can either stick or glide uncontrollably when tuning. Violin strings remained expensive for some, and some strings can easily break. Wooden violin bows sometimes break and they need expensive rehairing periodically. Shoulder rests have never been a one-size-fits-all item and sometimes students need to purchase several to find one that works.

Ukulele pegs are the same type of mechanical pegs found on guitar and these can be turned easily and do not malfunction as often as the wooden pegs on a violin. The instrument can be tuned relatively effectively by most people who can match an online tuning pitch. No shoulder rest is needed for the ukulele and if an inexpensive ukulele breaks it is not expensive to replace. Preparing to study the violin by first practicing and learning songs on the much easier ukulele may help students excel when they start to take violin lessons. There could be another


pandemic in our future, and it is possible that we may need to start all beginning violinists remotely for the duration of several years.

For those handy with tools, online instructions about making ukuleles out of a variety of inexpensive materials like empty Altoid tins are available. Homemade instruments have always been especially prized by children, who can have a hand in making them. They can be decorated with stickers, paint, etc., something that is not usually acceptable for small violins, especially if they are rented. If a child needs an especially small size, the homemade instrument can be made to their specifications. My research did not yield simple instructions for constructing a homemade violin and bow inexpensively out of recycled materials, and I am skeptical that such an instrument would have a very good tone. Before the pandemic and continuing today there has been an orchestra in Asunción, Paraguay made up of students who play on violins and other instruments made entirely from recycled materials from the Cateura landfill, so it must be possible to construct them. In the comparatively wealthy United States, students may have better access to materials and instruments. Students may be less likely to need to collect materials from a landfill and parents less likely to allow it.

Playing the violin involves the study of three basic elements: development of left arm/hand/finger technique, development of right arm/bow grip technique, and the ability to read music and relate the notes specifically to violin. Preparing the left hand for violin study by first learning to recognize and play notes on a ukulele would create a similar physical experience to that of the student who learns left hand position using the traditional Suzuki box violin, but with


the advantage of hearing the notes that are played and learning to read. Most traditional methods teach the student about left hand, bow arm, and note reading simultaneously, which can be challenging. By contrast, Suzuki method’s hallmark characteristic is that note reading is delayed for beginning students. If instead of delaying note reading, the element of bow technique is delayed until after a student learns to play and recognize most first position notes on the fingerboard of a ukulele, a beginner violin student would become familiar with basic left-hand technique. Note reading would have already been started by the time lessons on violin begin. Bow technique could be introduced in the first violin lessons and practiced with careful study of individual pieces in Suzuki Volume 1, scales, and appropriate etudes.

Violin students are taught to avoid looking at the fingerboard as they play and encouraged to find finger location by feel. It is problematic to look at left hand finger placement when playing the violin on the shoulder because of the horizontal sight angle of the fingerboard and looking at the fingers can cause the hand and wrist to go out of position. When using a fretted instrument like the ukulele, the fingers are guided somewhat by the feel of the frets. Many guitars are made with inlaid “side dots” made of various materials in colors that contrast the material of the fingerboard. The dots are placed on the side of the fingerboard that is visible when the guitar is played and looking at them helps guitarists locate fret position by sight. Looking at the fingers when playing a guitar or ukulele does not change the wrist position because the fingerboard is visible from the side. Once students become more advanced, they are less likely to feel the need to look at their fingers. Instruments with frets produce more consistent intonation than violin because the string is stopped in a consistent spot by the fret, an advantage for new students who need to hear relatively good intonation to train the ears. Another possible advantage of students playing a ukulele is that other positions might be taught earlier. The skill
of shifting back and forth into other positions is generally not presented in the first book of any widely used violin method in the United States. The concept of positions might be more easily introduced before violin study using the ukulele with its visible frets. Some studies indicate that students can start as easily with third position as they can with first position on the violin\textsuperscript{16} and early training for conceptualizing third position using a ukulele could be transferred to violin when students begin lessons.

It is unclear who originated the saying, “The bow is the soul of the violin,” but it is often repeated. Good bow arm technique is vital for a beautiful sound and musicality, and most violin methods provide some amount of preparation for using the bow. Most Suzuki teachers have students prepare for using the bow by learning exercises with a dowel stick as a substitute. Preparatory exercises are especially important when teaching bow technique virtually because the teacher is not able to make manual corrections on the student’s arm. A cardboard tube from a used paper towel roll can be used as a guide for the dowel stick when it is held between the jaw and the left shoulder. The tube keeps the stick straight and the angle is similar to the line the bow follows when playing the violin. A makeshift frog for the bow can be a chunk of rectangular eraser that is taped to the lower part of the stick, which provides a place to form a bow grip and begin using proper bow hold. This would not be an ideal way to learn to use a bow, but it would make it easier for students to maintain a straight bow stroke when a teacher is not present to guide the bow arm. In structuring an individual lesson, students could first be taught their assigned pieces using the ukulele for 20 minutes, and then at the end of the lesson a few minutes could be reserved for basic bow practice. There are many video recordings of both students and

teachers playing the familiar pieces of all the Suzuki books. Drawing a dowel stick bow along with the performer not only reinforces the feel of playing the violin but doing so insures more valuable listening repetitions.

The most basic way that children learn is by engaging in play. Suzuki violin teachers are trained to teach children as young as age three, which usually involves bringing several educational toys to lessons. Each toy reinforces skills related to violin learning. Since many teachers are now teaching online, they cannot hand toys directly to the students, but it is possible for a teacher to create a narrative with a student’s toys. Does it have a name? Is it happy or sad, and why? Does it have friends? It is a way for a child to feel relatedness and to feel cared about, even if the experience is imaginary. Stuffed toys can be expensive, but it is possible to make them very cheaply at home. There are popular videos online about how to make toy kittens out of socks and this is one way for a socially distanced child to construct a musically supportive friend for home. A friend who helps them with practicing could help maintain motivation to practice. Most children’s books and stories today have warm messages and non-threatening characters, and some of them offer moral messages and lessons for living. Short stories from Aesop’s Fables or Mother Goose tales could be related to individual songs and read during online lessons to create a comforting routine. Many Suzuki teachers with very young children create lyrics for the pieces in the first three Suzuki volumes, and lyrics can be designed to not only clarify rhythms but to also provide life lessons about respect and kindness. Singing their

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pieces can help students learn the rhythms of their songs.\textsuperscript{19} Lyrics of songs learned as children tend to be retained.\textsuperscript{20}

Fundamental violin method books often contain images of the fingerboard with note names to help students understand the location of notes. Some students find an image helpful, but it is difficult for most to memorize note and finger locations from a picture. One-octave scales in first position require at least one string crossing and when playing scales the fingers are not always placed in the same spot on every string, adding to the challenges for a beginner. Knowledge of the piano keyboard when beginning to study the violin can help demystify the violin fingerboard because the notes can be seen on the piano in a way that they cannot be seen on the violin. Half steps and whole steps are easier to play on the piano because the fingers do not have to press a very specific spot to play in tune and all the keys are easy to see. Most families with children now have internet access where online virtual piano keyboards may be found. It is possible to develop a basic understanding of the keyboard using the computer keyboard, and some students can pursue this on their own even if they do not have access to a piano. When teaching violin online, assignments for note study can now be made with the use of virtual piano keyboards.\textsuperscript{21}

Often there is not enough time during a violin lesson to teach music theory because so many other things need to be addressed. When teaching virtually it is possible to utilize online theory programs by using the screen sharing option. Music Teachers National Association offers

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
an extensive list of music theory websites\textsuperscript{22} that teachers and parents can explore. MusicTheory.net is a free website that offers brief lessons and exercises in many areas of theory.\textsuperscript{23} For very young students, PBS.Kids\textsuperscript{24} offers games and colorful images to introduce children to musical instruments, sound concepts, and different genres of music. Teoria is a free online theory course that teaches all levels of theory, from beginning to advanced. It offers lessons for basic note reading, writing, scales, keys, and ear training exercises for intervals, modes, and jazz chords. For advanced students there are tutorials on analysis. It is a high-quality online resource that may be used by students who are in middle school and older. Assignments from these websites can be made weekly to give students a thorough foundation in music.


CHAPTER SIX
INTO THE FUTURE

Challenges with teaching violin online might be mitigated in the future as videoconferencing technology becomes more developed. One of the early difficulties with violin teaching was the inability of the teacher to view the student from all angles when using a platform like Zoom. We were limited to a two-dimensional view on the computer screen and students needed to be close to the computer microphone to be heard, which further limited the view of the student. But technology improves rapidly and we have begun to see it used in areas such as psychology, where the human imagination can be harnessed to overcome phobias.\(^1\) As technology improves, I wonder if it may become possible for students and teachers to wear arm and head sensors that could provide improved audio and detect motion. The use of avatars as virtual stand-ins could then allow the teacher to correct a student’s position virtually. A head-mounted display would enable a three-dimensional view and more of a sense of being in the same room together. By 2020, with the advent of the Metaverse,\(^2\) we were beginning to see new possibilities with three-dimensional videoconferencing. Being able to view musicians three dimensionally would allow for more physical mobility and therefore more musical presentations by students. Improvements in the quality of audio would provide a truer representation of a student’s tone. Another application for this type of technology could allow students who experience stage fright to play for virtual audiences which could be programmed to provide a positive response. They could play for progressively larger and more restrained audiences to desensitize their anxieties. Improvements in technology will most likely expand the ability of

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violin teachers to teach students from any location and teach them more effectively to perform well for audiences. If the imagination has always been an important element for teaching and learning, we have begun a new era in which the imagination can be almost unlimited.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A

RESOURCES FOR ONLINE TEACHING/LEARNING

Video Conferencing Platforms:

- **Zoom**
  
  Founded in 2011, Zoom was the preferred video teleconferencing platform for many teachers during the pandemic, so widely utilized that the term “Zooming” was coined. The Zoom Basic Plan allowed up to one hundred people to share a video call for free. For two people there was no time restriction. A forty-minute time restriction was imposed for more than two. In early 2020 there had been reports of meetings being suddenly invaded by malicious intruders, but security measures were quickly put into place to prevent that from happening. Zoom was easy to use and there were options for sound settings and screen sharing, which proved useful for teachers. Some teachers used external microphones to improve sound quality. Many teachers experienced frequent interruptions in transmission.

