The NOTEWORTHY

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Coach's Comments

Semester I has now officially ended, culminating in our very successful Winter Member Recital of solos in preparation for school Solo & Ensemble Festivals and college scholarship auditions. No one played perfectly, including me, but this was a good opportunity to see where we are in our preparations for our upcoming performances and auditions.

In light of such improvements, our first Coaching Session of Semester II will focus on evaluating our Recital performance, both audio and video, and discussing what we need to do to improve before our next performance. Come prepared to find three good things you did, and three things you need to improve upon – and we'll be specific.

Because this session is also the first session of February, we will also be passing off rhythms and scales exercises for points. This is a great opportunity to start off the Semester with a good score! Remember to also keep track of any extra music activities during your week off to add to your total.

Semester II begins the week of February 8th-11th, and I am assuming everyone is keeping their same time, so call or email if you'd like to change your time before we start up again (you can always change later if needed). Coaching Fees will also be due: $100.00 if you are paying monthly, or $360.00 if you'd like to pay for the entire 4-month semester and receive the 10% discount. Many of you also are receiving a new method book, and that amount will also be due. If you are paying via PayPal Invoicing please let me know how much to charge you before I send out invoices on Friday, February 5th.

Semester II will run for 16 sessions, with our Spring Festival Recital of small ensembles performing "fun" music taking place on Sunday, May 22nd at 6:00 pm; followed by a final follow-up session the week of May 23rd-26th. We will also have a week off for Spring Break March 28th-31st. In preparation for the Recital, the two weeks before will be scheduled in a modified fashion: everyone participating in the recital will have one Coaching Session and two rehearsals with ensembles during those two weeks. The specific schedule will be set up once we determine ensemble membership, and music pieces, in March.

So keep working on your music, and I'll see you soon!

Is Music the Key to Success?

"Condoleezza Rice trained to be a concert pianist. Alan Greenspan, former chairman of the Federal Reserve, was a professional clarinet and saxophone player. The hedge fund billionaire Bruce Kovner is a pianist who took classes at Juilliard.

"Multiple studies link music study to academic achievement. But what is it about serious music training that seems to correlate with outsize success in other fields?

"The connection isn't a coincidence. I know because I asked. I put the question to top-flight professionals in industries from tech to finance to media, all of whom had serious (if often little-known) past lives as musicians. Almost all made a connection between their music training and their professional achievements.

"The phenomenon extends beyond the math-music association. Strikingly, many high achievers told me music opened up the pathways to creative thinking. And their experiences suggest that music training sharpens other qualities: Collaboration. The ability to listen. A way of thinking that weaves together disparate ideas. The power to focus on the present and the future simultaneously.

"Will your school music program turn your kid into a Paul Allen, the billionaire co-founder of Microsoft (guitar)? Or a Woody Allen (clarinet)? Probably not. These are singular achievers. But the way these and other visionaries I spoke to process music is intriguing. As is the way many of them apply music's lessons of focus and discipline into new ways of thinking and communicating — even problem solving.

"Look carefully and you'll find musicians at the top of almost any industry. Woody Allen performs weekly with a jazz band. The television broadcaster Paula Zahn (cello) and the NBC chief White House correspondent Chuck Todd (French horn) attended college on music scholarships; NBC's Andrea Mitchell trained to become a professional violinist. Both Microsoft's Mr. Allen and the venture capitalist Roger McNamee have rock bands. Larry Page, a co-founder of Google, played saxophone in high school. Steven Spielberg is a clarinetist and son of a pianist. The former World Bank president James D. Wolfensohn has played cello at Carnegie Hall.

"It's not a coincidence," says Mr. Greenspan, who gave up jazz clarinet but still dabbles at the baby grand in his living room. "I can tell you as a statistician, the probability that that is mere chance is extremely small." The cautious former Fed chief adds, "That's all that you can judge about the facts. The crucial question is: why does that connection exist?"

"Paul Allen offers an answer. He says music "reinforces your confidence in the ability to create." Mr. Allen began playing the violin at age 7 and switched to the guitar as a teenager. Even in the early days of Microsoft, he would pick up his guitar at the end of marathon days of programming. The music was the emotional analog to his day job, with each channeling a different type of creative impulse. In both, he says, "something is pushing you to look beyond what currently exists and express yourself in a new way."