- **Skype**
  
  Also free, Skype was founded in 2003 and was used by many studio music teachers. Skype was very similar to Zoom. Screen sharing was also possible, and the basic quality of sound was comparable to Zoom.

- **Zoom and Skype** were the most widely used platforms during the pandemic. Other platforms that survey respondents named (see Appendix B) were Discord, Facebook Messenger, FaceTime, Google Duo, Google Hangouts, Google Meet, Muzie Studio, Teams, TL Classroom, WebEx, WeVu, and WhatsApp.

Equipment recommended by online teachers:

- **At this writing, there were three main operating systems (OS):** Microsoft Windows (76.45%), macOS (17.72%), and Linus (1.73%). Usage of equipment, software, apps, etc. were sometimes limited by the OS of the teacher.

- **Laptops, iPhones, iPads**

- **Recommended microphones:** Blue Yeti, Cardioid, Samsung, USB; directional mic

- **Headphones:** a variety of brands; noise canceling headphones are available

- **Cameras and lighting:** HQ4n webcam, Logitech 930C camera, MeetUp ConferenceCam (allows for 120° to 170° field of view), OTT light (natural daylight illumination), spotlight, tripod
• Speakers: Bose sound bar, USB speaker

• H6 Handy recorder

Apps:
• Acapella – used for creating videos
• Anytune – slows down audio for music practice
• CamScanner – a mobile app that allows mobile devices to take pictures and share them as a JPEG and PDF; useful for sending images of music
• Digital Audio workstation – used for recording, editing, and producing audio files
• forScore – sheet music organizer
• GoodNotes – note taking app for iPads
• Google Classroom, Google Docs, Google Drive
• Marco Polo - video messaging and video hosting service mobile app
• Metronome Beats – interactive speed trainer and metronome
• Seesaw – for student recordings, teaching resource used by some classroom teachers
• Soundcorset – tuner and metronome
• TempoPerfect - metronome
• TonalEnergy – for tuning, and metronome
• Tonara – studio management, creates music assignments, motivates students, etc.
• Tunable (free) – chromatic tuner, tone/chord generator, metronome, useful for practicing

Various resources online:
• Flipgrid website – video sharing tool which allows teachers to facilitate discussions among students
• GoReact – interactive cloud-based platform for feedback
• IMTEX – music-oriented website that distributes articles, digital sheet music, and MP3 files
• Kahoot! – a game-based learning platform; user-generated quizzes

• Media Library – a place for storage of videos, images, and flash files; creates paths to the files

• Mighty Networks – community software platform designed to help create online courses and build communities

• OBS Studio – software for video streaming and live streaming

• Screen sharing – Zoom and other platforms allow the teacher to show students educational pages while video conferencing

• Sightreading Factory – composes music for sightreading practice

• ViolinPractice.com – videos organized by topic, for home practice

• WeTransfer – internet-based computer file transfer service

• WeVu – Video sharing platform

• YouTube – video sharing platform for videotaping and sharing student performances. It offers many recordings of piano accompaniments for standard violin works.

Music writing software:

• Finale

• MuseScore

• Noteflight

• Sibelius

Ensemble playing:

• Jamulus – an open source (General Public License) networked music performance software that allowed musicians to play together; platforms like Zoom and Teams were unsuited to the task; high speed internet required; latency diminished but not entirely eliminated
Online group recording:

- **BandLab** – a Cloud Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) tool for collaborating with other musicians
- **GarageBand** – DAW developed for macOS

Student/Teacher Locator Services:

- **Lessons.com** - a free service for teachers looking for students. Potential students signed up online to have their names, ages, instrument of choice, experience level, whether willing to travel to the teacher or whether they preferred internet lessons, location, and instrument. Teachers were able to make themselves available to students both locally or at a distance.
- **Takelessons.com** – charged a fee for background check; handles bookings and payments from students
- **Thumbtack** – charged a fee to contractors, sends names and contact information for students who were looking for lessons. Thumbtack did not allow violin teachers to offer remote lessons before the pandemic.

Teacher Support:

- **My Music Staff** – software that helps teachers manage their teaching loads
- **Don’t Fret decals** – pre-made decals for finger placement on fingerboard
- **Bow Hold Buddy** – a device to help beginning students learn a proper bow grip
- **Duet (Music Teacher’s Helper)** – business management software
- **Online Dice** – for games

Internet Safety:

- **Be Internet Awesome**

Informational videos (how to build instruments, tune, solve instrument and bow issues, etc.):

- **TikTok**
- **YouTube**
Equipment Purchase/Rent/Borrow:

- eBay - connects buyers and sellers throughout the world; prices and quality of equipment vary widely; pre-owned and vintage sheet music is widely available, as is all types of violin equipment.

- Library – some libraries have programs to lend out instruments for free, such as the one in Brooklyn, NY.¹

- Music Stores - violins of all sizes can be rented or purchased; sizing usually offered for free, as well as tuning when needed

- Pawn Shops – a sometimes overlooked resource; prices, size, and quality may vary

Online lessons:

- YouTube - tutorials for those who have internet and are highly motivated to learn to play violin with free lessons

- MasterClass – online classes for all skill levels

- [my] Talent Forge – video lessons on a variety of instruments

- Violin Lab – online modules for motivated learners; music books provided online

Finding answers to questions:

- Violinist.com – offers blogs and discussion with other violinists of a variety of levels; questions are answered by others of all skill levels

- Facebook group – The Violin Guild

Practice support:

- Accompaniment recordings on YouTube - piano accompaniments available for most standard violin pieces on YouTube; tempos of the recordings will vary and some recordings offer a visual of the music as it is played.

- FiddleQuest – for a fee, teachers can purchase this curriculum for their students; students can purchase access online; a variety of styles to choose from and playing with the recordings can substitute for a lack of ensemble availability

- Smart Music – offers web-based music education tools

¹ https://www.bklynlibrary.org/locations/central/musicloan
• Facebook group – The Violin Guild

Ensembles with social distancing:
• Many youth symphonies will offer scholarships on merit, need, and work study
• Most large cities offer a variety of music organizations to engage youth in classical, jazz, and other styles of music

Music theory:
• Teoria - a thorough, free, online program that starts at the most basic levels of theory and progresses through training for jazz and harmony, tutorials for form and analysis, ear training, piano keyboard, modes, etc.
• YouTube – instructional videos
• Virtual Piano – online virtual piano software that makes it possible to play music with the keys of a computer keyboard (there are many others in addition to Virtual Piano)
• MusicTheory.net

Motivation and Alternative Styles:
• YouTube – videos of musicians playing/teaching all styles: classical, jazz, improvisation, hip hop, Irish, blue grass, country, etc.
APPENDIX B
SURVEY RESPONSES FROM STUDIO TEACHERS

1. Do you teach primarily violin, viola, cello, bass, or another string instrument? (149 responses)

Figure 1. Instruments Taught by Respondents

2. How many years have you taught strings virtually? (150 responses)

Figure 2. Years of Teaching Experience
3. What age groups do you teach? (150 responses)

![Figure 3. Age Groups of Students Taught](image)

4. Which of these methods do you teach? (150 responses)

![Figure 4. Methods Taught by Respondents](image)
5. Please indicate below how you were teaching before the pandemic. (150 responses)

![Bar chart showing mode of teaching before pandemic: 145 (96.7%) in-person private lessons, 75 (50%) in-person group/ensemble classes, 25 (17.3%) online - group and/or individual lessons.]

Figure 5. Mode of Teaching Before Pandemic

6. If you were teaching group classes before the pandemic, are you still teaching group classes? (99 responses)

![Pie chart showing 44.4% Yes and 55.6% No for respondents teaching group classes.]

Figure 6. Percentage of Respondents Teaching Group Classes
7. If you are still teaching group classes in person, how are you managing social distancing issues? (58 responses)

Figure 7. Social Distancing Solutions by Percentage

8. Since the start of the pandemic, have you been teaching mostly online? (149 responses)

Figure 8. Percentage Teaching Online
9. What online applications do you use? (149 responses)

Figure 9. Online Application by Percentage
10. What other online apps, tools, equipment, etc. do you use in teaching? (95 responses with some duplication; more details in Appendix A)

Video conferencing platforms:
Zoom, Skype, Discord, Facebook Messenger, FaceTime, Google Duo, Google Hangouts, Google Meet, Muzie Studio, Teams, TL classroom, WebEx, WeVu, and WhatsApp

Equipment:
Microsoft SurfacePro tablets, various laptops, iPhones, iPads, Blue Yeti mic, Blue Snowflake mic, Cardioid mic, Samsung mic, Snowball mic, USB mic, directional mic, noise-canceling mic, HQ4n webcam, Logitech 930C camera, MetUp ConferenceCam, Microsoft HD external camera, Philips 50MM headphones, OTT light, spotlight, tripod, Bose sound bar, USB speaker, Zoom H6 recorder

Apps:
Anytune, BandLab, CamScanner, Digital Audio workstation, forScore, GoodNotes, Google Classroom, Google Docs, Google Drive, Marco Polo, Metronome Beats, Seesaw, Soundcorset, TempoPerfect, TonalEnergy, Tunable

Miscellaneous resources:
Flipgrid website, IMTEX, Kahoot!, Media Library, OBS Studio, screen sharing, Sightreading Factory, ViolinPractice.com, WeVu, YouTube, eBay, MasterClass, Violin Lab, Violinist.com, The Violin Guild (Facebook group), FiddleQuest, Smart Music, Teoria, Virtual Piano, MusicTheory.net

Music writing software: Sibelius, Finale
Audio mixing software: Adobe, Pro Tools
Community software platform: Mighty Networks
Ensemble playing and group recording: Jamulus, BandLab, GarageBand
Teacher support: My Music Staff, Don’t Fret decals, Bow Hold Buddy, Korg tuners
11. Has it been your experience that internet access has been problematic for some students and/or teacher? (149 responses)

![Difficulty with Internet Access](image1)

Figure 10. Difficulty with Internet Access

12. Have you observed or been aware of an increased level of stress in your students? (148 responses)

![Student Stress Level](image2)

Figure 11. Student Stress Level
13. In your opinion what age group is most likely to quit studying during the pandemic? (119 responses)

![Pie chart showing age groups most likely to quit studying during the pandemic.](image)

Figure 12. Age Group Most Likely to Quit Studying

14. Considering the following age ranges, please rank the age groups according to ease of teaching and communicating instructions using strictly online lessons.

![Bar chart ranking age groups by ease of teaching and communicating instructions.](image)

Figure 13. Ease of Teaching and Communicating Ranked by Age Group
15. What is the age range of students that you accepted into your studio before the pandemic?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youngest ages accepted</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
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<td>18+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14</td>
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</table>
16. What is the age range of students that you will accept into your studio during the pandemic? (147 responses; some responses were ambiguous due to wording of question)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youngest ages accepted</th>
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<td>Limiting new students by age/vaccine status</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers who raised minimum age of students they will accept during pandemic</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. Until the pandemic began, most strings teachers were teaching lessons and classes in person. Here is a list of challenges for the online strings teacher. Please order these issues from 1 (least difficult to manage) to 10 (most difficult to manage):

1. reading music
2. determining if bow is being properly drawn, parallel to bridge
3. assessing left hand/finger position
4. rhythm training
5. tone production issues
6. motivation to study
7. equipment challenges (loose chinrest, issues with tape on fingerboard, bow tension)
8. fidelity of sound and pitch when using online applications
9. online sound transmission failure
10. strings going out of tune

18. Online teaching tips for private strings students:

• Have student submit videos before lessons
• Hold some group lessons for social time; online studio classes
• Use simple, clear language
• Screen sharing
• Remember that students are human first, students second, and achievers last
• Be insistent about camera angles
• Admit what you can’t figure out
• Smile, nod, stay in motion while on camera
• Patience
• Keep a sense of humor
• Create game plans together
• Meet with groups outdoors
• Have students play for family members
• Prepare fingerings and bowings before lesson and send to student
• Be available to chat
• Provide asynchronous teaching tools
• For young students, teach parents to tune
• Tell students to write down assignments
• Make it exciting; keep changing
• Be flexible
• Keep expectations realistic; give authentic praise
• Bow arm is the most challenging; adjust camera angle
• Young students must have fine tuners
• Always begin with a scale
• Teacher and student take turns playing
• Talk less
• Teacher should tell siblings what they can do to not distract the student
• Have student drop instrument off for teacher to tune, or have them go to local music store
• Schedule enough time between lessons to cope with transmission problems
• Have student listen to recordings frequently
• Have student text the teacher facts about composers
• If possible, alternate online with in-person lessons
• Younger students need hands-on instruction
• Join a Facebook group for distance learning
• Be near WiFi; turn sound to camera
• Instruct student about Zoom settings, proper stand, and lighting set-up
• Keep folder in Google Docs for each student with lesson recordings and notes, best set-up for Zoom, and camera placement
• Make sure audio setting on Zoom is set to low background noise
• Send recordings with practice tempos to students; WeVu and GoReact let you make comments at specific spots in videos

• Get good equipment, large monitor or TV, external mic, separate speakers

• Do webcam test before starting lesson

• Use Don’t Fret fingerboard decals

• Use dedicated line and fastest speed for internet

• Keep everything within arm’s reach

• Do lots of metronome work

• Charge devices before lessons

• Position camera for best angle to see right arm

• Hold tuner so student can see it while they are tuning

• Play together with metronome, keeping student’s mic off

• Make sure the room is quiet; keep fans and other noise generating equipment off

• Have student use electronic practice record

• Use small signs that say, “instrument up” and “bigger bows,” etc.

• Have a network of in-person helpers to tune instruments, rehair bows, etc.

• Scan scales, etudes, and music pieces to send to students before lessons

• Have only a few goals

• Include parents

• Sometimes it’s ok to tell stories to keep the kids engaged

• Continue to develop your skills with audio and video capabilities
19. Generally, does teaching strings online lead to more, less, or about the same student success as teaching in person? (144 responses)

![Pie chart showing student success with online teaching.]

Figure 14. Student Success with Online

20. During the pandemic, do you find your students have more, less, or about the same level of motivation? (145 responses)

![Pie chart showing student motivation level with online teaching.]

Figure 15. Student Motivation Level with Online
21. If you are teaching virtually due to the pandemic, do you plan to return to in-person teaching or do you plan to continue online mostly? (141 responses)

Figure 16. Percentage of Teachers Planning to Return to Teaching In-Person

22. How do you measure your own success as a teacher as you teach virtually during the pandemic? (125 responses)

Most teachers measured their success in terms of the success of their students. Student progress, student enjoyment, learning to follow directions, happiness, and keeping students passionate were all mentioned. Student retention was important and most had success in this area. One teacher spoke of gaining students from around the country. Some teachers found online lessons difficult and felt less successful. To some, managing student stress became more important than student technical progress. How students related to music and whether they remained grounded was important. The online platform encouraged many teachers to think outside the box, and several mentioned putting together entire recitals online. There were several who felt it was much more difficult to teach students below the age of 10.

23. What do you still want to learn about teaching online successfully?

- New equipment that makes the job easier
- How to implement supervised group practice sessions
- Tips on how to creatively engage younger (through middle school) learners in ways that empower them; worried that online lessons are more “screen time”
• Good techniques for teaching tone and intonation online
• Teaching students who cannot read music yet
• Getting ideal sound transmission, both incoming and outgoing
• Parent communication
• More virtual activities
• Attracting and retaining students
• More technology tools
• How to motivate students
• How to manage students from ages 4 to 7; found this group extremely difficult to teach
• How to play duets without buying and training on expensive equipment
• Is there a platform with zero latency?
• Settings for best fidelity
• How to teach students to tune online
• How to organize virtual recitals
• More online teaching aids; apps to play with students
• Better sound transmission
• How to manage when students do not have good equipment
APPENDIX C

DESIGN OF AN ONLINE PRE-VIOLIN PROGRAM

The following is a design of a pre-violin program that could be used by parents or teachers to provide a foundation for beginning online violin students and could be modified to be used by beginning viola students as well. The program could be presented either in the form of online lessons or in a series of videos. Especially for young beginners, studying violin remotely is challenging. The program, using the music from Suzuki Violin, Vol. 1, is designed to keep students motivated and moving forward quickly, while providing an enjoyable form of regular practice at basic violin/viola skills, listening, and singing. Each piece is presented with a story that is an adaptation of one of Aesop’s Fables. Hopefully, following this program would ease the transition from pre-violin study to the use of a real violin.

Materials Needed for Implementation:

- ukulele of basic quality $20
- Suzuki Violin Volume 1 (optional) $5 (used, on Ebay)
- paper stickers (two colors) for fingerboard $5
- materials needed to make stuffed cat, Vuillaume (blue and brown buttons, needle and thread, socks, cotton stuffing) $0 to $10
- music movement (optional) $26 on Ebay
- computer and internet connection costs vary
To appeal to children ages six to ten (and possibly older) there will be a character in the stories, Vuillaume, who will be their constant companion and friend. He is a cat who has one blue eye and one brown eye, and the students will first be required to create him themselves out of socks, buttons, and if they wish, a small music box that plays Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. Vuillaume can be adapted to the preferences of the student and may be of any color or gender. It is most important that the student be able to identify with and relate to any of the characters in the story, and these can be modified as well to suit the needs of the student. Though many of the characters in the stories are represented as male, all characters may be presented as either gender, or non-gendered. The DIY crafts video described earlier provides instructions on how to make the cat.¹

Once the cat is constructed, an online narrative will begin using light-hearted, whimsical language that hopefully will engage young students. Instructions are given as to how to set up the ukulele with stickers on the fingerboard for finger placement.

Ukuleles are easy to tune for most, but there is a small percentage of people who cannot distinguish pitch. Some studies have concluded that one in twenty-five people (4%) have “amusia” or tone deafness.² It is unknown whether individuals who are tone deaf can learn to distinguish pitch, but because the pre-violin program is for everyone regardless of their ability to distinguish pitch, it is assumed that any music training is helpful and no harm is done if some students’ sense of pitch does not improve using the program.


Because the screw mechanism of the pegs is easy to manipulate, tuning a ukulele is much easier than tuning the violin. The “A 440” pitch can be found on the computer or phone. The other strings can be tuned this way as well by calling up the pitches D 293, G 195, and E 659 on the computer. Tuning in the early weeks of the program is simplified by the fact that all the songs in the first half of the Suzuki volume only utilize the A and E strings. After learning to tune the A and E strings and learning what the perfect 5th sounds like from the first notes of Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, some may begin to be able to tune the other strings a 5th apart as well without calling up tuning notes. Playing Twinkle starting from the D to the A string would reinforce the perception of the interval of the 5th and could help a student begin to understand the meaning of transposition.

Tuning at home without a teacher is one of the more difficult challenges that online students face. To tune the instrument on their own, the student must learn to locate the proper string on the ukulele with a diagram, pluck it, then sing the pitch that is sounding. After playing the pitch on the computer, the student must learn to sing the note that the string is playing, then move their voice either up or down to match the correct pitch that the computer is playing. Most people can identify whether their voice is rising or descending but a small percentage will find it a challenge. The peg will need to be tightened or loosened while the string is being plucked, to match the direction the voice is going. With patient effort, most people can tune a ukulele much more easily than a violin. Another option for tuning the ukulele would be to take the instrument to a local music store where someone will be able to tune it for them.
The ukulele fingerboard needs to be set up for the key of A major and this can be done with paper stickers of one color. Finger numbers and string names may be written on the stickers:

Figure 17. First Fingerboard Setup: A and E Strings

For ease, finger numbers with the string names will be used in the printed music to allow the students to play their pieces immediately. Left hand index finger is 1, middle finger is 2, ring finger is 3, and little finger is 4.

Figure 18. Left Hand Finger Numbers
If A1 is indicated, it means press first finger on the sticker on the A string (B pitch). If A2 is indicated, then second finger is pressed on the sticker on the A string (C#), etc. E0, A0, D0, and G0 indicate to pluck open strings with no left hand fingers pressed on the fingerboard. Later, there will be new notes designated AL2, which means that the second finger moves one fret lower, so the note sounds half a step lower, and GH3 meaning that the third finger on the G string will be moved a half step higher.

Assuming that the ukulele has been tuned and set up, and Vuillaume the Cat has been constructed, it is time for the stories to begin. They will begin with a story about our little protagonist Vuillaume and how he meets Sir Braccio. Of course, Villaume will be providing support and encouragement by sitting next to the student for every lesson and practice session.
APPENDIX D

THE STORY OF VUILLAUME THE CAT

For Pam and Jay Markle

Once upon a time there was a cat named Vuillaume. He was a very special cat, having one brown eye and one blue. There are legends about animals with two-toned eyes and the saying goes that animals like these are very special, that they can see both Heaven and Earth, so they tend to be very wise. Vuillaume was a happy little cat and liked to spend the long hot summer days playing outside.

One day a few summers ago when Vuillaume was very small, he had been playing in the park on the jungle gym near the park gazebo when he suddenly heard the most beautiful music that he could imagine. He turned to see the source of the music and saw that there was a big group of musicians playing a concert. He was amazed! How could they make such an incredible sound together? Nearest the edge of the stage sat a big group of people playing the all the same instrument and their music was his favorite. He remembered from school that his teacher had once taught him the names of all the instruments so he knew that these were violins, but he had no idea how beautiful their music was. He turned to one of his friends and said, “Wow! Someday I want to play the violin!” His friend was older, and as older kids are sometimes, he was a little mean. “Huh. My teacher told me that violin is a real hard instrument to play. And besides that, you are a cat. Cats don’t play violin.” Vuillaume’s feelings were a little hurt, but he kept on playing anyway. Maybe the violin wasn’t for him after all…

A couple of years passed and it was time for summer vacation again and long, lazy days in the sun. Vuillaume was out playing stickball with some friends when he began to notice some enchanting music coming from down the street. It was almost sounded like the voices of cats
singing the ancient songs of his people, but far more beautiful. He looked down the street and to his surprise there was a puffy grey billowing cloud of mist that was slowly moving towards him. He turned his head to look at his friends but none of them seemed to notice the cloud and instead kept playing as if nothing special was happening. Vuillaume turned back, and as the billowing cloud approached him he could begin to see dancing and spinning in the mist an image of a man with silver robes and a pointed hat. His robes seemed to be decorated with glittering stars and there was a creamy-colored quarter moon shape on his back that Vuillaume could see as he twirled.

“Hallooo Vuillaume!” The booming voice of the man (or was he a wizard?) greeted Vuillaume by name. “Hello… to you?” Vuillaume didn’t quite know how to address the man so he waited uncertainly to see what would happen next.

“I am Sir Violino da Braccio, Spirit King of All Orchestras! And you are Vuillaume, the Cat, who can see both Heaven and Earth!” Vuillaume was startled to say the least. How did this man/wizard know his name? He again looked at his friends and was amazed to see that they were still oblivious, playing and unable to see the cloud. They began to fade into the background, almost looking like holograms. Vuillaume wasn’t exactly afraid, but he felt very jittery and fascinated. There had been a handful of occasions when he had seen odd things like this before because of the special powers of his eyes, but not often.

Vuillaume suddenly remembered his manners. “To what do I owe the pleasure of your presence, Sir Braccio? Why are you here to greet me today?” “Vuillaume,” he began to look sad. “I need your help, and not just a little bit. Do you know what an ‘Orchestra’ is?” Vuillaume thought for a moment… Then he remembered. Once a few months ago, he had gone to the library to check out a book and there had been some sort of gathering. He noticed that there
were many people wearing elegant clothes and walking with cases slung over their shoulders. He had stopped to see what would happen and in a short while the people had opened their cases, pulled out musical instruments (some of them had violins!), and they began to sit down in chairs arranged in a semicircle. Soon, a woman who seemed to be in charge stood up before them and started waving her arms, and at that point the most beautiful music started to fill the library! Vuillaume had been enraptured and he ended up staying until the very end of the concert. He even got into trouble for staying so long. When he got home his mother who had been worried about his long absence had fussed at him.

So in answer to Sir Braccio’s question about the orchestra, Vuillaume could truthfully say “yes”, that he had actually attended an orchestra concert once before. Sir Braccio seemed happy with this answer, but nonetheless began to look sad again. “Vuillaume, many in our country do not even know what an orchestra is. People have begun to get very preoccupied with so many other things and don’t even notice all the beautiful music they are missing.” Vuillaume felt sad for Sir Braccio’s problem but he didn’t know what he could do to help.

Sir Braccio spoke again after a quiet moment. “Vuillaume. You are a special cat as you know, with special powers that could make things better. I need your help. I need for you to complete a difficult journey that will lead you to places you cannot imagine. The way will not be an easy one and you will need to persevere to reach the reward. And once you start on this path, you can never ever stop until you have met your goal.” Vuillaume was intrigued. “What’s in it for me? Will the journey be worth the effort?” “You cannot even imagine the joy it will bring you in so many ways. You will meet people from faraway places. You will travel around the world if you want. The music you hear will fill your heart, and the best part is that you will be a
better, stronger, and kinder person for all your effort. Are you with me? I need you to come with me soon.”

After hearing all this, the journey that Sir Braccio was inviting him to embark on seemed something vital. How could he refuse to help? “Yes. I will go.”

At this, the mist cloud suddenly began to billow up from the ground again and the wind began to blow. Sir Braccio’s cloak swirled and twirled around him. The earth beneath their feet emitted a low groan. Sir Braccio became animated. “Oh! It is time for me to go now. But I will be back tomorrow, and we will start on The Journey!” The mist cloud billowed out and rolled back down the street, carrying Sir Braccio with it, and then suddenly, all was still.

Vuillaume opened his eyes and looked around. His friends were still playing hopscotch as if nothing had happened. “C’mon Vuillaume! It’s your turn!” they called to him.
Lesson 1 - Kindness

The next day Vuillame awoke after a restless, dreamless night of sleep. He wasn’t sure if he had really experienced a visit from a Sir Braccio but he had his breakfast, got ready to go out to play and left the house for the day. It didn’t take him long to find his friends again and he started to play baseball with them.

Before long, he began to hear the same enchanting music that he had heard the day before, and when he turned to look down the street he could again see a large billowing cloud of mist rolling very slowly towards him. As the cloud got closer his friends faded into the background, and this time he heard his name called with instructions. “Vuillaume! Walk into the cloud!” It was Sir Braccio! He could see Sir Braccio in the mist sitting on top of something that undulated, riding the motion of the air. Bravely the little cat got up on his hind legs and walked into what turned out to be a cool, misty capsule that surrounded a red magic carpet. “Climb aboard! Here we gooooo!” Vuillaume stepped up, the carpet levitated and off they went.

It seemed like only a few minutes that they were flying through the air before the magic carpet bearing Vuillaume and Sir Braccio thumped to the ground and the two of them rolled off into the grass of a green meadow. The billowing cloud dissipated and they could see that the large meadow was surrounded by trees, and in the middle of the meadow was a very large sleeping lion. His breaths came in snorts and grunts as he lay there dreaming lion dreams. “Will he wake up?” Vuillaume nervously asked Sir Braccio. “Don’t worry, he cannot see us,” replied Sir Braccio. “Just… watch…” Out of the corner of his eye Vuillaume could see a very tiny gray mouse scurrying around the lion, looking for bits of food. Suddenly, the little mouse stumbled and fell against the lion’s gigantic nose! The lion woke with a start and jerked his head upright. “WHAT?!! Who is this that woke me UP??” he shouted, and with that he slammed his great paw
on the little mouse’s tail. “Please Mr. Lion! I was just searching for food for my family and I am ever so very sorry I woke you up!” the little mouse exclaimed. “I didn’t mean to! Please! Let me go!” “Well, I don’t know about THAT! You are a nuisance and you shouldn’t have waked me up. How dare you?!” The little mouse pleaded again, “Please just let me go! I promise you that someday I will help you out if you will just let me go today!” The lion mused on the image of such a little mouse helping such a big and important lion as he was. But the lion did have a kind heart. In the end, he did release the mouse and she thanked him profusely.

Sir Braccio looked at Villaume to see what he thought about what he had seen. Vuillaume thought, and then said, “I just don’t get it. Why did the lion decide to release the mouse? There isn’t any way that the mouse will ever be able to repay the favor.” Sir Braccio replied, “Lesson number 1. Always be kind to others. You never know what the future holds.” Villaume just shrugged.

By and by, Sir Braccio pulled out a picnic basket that seemed to materialize from nowhere. “Lunch?” he asked. “Please,” said Villaume and they ate in silence.

Before long, Mr. Lion got up from his spot and began to lumber towards the trees. Suddenly as he was walking, a net snapped up from the ground and lifted him up. It was a trap set by a hunter! He swung back and forth by a rope strung from the tree above him, a few inches off the ground. He struggled and struggled, but no matter how hard he tried he just could not get free. After an hour of struggling the little mouse appeared again, still searching for food. As she came out into the meadow she saw the lion hanging there. She scurried up and began to gnaw at the ropes that held the net together, and pretty soon she was able to free the lion! “You see Mr. Lion? I WAS able to help you after all!” said the mouse. The lion was thrilled to be free and started to cry, thanking the little mouse for saving his life.
Sir Braccio again turned to Vuillaume and asked, “So what have you learned?”

Vuillaume replied, “I can now see how always being kind to others is important.” “Wonderful!” replied Sir Braccio. “Now I want for you to reach a higher level of understanding. So that you never forget this lesson, I want you to sing about it, and play. Here is your ukulele!”

Lesson 1 – Kindness [Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star]³

“Life’s first lesson, as we live
To all others kindness give.
As we travel on our way,
We can make a better day.
Life’s first lesson, as we live
To all others kindness give.”

³ All songs in Appendix D are from Volume 1 of Suzuki Violin School. Lyrics and fingerings are my own.
Lesson 2 – Perseverance

The golden morning sun lit Vuillaume’s room and as he woke up he could hear the soft street noises outside. He didn’t remember getting home from yesterday’s trip with Sir Braccio but he could remember the words to the song that he had learned. “Life’s first lesson as we live, to all others kindness give…” The song drifted through his mind as he got up and had his breakfast. Then he was ready to go outside again to find his friends.

Today someone had brought a basketball so before long they were all playing a raucous game together. Vuillaume was ready to hear the music of Sir Braccio and every so often he would look down the street. Sure enough, faint music started to play just like a distant ice cream truck and billows of mist started to roll down the street. Vuillaume’s friends faded and quieted and Sir Braccio appeared, gesturing for Vuillaume to step up to the floating carpet. In a moment, they were off to another adventure.

Soon they arrived and landed on a dusty hill with little grass and no trees. The cloud billowing around them sank to the ground and calmed. A few yards in front of Vuillaume was an asphalt racetrack where a small crowd had gathered around a rabbit and a turtle who had on shirts with numbers, obviously contestants to be in an upcoming race. The rabbit had a beautiful, new shirt with a large reflective “13” on it, and the turtle had a clean but obviously old secondhand shirt with the number “7.” The crowd seemed excited about the race and clearly favored the rabbit who looked athletic and lean, and the poor turtle was off by himself on the side with no one talking to him. “Mr. Rabbit, you are the greatest runner ever!” someone exclaimed. “I can’t wait to see what your time will be. Probably a new World’s Record!” exclaimed another. Mr. Turtle was a good sport, and offered, “Mr. Rabbit really is a fine runner! I am just here to do the best that I can and it doesn’t matter who wins. Maybe I can learn from Mr. Rabbit!” No one heard him, but he kept his good attitude anyway.
Before long there was the crack of a pistol shot which was the signal to begin the race. Mr. Rabbit with his lean, long legs sprung into action and just to show off leapt over the first ten feet of the race, which caused the small crowd to cheer loudly. Mr. Turtle, coughing a little from the dust Mr. Rabbit had kicked up with his magnificent leap, started off awkwardly in his secondhand sneakers.

After leaving the cheering crowd behind, Mr. Rabbit looked back and sneered at how slowly Mr. Turtle was going. The track curved around a hill and then Mr. Rabbit was out of the view of the crowd. “Ho hum, what a drag. I don’t really have to do anything to win THIS race. Why don’t I just lie down here for a nap while Mr. Turtle catches up.” And he did.

Mr. Turtle did not get discouraged, even though he was quite obviously not the preferred contestant. He just kept plodding along, one foot in front of the other: left front… right rear… right front… left rear… and so on. He was not going to stop, no matter what. In due time, he came upon Mr. Rabbit sleeping behind the hill. Mr. Turtle was such a good sport, he tried to wake up Mr. Rabbit so that he could finish the race. But true to form, Mr. Rabbit felt himself superior. He told Mr. Turtle to go ahead, that he would have his win before Mr. Turtle could ever finish.

Mr. Turtle plodded on. Before long, the track had circled back to where the crowd was waiting and they began to cheer until they saw it was Mr. Turtle getting closer, and not Mr. Rabbit. The crowd fell silent. They could not believe that Mr. Turtle could actually win the race, and their favorite, Mr. Rabbit, was nowhere to be seen.

Sir Braccio saw what was happening and decided to step in. He raised his hands suddenly and then lowered them slowly to his sides, which had the effect of making himself visible as another member of the crowd. He walked up to them and said, “Mr. Turtle has run the good race
and fought the good fight. Clearly he is positioned to win this race by his own perseverance and effort. Let us grant him the respect he deserves!” There was a bit of mumbling in the crowd which began to turn into a “He’s right” here and a “Yes, probably so…” there. Then the mumbling turned to calling out, and then the calling out turned to outright cheering. The crowd became crazed with enthusiasm as Mr. Turtle ever so slowly made his way across the Finish Line. “Mr. Turtle Wins the Race! Hooray!!”

Quickly raising his hands above his head, Sir Braccio again went invisible to the crowd. “So. What have you learned today?” he asked Vuillaume. Vuillaume replied, “Well, Mr. Turtle has taught me that it is important to persevere. No... Matter... What...”

“You must now play and sing your lesson so that you will remember forever.”

Lesson 2 – Perseverance [Lightly Row]

```
E0 A2 A2 A3 A1 A1 A0 A1 A2 A3 E0 E0 E0 E0 A2 A2 A2 A3 A1 A1 A1 A1 A0 A2 A3 A2 A2 A2 A2

Per se vere, Per se vere, Bring succes ses ver y near. We can solve it, we can do it

A0 A2 E0 E0 A2 A2 A2 A1 A1 A1 A1 A1 A2 A3 A2 A2 A2 A2

If we al ways per se vere. When we are un sure and fear, make full ef fort

A2 A3 E0 E0 A2 A2 A2 A3 A1 A1 A1 A0 A2 E0 E0 A2 A2 A2

for a year. We can do it, we can solve it We must al ways per se vere.
```

“Persevere, persevere  Bring successes very near

We can solve it, we can do it  If we always persevere.
When we are unsure and fear, make full effort for a year.
We can do it, we can solve it. We must always persevere.”
Vuillaume was beginning to look forward to his daily meetings with Sir Braccio so when he woke up the next morning he eagerly ate his breakfast and ran out the front door. It was a sunny mid-summer day with big fluffy clouds. One of the clouds looked just like a dog he had seen in the neighborhood a few weeks back. Before he could find his friends, the billowing mist began to make its way down the street, and this time when it got close Vuillaume rushed inside with no hesitation and hopped on the magic carpet, and away they went.

The journey this time was a bit longer, and down below there were many lakes. Before long they came to rest in a field in the mountains. Vuillaume could see a pack of large dogs running together looking for food. One dog seemed independent and circled back to a cabin that the pack had passed on the way up the mountain. As the other dogs continued to run over a stream and up a steep hill and out of sight, the lone dog reappeared carrying what looked like a steak that he had stolen from the grill that was behind the cabin. He seemed very proud of his find and walked slowly so that the other dogs would not return to take his food. When he was sure they were gone, he walked towards a wide slow-moving stream intending to cross over and find a hiding place where he could eat his food in private. As he walked up to the stream he looked down, and lo and behold, there was another dog! The other dog stared back at him holding an even larger steak that looked very delicious. Dogs are prone to hasty decisions, so the first dog decided in a moment that he wanted to take the large steak from the other dog and run as fast as he could to find a place where he could have both. He lunged and snapped, something that had always seemed to work in the past, and his lovely steak fell out of his mouth and into the
It was then that he realized that it all had been an illusion. The other doggy that he saw when he looked down had been his own reflection. He sadly walked away, still very hungry.

Sir Braccio chuckled at the drama before him and then turned to Vuillaume. “What can we learn from this dog’s experience?” Vuillaume thought for a moment and then said, “The dog has learned a lesson about greed and happiness. He wanted to steal the steak that belonged to the other dog and he ended up losing his own. He should have been happy with what he had in the first place.” “Good!” replied Sir Braccio. “Time to play and sing.”

Lesson 3 – Be Happy with What You Have [Song of the Wind]

“Watch the dog he has some meat and now he wants some more!
Not his own but yours!
Now he snaps his meat which falls into the water, that’s too bad. Happy with his own is what he should have been before.”

Not his own but yours!
Now he snaps his meat which falls into the water, that’s too bad.
Happy with his own is what he should have been before.”
Lesson 4 – The Magic of Gratitude

Kaboom! A thunderclap woke Vuillaume from a deep sleep and he fell out of bed. It was morning and he had slept a little late, probably lulled by the musical plinking of the rain on his metal roof. He got dressed and ate his breakfast, then grabbed his umbrella and went outside to wait. Would Sir Braccio travel to see him in the rain?

Even though it was already drizzly and grey outside, pretty soon Villaume heard the music and saw the grey cloud of mist coming down his street. Sir Braccio looked a little soggy, but he greeted Villaume heartily and off they went to see what they could see.

The landing in the rain was a little mushy this time and when the mist cleared Vuillaume could see a rust red barn and a farmyard. “Go on, have a look around,” Sir Braccio urged. Vuillaume got off the magic carpet and walked a bit in the muddy yard. He decided it was maybe better to go inside the barn because the rain was making his fur frizzy, so he walked through the open door. As his eyes adjusted to the dim light, he began to be able to see a goose sitting on a nest on a raised wooden plank. She was as grey as the weather was outside that day and she was fat and healthy. When he came in, she got off her nest to nibble some corn that was on the dry floor of the barn. Vuillaume caught his breath when he saw that she had been sitting on a shining golden egg. What kind of goose could this be?? She must be a very special one.

Vuillaume heard footsteps behind him and remembered that he was invisible. He stepped to one side as the farmer came into the barn and walked up to the nest and picked up the golden egg. “Aint Mamie, is that the best y’can do for me today? You’ve been laying only one golden egg every day for a year” he addressed the goose. She looked at him with little interest and turned her attention back to the corn. The farmer shook his head and began to get frustrated, but Vuillaume had no idea why. “I told you that you better start doin’ better than that. One golden
egg a day isn’t going to pay for much. I’ve had about enuf.” Vuillaume watched carefully to see what the farmer would do next. He shuffled over to the opposite side of the barn and began to rummage in the corner for something. Shockingly, it turned out to be an ax. “OK, come here Aint Mamie. You and I need to go outside for a minute.” He gathered up the goose and walked out into the rain and the muddy farmyard. Before he knew what was happening, Vuillaume heard a crisp “chop!” He looked out to see what had happened and sadly, the farmer had dispatched the goose.

Vuillaume turned and went farther back into the barn to sit on a bale of hay. He couldn’t think what lesson this day had provided. Pretty soon he heard the old farmer muttering to himself. “Well, you got the better of me today Aint Mamie. I sure thought that you were hiding a bunch of those golden eggs inside. I sure could’a used ‘em. I guess there won’t be any more golden eggs for me now. I’m done for.” He shook his head sadly.

The farmer left and shuffled back inside his house and Vuillaume peered outside to make sure he was gone. When he was sure the farmer wouldn’t be back he ran over to where Sir Braccio waited. “Vuillaume, today’s lesson was difficult but important. What have you learned today?” Vuillaume replied, “Either it is important not to be a goose that lays golden eggs, or it is important not be greedy. The farmer could have gotten one golden egg every day, and now he will have none.” “Ah! Well my lesson today missed the mark a little.”

Sir Braccio continued, “Do you believe in spirits Vuillaume? I believe you do, because you are able see both the earth and the spirit world with your special eyes. One of the most powerful spirits is the Spirit of Gratitude. You can cast a spell and conjure him up in times of need and he will lead you to the realm of Abundance, a place where you can feel safe. The farmer could have invoked the Spirit of Gratitude and then things would have gone better for
him and his goose. Our song for today is actually a magic spell, and now I want you to play and sing the *Spirit of Gratitude* out into the open.”

Lesson 4 – The Magic of Gratitude [Go Tell Aunt Rhody]

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A2 A2 A1 A0 A0 A1 A1 A2 A1 A0 E0 E0 A3 A2 A2

Thankful and grateful, glad for all we have Thankful and grateful,

A1 A0 A1 A2 A0 A2 A2 A3 E0 E0 E1 E1 E0 A3 A2 A2 A2 A3 E0 E0

glad for all we have. There is a bun dance in our universe Appreciate all

E1 E1 E0 A2 A2 A1 A0 A0 A1 A1 A2 A1 A0

that we have. Thankful and grateful, glad for all we have

E0 E0 A3 A2 A2 A1 A0 A1 A2 A0

Thankful and grateful glad for what we have.
```

“Thankful and grateful, glad for all we have

Thankful and grateful, glad for all we have.

There is abundance in our universe

Appreciate all that we have.

Thankful and grateful, glad for all we have

Thankful and grateful, glad for what we have.”
Lesson 5 – No Cause to Celebrate

The next day Villaume again slept late. The sun rose into the sky and still he lay there dreaming about a beautiful sunny day spent with him playing on the banks of a pond filled with many tadpoles. He was reaching his hand into the cool water, catching them in his fingers when they started to shrivel and disappear. Music started to tickle his ears and he awoke with a start. He had almost overslept and already the billowing cloud was in front of his house! He quickly dressed and ran out without eating his breakfast.

“Come ahead Villaume! We are late” called Sir Braccio. They were immediately off to another adventure.

They arrived at a pond that was surrounded by sand and Vuillaume realized that it had been this pond that he had seen in his dream. There were beautiful red and orange prickly flowers that grew nearby and purple/dark blue mountains that seemed not too far away but probably were. The pink sand that he saw for miles was dotted with mirages, or images of water pools that did not exist. (He could tell these were mirages because of his special eyes.)

Villaume stepped out of his cloud and onto the sand. It was very hot because of the sun, which seemed closer than usual.

Walking to the pond he could hear the frogs talking to each other. “Well today is the big day. The sun is getting married and it’s time to celebrate!” There were other animals: a scorpion in his tuxedo, a grasshopper with a top hat, and a coyote who obviously hadn’t realized that this was a formal affair. He was wearing sneakers.

One very old bullfrog started to speak to the others in a commanding voice. “Do you all not realize that this marriage will probably be the end of us all? There is no reason to celebrate. Mr. Sun will be married, and then the next thing you know he will have children. It is already
much too hot, much too dry. Do you not realize that with all the little baby suns, that this pond will be a dried-up salt flat soon?” The others stopped croaking and began to think. They looked at the pond with all the little tadpoles in it and realized that what Great Granddaddy Bullfrog was saying was true. They started to cry.

At this point, Great Grandmamma Bullfrog came up to see what all the fuss was about. “Mr. Sun is getting married today. When Mr. Sun has his sun children, our pond will dry up! Our own children won’t be able to survive,” they cried. Great Grandmamma had a way about her and had lived long enough to know that not everything she heard was true. “My precious polliwogs. Stop crying. The good Lord has given us choices and we can make one choice right here. Yes, it is very dry here. Yes, it is even a dessert. But we were made to survive. It is time for us to plant trees around this pond so that the shade will protect us. And the trees will begin to cool our desert and pretty soon the rains that come every year will come again. Rest assured, we can take care of ourselves.” After a bit, even the most hysterical of the frogs had calmed down. Clearly it was not time to cry and panic. It was time to get busy and plant trees.

Vuillaume saw all of this and began to feel much better. Sir Braccio turned to Vuillaume and said simply, “What?” Understanding that was code for “What have you learned?” Vuillaume answered, “Firstly, we must be aware of what is happening so that we will know whether we should celebrate. Secondly, we must be willing to take action to make things better.” “Exactly. Now it is time for your daily song.”
Lesson 5 – No Cause to Celebrate [O Come Little Children]

“Let’s do what we can to take care of our land

Its beauty’s for everyone, work while we can.

No fires, no extinctions, polluting is wrong

Let’s take care of Earth, so it can sing its song.”
Lesson 6 – Always Tell the Truth

Villaume had traveled to several places with Sir Braccio, but he had not yet been to another big city like the one where he lived. It was time to see how other people do things.

The trip was a bit longer than usual the next day, but eventually the magic carpet landed in the middle of a sidewalk surrounded by tall buildings. There were people walking briskly in all directions, in a hurry to go… somewhere... Vuillaume stuck his foot out and stepped onto the cement. Looking around, he noticed a bench with some men sitting together and another out in front speaking animatedly about a trip he had taken recently.

“Yep. My trip to Rhodes was really something.” The man stuck his thumbs in the armholes of his vest and threw his chest out with pride. “It was the greatest, the best trip ever! And everyone was amazed at what I could do,” he said. “Why, have you ever heard of The Colossus of Rhodes? When I left, they were talking about building a statue just like that of ME!”

He strutted around a bit in front of the others for affect. Clearly impressed with himself he continued, “Yes sir! As a matter of fact, the week I was there they were having tryouts for the Olympic team. There was a Broad Jump competition, and I jumped 30 feet! Everyone saw it. So many people said they had never seen anything like it before!”

His audience sat still, and no one spoke. A bubble appeared over one man’s head and the word “Gasbag” became visible.

Finally, one of the men in the crowd spoke. “Well, I think that is just amazing Mr. Poser. We’d all like to see you jump like that so we can be amazed too!”

“Yeah! Why, you could do that right here, right here on the sidewalk. There’s a good 30 feet to the next street and plenty of room. C’mon! Please show us how! I bet you’d look just like a grasshopper!” That made everyone laugh. Everyone except Mr. Poser. “Well, I don’t know. I, uh, I don’t see how I could do that, seeing as how this is not Rhodes.” The men continued to urge
him on, until finally Mr. Poser had to tell the truth. “Well. Maybe it wasn’t thirty feet. Maybe more like… five…” Everyone got quiet again and bit by bit the crowd dispersed. Mr. Poser was left alone on the sidewalk to think about how he had tried to deceive the others and how it had not ever worked.

“That lesson was very simple. Always tell the truth,” said Vuillaume. Sir Braccio gave him a thumbs up and said nothing.

Lesson 6 – Always Tell the Truth [May Song]

“Truth is best in all that we do
I am truthful. You too.
Fibbers are found out you will see.
Honesty’s the best policy.
Truth is best in all that we do
I am truthful. You too.”
Lesson 7 – Be Watchful

The next morning Villause woke up and decided to make himself some blueberry muffins. It was late summer and soon the fall would be here with cooler weather. Villause began to imagine the cold of winter and started to crave seeing snow once again. So when Sir Braccio made his appearance, Villause asked if they could travel somewhere that had snow on the ground and Sir Braccio, sitting in the middle of his billowing mist cloud sat thinking for a minute. “I have an idea. Hop aboard!” Villause obliged, and they zipped off into the sky.

When they landed and the mist cleared, Villause could see that Sir Braccio had indeed taken them to a place with snow on the ground. There was snow as far as the eye could see and it almost blinded the little cat. After his eyes adjusted, he noticed there was a farmer who was walking in his boots through a large open field of snow towards a barbed wire fence. When he got close to the fence he stopped short as if he had seen something. He stooped down and said, “Hello there little guy.” He reached into the snow bank and pulled out something that looked like a frozen piece of rope. Villause looked closer and was shocked to see that it was a snake! His mother had always taught him to avoid snakes because some of them are poisonous. For reasons unclear to Villause, the farmer took it upon himself to place the frozen snake inside his coat, seemingly to thaw it out, then he turned and started walking back towards his house in the distance.

Villause followed the farmer and wondered what would happen next. As they got closer to the farmer’s house, it looked like everything would be alright. Then suddenly, the farmer’s hand jerked up to his coat where he had placed the snake. After a struggle, the farmer’s knees collapsed and he slowly fell to the ground. Terribly distressed, the farmer turned to the snake who had emerged from his coat. “I was rescuing you from the cold. Why have you bitten
me?” “Sir. When you picked me up you knew that I was a snake, with all the characteristics of a snake. My nature is to bite you. What did you think would happen??” The poor farmer lay on the ground waiting for help and soon his wife who had been expecting him to be back earlier came outside. Seeing immediately what had happened, she loaded him into their truck and rushed him to the hospital where he would be able to recover.

Vuillaume turned to Sir Braccio and said, “Even I know not to pick up a snake.” “But what is the deeper meaning here? What have you learned?” Sir Braccio asked. Vuillaume replied, “That a snake is a snake. A snake cannot easily change his nature.” “Correct!”
“Once there was peace in the world long ago
Long, long ago long, long ago.
No need for guns, nor for arrows nor bows
Long, long ago long ago.
Serpents had legs, ankles, feet, and some toes
Some say God’s wrath made them look like a hose(!)
Once there was peace in the world long ago
Long, long ago long ago.”
Lesson 8 – Gluttony

The next day when Sir Braccio came, Vuillaume knew something was up. When the billowing cloud arrived and the mist parted, there was no magic carpet. Sir Braccio was sitting in a small submarine. “Hey ho, let’s go!” he called and Vuillaume jumped in to join him.

They flew up in the air and sped towards the beach. When they got to the beach they did not stop, but continued a few miles out over the ocean. Suddenly the mist parted, and the submarine did a steep dive into the water. “We won’t actually stay so far out, but I wanted to give my submarine a try,” said Sir Braccio. The submarine made its way back toward the beach passing all sorts of strange of sea creatures. There was an octopus, a sea urchin, a large jellyfish, and even a shark. What an amazing sight for Vuillaume! As they made their way back toward the shoreline, they came across a huge colony of oysters. Vuillaume had seen his family eat oysters many times, but he had never seen where they lived nor actually tried to eat one. The submarine stopped at the beach and Vuillaume stepped out onto the sand, and he immediately noticed a mouse who was running toward the water. The mouse had seen one of the oysters that had washed up on the beach, and even though he had just eaten a huge meal, with chocolate cake for dessert, he wanted more. The oyster seemed like just the ticket.

As the mouse got closer, the oyster yawned a big yawn with his shell opened all the way wide. The mouse saw his chance and jumped on the soft, slippery body of the oyster, hoping to finish him off. At that, the oyster started to close his jaws, faster and faster, and then the mouse began to think the better of it. But the mouse was so full of food he couldn’t move very quickly, and the oyster snapped his shell shut around the mouse! Vuillaume waited to see if the mouse would get away, but sadly for the mouse, it was the end of the road…
Sir Braccio shook his head and looked at Vuillaume. “I will tell you myself the moral of this story because you already know. Don’t be a glutton.”

Lesson 8 – Gluttony [Allegro]

“Pop-corn Pop-corn, bubblicious Pop corn
Pop-corn Pop-corn caramel and fries!
Pop-corn Pop-corn, sticky buttered Pop corn
Pop-corn Pop-corn, soda and moon pies!
Belgian waffles, maple syrup,
Chocolate Italian ice. [urp…]
Pop-corn Pop-corn, let’s not eat the Pop-corn.
We can eat much better if we try.”
[At this point in our story, the parent will need to set up the ukulele with additional stickers for the D and G strings. These stickers should be the same color as the stickers on the A and E strings.]

![Diagram of ukulele string placement]

**Figure 19. Sticker Placement for D and G Strings**

Lesson 9 – Be Healthy

The next day Sir Braccio did not come. Vuillaume had gotten up, had his breakfast, and was waiting in the street. The other children went up to him and asked him to come and play, but Vuillaume was sure that Sir Braccio would come and take him on another adventure. After a few hours of waiting, he went back inside to have a snack and then he began to feel sad. What if Sir Braccio never came back? What would he do then? He was afraid that he had not learned his lessons well enough, so he took out his ukulele and played and sang, and sang and played, until
he knew everything by heart. Little did he know that this was exactly what Sir Braccio had intended for him to do.

After one week of extra hard practice and review, Vuillaume was sitting with his ukulele and he looked out the window. Lo and behold, there was the familiar grey mist cloud coming down the street! He hadn’t even noticed the familiar beautiful music because he was practicing his pieces so well.

He ran out into the street to greet Sir Braccio. “Where have you been?” he cried. “I thought you were never coming back!” “Of course I am back,” Sir Braccio laughed. “I just needed for you to be very well-prepared. Today we will start a new phase of your training and there will be new notes to learn. We are going to use the same fingers but now place them on the D and G strings. From now on, you won’t always have words to your songs. The songs will be a bit more difficult and you will need to listen to some recordings so that you can understand. Some of your pieces will be played by a very talented friend of mine, Signora Violino con la Mentoniera. [Future performances of songs should be demonstrated by the teacher (Signora Violino) using the bow on the violin, if not already.] You have learned enough that you will be able to follow her example.” Vuillaume was very excited.

“First things first. I have two more songs for you and these are songs that will help you to be healthy and strong as you continue learning” said Sir Braccio. “We must always eat properly and get enough exercise. Here are two songs to help you with these. Please study them well and play them many times.”
“If you ask do they say I eat sweets every day, they will say “Not today!” they will say “Not today!”

If you ask do they say I eat sweets every day, they will say “Not today! Not today!”

I have nuts, grain and corn, as for sweets, they’re forsworn.

I eat vegetables, fruits, and then maybe souffle...

If you ask do they say I eat sweets every day, they will say “Not today! Not today!”
“Exercise, exercise, makes us all strong. Exercise, exercise, doesn’t take long.

Take a walk, take a swim, play with your friends. Play a game outside or go to the gym.

We all need to get up and move. Couch potatoes earn no halos…

Exercise, exercise, makes us all strong. Exercise, exercise. Play some ping pong!”

“Now that you have learned all your lessons well, I am going to teach you what is known as a ‘two octave G major scale.’ You will need to mark a few of new notes on your fingerboard. The stickers that you use will need to be a different color. What’s your favorite color, Vuillaume?” “Green!” “Alright then, the new notes will be green. Please look at my diagram:”
Figure 20. Sticker Placement for AL2, EL2, GH3, AHE, and E4 [new stickers should be a different color from the original stickers]

“The lowest two green notes closest to the tuning pegs will be called ‘A low 2’ and ‘E low 2’ or ‘AL2’ and ‘EL2’ when we need them. When we speak of ‘low 2’ it means that your first and second fingers touch together.”

Play G Scale:
G0, G1, G2, G3, D0, D1, D2, D3, A0, A1, AL2 (low 2), A3, E0, E1, EL2 (low 2).

“Have you ever ‘scaled a mountain’ Vuillaume?” “Yes” he replied. “This ‘scale’ is how we climb up the notes on the fingerboard. As you can see, some notes are close together and some are wide apart. Just like when we climb a mountain, not all steps are the same. We will be using this new collection of notes to make music.”

[Listen to recording of G two octave scale here]
Sir Braccio continued, “Learning how to play difficult pieces is sort of like learning to play baseball. You must practice every day with the intention of getting better. Sometimes you will need to practice just one finger motion over and over until you get it. Are you ready to learn?”

“Of course!” exclaimed Vuillaume, and he meant it with all his heart. “Wonderful! Then I will be back tomorrow and we will continue our lessons then.”
Lesson 10 – The Storm

As he promised, Sir Braccio returned the next day with his magic carpet and Vuillaume climbed aboard. This time it seemed like the carpet was going way too fast and Vuillaume had to hold on tight. In the distance, he could see big black clouds and the carpet was headed right for them! As the carpet went faster and faster and they got closer, Vuillaume began to hear thunder and see big bolts of blue and yellow lightning jumping between the clouds and he began to be very afraid. A huge “Boom!” rocked them from side to side. The carpet plunged forward, right into one of the huge clouds and the wind began to blow very hard, almost blowing Vuillaume off the carpet. He stuck his little claws deep into the material, stiffened his legs, and puffed his fur out. He started to hear a roar like a freight train and he looked directly down into a swirling mass of air with lightning bolts flying off the sides. It was a huge tornado!! Vuillaume had never been so frightened in his life! In that moment of great fear, time slowed down and he thought, “Why did I come on this trip?? Will I ever see my family again??”

It seemed to take forever to come to the other side of the storm but finally the carpet popped out of the mighty cloud, and they began to leave the storm behind. The blue sky came back and the wind quieted. Vuillaume could hear the birds singing as the carpet slowed and then gently came to rest right in front of his own house!

“I thought that storm would be the end of us!” said Vuillaume, now a bit more calm. Sir Braccio spoke, “Vuillaume. Have you ever been through a nightmare, one that was worse than you could ever imagine? And then waked up the next day to find out that everything that you thought would be the end of you turned out to be all right?” “Yes.” Well that’s today’s lesson. Sometimes we think that the end of the world is coming because everything seems so awful. We become terrified and upset, and we can’t see how things can change. And then many, many times… things resolve. The worst that we thought would happen, didn’t happen. Please
remember this lesson Vuillaume, and be aware of the times when what you thought what would happen did not happen. Count those times… and remember.”

Here is the song for today:

Lesson 10 – The Storm [Etude]
Lesson 11 – Have a Good Attitude

The next day Vuillaume woke up feeling energized from the day before. He was so happy that things seemed so much better today by comparison. If they had been smashed by the storm of yesterday, things would have been very different. He went outside to play and soon met up with his friends.

Most of his friends were very nice but he had one friend who didn’t like much of anything and her name was Ann Tippeth. Ann came from a pretentious family and she felt the need to be above all the other children. None of the toys that the other children had were ever good enough for Ann. Vuillaume was happy when Sir Braccio came to take him off somewhere because anywhere was better than being around Ann.

The weather was much better as they sailed along, and by and by a beautiful vineyard came into view spread out below them on a hill. They landed softly and Vuillaume eagerly jumped off the magic carpet and made his way into the rows of purple grapes gently swaying in the breeze. Suddenly he heard a rustle behind him and when he turned there was a red fox who looked very hungry and thin. He was weakly panting in the summer heat and looked tired from exertion. After a few minutes he stood up, gathered himself, and then leapt up as far as he could, clearly trying to get a bite of the grapes. He jumped up over and over, but no matter how hard he tried he just couldn’t manage to grab any of the succulent fruits. Finally he sat back down dejectedly muttering to himself, “well, I didn’t want any of those old nasty grapes anyway. They aren’t any good and probably sour to boot.” With that the fox slunk back down the row of the vineyard and made his way back down the hill, muttering all the way.
“I don’t like his attitude,” said Vuillaume. “He reminds me of Ann Tippeth. If someone shows up with a new toy, Ann always has something negative to say about it.” “Precisely,” replied Sir Braccio. “And no one likes a sore loser.”

When Vuillaume arrived back home, Sir Braccio reminded him that he needed to listen to his new piece of the day, and that he now needs to listen to other classical violin music recordings as well. Vuillaume agreed to both listen and practice, and then he went inside to work.
Lesson 11 – Have a Good Attitude [Minuet 1]
Lesson 12 – The Sticks: One Step at a Time

The day began as usual with Vuillaume waking up, getting breakfast, and going outside to play. As he played he watched down the street for the familiar cloud of billowing mist and listened for the music, but today was different. In the distance, he saw Sir Braccio walking down the street. Vuillaume knew that no one else could see Sir Braccio so he broke away from the crowd of children and walked quickly down the street to find out what was going on. As he hurried to Sir Braccio he could see that he had a small armload of sticks that he was carrying. As he got closer, Sir Braccio stopped and gestured for him to follow, and he turned a quarter-turn and walked towards the forest that was nearby.

Once they were both out of earshot of the other children, Vuillaume asked Sir Braccio, “What is happening? Where are we going?” to which he replied “To get more wood…” Vuillaume followed him until they got to the forest where Sir Braccio collected thirty more fresh branches. Then he turned to Vuillaume and handed him the entire bunch. “Break these in half,” he commanded. Vuillaume took the wood in his hands and twisted. Nothing broke. He took the bunch in two hands and tried to break them over his knee. Nothing broke. Finally, he took the sticks over to a large oak tree and tried to snap them in half by pushing them against the tree. Again, the sticks remained whole. Sir Braccio then said, “Alright, so now try to break just one stick.” Vuillaume took one stick and it snapped easily. “Good. Break another.” Vuillaume took another and broke it, and seeing where this was going, continued to break one stick at a time. Soon the entire bunch of sticks lay broken on the ground. “What have you learned, Vuillaume?” Vuillaume replied, “It is much easier to complete a job if you go step by step.” “Excellent! Now I have another, more difficult song for you to learn. Please use the principle that you just learned as you study it.”
Lesson 13 – Persistence

That last song that Vuillaume was learning turned out to be difficult so he decided he should study it for at least three weeks or more before learning another lesson with Sir Braccio. He mostly stayed in his room and used the principle that he had just learned about, of breaking just one stick at a time. Before long after taking just one small problem at a time, he was playing the song pretty well.

As he sat in his room practicing, he heard a sound outside his window and noticed a narrow-necked pitcher that he had left outside on a table. It had been dry and not much rain had fallen lately since autumn was coming, but there must have been a little rainwater in the bottom of the pitcher and a crow was pecking at it, trying to get a drink. “Clink, clink clink, plink..” The crow pecked and pecked, but her bill was just not long enough to reach. “Poor bird,” thought Vuillaume, but he didn’t let the distraction stop him from practicing his song. After awhile, the bird flew away.

After about ten minutes, the crow returned and this time she had a pebble in her beak. To Vuillaume’s surprise, the crow dropped the pebble into the pitcher. A “Poink!” sounded as the pebble fell to the bottom. Vuillaume thought it strange that the crow should behave like that, but soon the bird flew off and Vuillaume was back at his practicing again. A few more minutes went by and sure enough the crow returned with another pebble, and another. The crow must have brought more than two dozen pebbles. Vuillaume watched to see what would happen next.

The crow came with another pebble, and then reached her bill into the neck of the pitcher. It was then that Vuillaume began to understand what inspired the bird to work so hard for so long. The water level in the pitcher had risen as the pebbles were dropped in, and now the bird could get a drink!
“The next time I see Sir Braccio I must tell him about the crow! I guess we can learn things from everyone.”

Lesson 13 – Persistence [Minuet 3]
Lesson 14 - Flexibility

At last it was time for Vuillaume to meet with Sir Braccio again, so on an especially crisp fall morning Vuillaume awoke and jumped out of bed and hurried to the breakfast nook where he had some oatmeal and fruit. Then he ran outside to meet the billowing cloud that was already coming down the street. When he got close he didn’t even stop but ran directly inside to the magic carpet. And away they went.

They flew for a long time and finally came to rest on the banks of a very wide river with a reed marsh on one side near one very large ash tree. Vuillaume watched for a moment before getting out because he heard voices but did not see anyone. He could hear a conversation which was more like a mournful song, and it went something like this, “We’re so tired, there’s no denial. Maybe we should rest awhile. In the breeze our days we spend, and for ourselves we cannot fend.” It turned out to be the reeds who were singing and it was clear that the blustery breeze was bending them this way and that. Another much louder voice started to speak and said, “Poor reeds! Your lives are so sad. You bend this way and that because you are weak, and not big and strong as I am.” It was the large ash tree responding to the reeds. “I never bend, no matter how much wind there is. For I am the King!” The reeds were too tired to argue with this, but just kept floating in the direction of the breeze. Vuillaume looked back at Sir Braccio, not sure what to think. Sir Braccio looked up to the sky, and then he slowly started to raise his hands. With this gesture, the wind got stronger and stronger. Vuillaume looked up the river and in the distance he could see the grass on the banks of the river beginning to flatten in waves. The wind was invisible but it was possible to see where the wind began by the way that the grass looked as it bent down in response. As the wind reached where Vuillaume stood, the reeds flattened out to
the surface of the water. The mighty ash tree stood its ground, fighting vigorously at first. As the wind got stronger, its branches started to break and fly away down the river and leaves were falling everywhere. Vuillaume felt rather than heard a very long, deep groan that sounded like a million bees and then he saw the tree beginning to lean; then there was a “crack!” almost like a lightning strike, and the great ash tree broke in half at the trunk and fell with a mighty “Boom!” to the ground. Immediately, the wind began to ease and the reeds began to go upright again and then it all became still.

Villaume’s eyes were wide as saucers. He had never seen anything like that before! His eyes traveled from the great ash tree, now lying on the ground, to the reeds who were evidently doing fine as they were once again upright. Bit by bit they started to moan mournfully and wave again, just as they had before. Their flexibility had saved them from damage but the rigid tree had snapped in the wind and fallen to the ground.

Vuillaume said to Sir Braccio, “It is better to be flexible, isn’t it. Otherwise, we could break in half with the winds of circumstance.” Sir Braccio nodded.
Lesson 14 – Flexibility [Gavotte]
Lesson 14 – continued

\[ \text{D3 A1 A3 E0 A3 A3 AL2 AL2 A1 A1 A0 A0 AL2 E0} \]

\[ \text{A3 A1 D2 D3 AL2 A0 D1 D2 D3 EL2 D3} \]
Lesson 15 – A Trickster is Easily Tricked

It was now the middle of autumn and there was a definite chill in the air. The year was growing old and soon winter would come with its cold winds and snow. Vuillaume had learned a lot from Sir Braccio, but mostly he hadn’t noticed until lately that the wizard seemed to be speaking slower and walking a bit more unsteadily. Did wizards grow old too? It was a troubling thought.

Vuillaume went outside to see if Sir Braccio would come today because he wanted to go on more adventures and learn more. Pretty soon the billowing cloud started down the street and Vuillaume greeted Sir Braccio with a smile and a wave. “Where to today, Sir Braccio?” “We will go on one more adventure, but Vuillaume, I must tell you that this may be the last. At least for awhile.” Vuillaume didn’t like to hear this very well but he said nothing and climbed onto the magic carpet.

They flew in silence this time, over mountains and forests, and even over the North Pole. They flew to a different time zone where it was early evening. When they landed, it was in the pasture of a farm where one tree stood in the middle of the grass surrounded by rolling hills. The sun was setting. An old hen was flying up into the branches of the tree to go to sleep for the evening when a fox appeared in the meadow and walked up to the base of the tree for a chat. “Hellooo!” the fox called to the hen. “Have you heard the wonderful news? All the other animals who were formerly enemies have gotten together and called a truce, so now we have all decided to stop fighting. You and I are now friends!” The hen eyed the fox with a dull look. The fox began again perkily. “Your family and my family are going to forget their differences and all be friends! I cannot wait to give you a hug! Come on down so we can embrace, sister!” The hen answered, stretching her wings, “Well that is just wonderful news and I am so delighted.” She
stood up on her toes and stretched her neck as if looking at something far away. “What is it you see?” asked the fox. “Um. Well it looks like we will have some company soon because I see a couple of dogs coming our way. And they look really big! They must have heard the good news and want to give you a hug too.” The fox began to look around anxiously, and then suddenly took off at a dead run through the pasture. “Wait! Where are you going? All they want is a hug!” cried the hen, but the fox was already out of sight. When the hen was sure that the fox was gone, she tucked her beak under her wing, drifted off to sleep, and began to snore.

Villaume admired the wily hen for getting rid of the fox who had only wanted to eat her. He looked at Sir Braccio who was leaning on a fencepost. He looked tired. “Well, I learned a lesson today about tricksters. I see that tricksters are the first to be tricked themselves!” Sir Braccio gave a tired smile. “That’s very good Vuillaume. You have learned well. Let’s go home now.”

It was another long trip home, all in silence. The clear blue sky, the crisp air of fall and the golden sunset should have made for a happier day, but Sir Braccio had said he would be away for awhile after this trip. Finally they arrived and Vuillaume began walking towards his house. He turned back once more to look at Sir Braccio. “Please tell me why we will not be meeting again for awhile, Sir Braccio?” There was a pause, and then Sir Braccio spoke slowly. “Vuillaume. You are my beloved student and you have learned well. I must tell you something important.” Vuillaume waited.

“Do you remember long ago, when you heard an orchestra concert and you wished you could play the violin?” he asked. Vuillaume thought about it and remembered. Sir Braccio continued, “Well, I am actually not a wizard.” With that, Sir Braccio faded and became opaque. Vuillaume could began to see the outline of a violin where Sir Braccio had just stood! “In truth, I
am a violin and not a wizard. What you probably don’t realize is that our long journey has been a preparation for you to study the violin. If you pick up a violin today, you will be able to understand and even play a bit. Your path to violin playing will be smoothed and you may even become a professional violinist one day.”

“One more thing that I must tell you. We know that there are many, many people in the world and sometimes we may feel like what we do doesn’t matter, that our behavior and our choices do not matter. We are one of so many and sometimes we feel insignificant and invisible.” Vuillaume nodded slightly. He often felt that he was unimportant. Sir Braccio looked him directly in his eyes and continued, “You DO matter, Vuillaume. Your behavior, your choices, everything about you is important. You have the power to change the world with your choices, and there are so many changes that need to happen now. You must feel this power in the very center of your being, and you must always choose wisely. If you know that you are important and you always choose to do what is best for everyone, others will follow your example. Always be kind, be respectful of others. You never know what troubles they may have. Please promise me that you will always remember this.” Vuillaume said, “I will always remember this and the lessons I have learned, and I promise you that I will always choose wisely.” “Thank you, Vuillaume. Now I must go.”

And with that Sir Braccio began to fade into complete transparency. The misty cloud Vuillaume had often traveled inside began to dissipate and in a few moments there was no trace of it, nothing to indicate that this had been anything but a dream. A gentle breeze rustled the dry leaves, sweetening the air with the faint smell of autumn, and ripe acorns fell from a nearby oak tree onto the street with a soft clattering sound. The last rays of a beautiful fall sunset cast a golden glow into the blue sky.
Vuillaume felt very sad that he wouldn’t see Sir Braccio for awhile. Or maybe ever again. He would always remember his lessons though, and he would choose his path wisely. And he would always remember that he *is* important…
Lesson 15 – Farewell Song [Happy Farmer]

Farewell! Goodbye! We mustn’t ever cry. We’re off to better things on that we can rely. Farewell! Goodbye! We mustn’t ever cry. We’re off to better things on that we can rely. Respect for all, the road we take is high. Farewell! Goodbye! We mustn’t ever cry. We’re off to better things on that we can rely. Respect for all, the road we take is high. Farewell! Goodbye! We mustn’t ever cry. We’re off to better things on that we can rely!
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May 6, 2021

PI Name: Nancy Ditto
Co-Investigators:
Advisor and/or Co-PI: Janet Page
Submission Type: Initial
Title: The Effect of the Pandemic on Violin Students and Teachers
IRB ID: #PRO-FY2021-172
Exempt Approval: May 5, 2021

The University of Memphis Institutional Review Board, FWA00006815, has reviewed your submission in accordance with all applicable statuses and regulations as well as ethical principles.

Approval of this project is given with the following obligations:

1. When the project is finished a completion submission is required
2. Any changes to the approved protocol requires board approval prior to implementation
3. When necessary submit an incident/adverse events for board review
4. Human subjects training is required every 2 years and is to be kept current at citiprogram.org.

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