"Mr. Todd says there is a connection between years of practice and competition and what he calls the "drive for perfection." The veteran advertising executive Steve Hayden credits his background as a cellist for his most famous work, the Apple "1984" commercial depicting rebellion against a dictator. "I was thinking of Stravinsky when I came up with that idea," he says. He adds that his cello performance background helps him work collaboratively: "Ensemble playing trains you, quite literally, to play well with others, to know when to solo and when to follow."

"For many of the high achievers I spoke with, music functions as a "hidden language," as Mr. Wolfensohn calls it, one that enhances the ability to connect disparate or even contradictory ideas. When he ran the World Bank, Mr. Wolfensohn traveled to more than 100 countries, often taking in local performances (and occasionally joining in on a borrowed cello), which helped him understand "the culture of people, as distinct from their balance sheet."

"It's in that context that the much-discussed connection between math and music resonates most. Both are at heart modes of expression. Bruce Kovner, the founder of the hedge fund Caxton Associates and chairman of the board of Juilliard, says he sees similarities between his piano playing and investing strategy; as he says, both "relate to pattern recognition, and some people extend these paradigms across different senses."

"Mr. Kovner and the concert pianist Robert Taub both describe a sort of synesthesia — they perceive patterns in a three-dimensional way. Mr. Taub, who gained fame for his Beethoven recordings and has since founded a music software company, MuseAmi, says that when he performs, he can "visualize all of the notes and their interrelationships," a skill that translates intellectually into making "multiple connections in multiple spheres."

"For others I spoke to, their passion for music is more notable than their talent. Woody Allen told me bluntly, "I'm not an accomplished musician. I get total traction from the fact that I'm in movies."

"Mr. Allen sees music as a diversion, unconnected to his day job. He likens himself to "a weekend tennis player who comes in once a week to play. I don't have a particularly good ear at all or a particularly good sense of timing. In comedy, I've got a good instinct for rhythm. In music, I don't, really."

"Still, he practices the clarinet at least half an hour every day, because wind players will lose their embouchure (mouth position) if they don't: "If you want to play at all you have to practice. I have to practice every single day to be as bad as I am." He performs regularly, even touring internationally with his New Orleans jazz band. "I never thought I would be playing in concert halls of the world to 5,000, 6,000 people," he says. "I will say, quite unexpectedly, it enriched my life tremendously."

"Music provides balance, explains Mr. Wolfensohn, who began cello lessons as an adult. "You aren't trying to win any races or be the leader of this or the leader of that. You're enjoying it because of the satisfaction and joy you get out of music, which is totally unrelated to your professional status."

"For Roger McNamee, whose Elevation Partners is perhaps best known for its early investment in Facebook, "music and technology have converged," he says. He became expert on Facebook by using it to promote his band, Moonalice, and now is focusing on video by live-streaming its concerts. He says musicians and top professionals share "the almost desperate need to dive deep." This capacity to obsess seems to unite top performers in music and other fields.

Ms. Zahn remembers spending up to four hours a day "holed up in cramped practice rooms trying to master a phrase" on her cello. Mr. Todd, now 41, recounted in detail the solo audition at age 17 when he got the second-highest mark rather than the highest mark — though he still was principal horn in Florida's All-State Orchestra.

" 'I've always believed the reason I've gotten ahead is by outworking other people,' he says. It's a skill learned by "playing that solo one more time, working on that one little section one more time," and it translates into "working on something over and over again, or double-checking or triple-checking." He adds, "There's nothing like music to teach you that eventually if you work hard enough, it does get better. You see the results."

"That's an observation worth remembering at a time when music as a serious pursuit — and music education — is in decline in this country.

"Consider the qualities these high achievers say music has sharpened: collaboration, creativity, discipline and the capacity to reconcile conflicting ideas. All are qualities notably absent from public life. Music may not make you a genius, or rich, or even a better person. But it helps train you to think differently, to process different points of view — and most important, to take pleasure in listening."

Is Music the Key to Success? by Joanne Lipman. The New York Times, Sunday Review, Opinion, page SR9. October 12, 2013. Accessed February 1, 2015.

Media Center

Print, Digital and Internet Extras

Steve Reich's Clapping Music Game App. Touchpress.com. iPhone and iPad. Free.

This game app, which is part of a research project led by Queen Mary University of London, aims to improve your sense of rhythm by challenging you to play Steve Reich's groundbreaking work that is performed entirely by clapping. Tap in time with the shifting pattern, and progress through all of the variations. Players can rehearse in Practice Mode, learn the history of the piece, find out more about Steve Reich and his work, and even submit their high scores for a chance to perform "Clapping Music" on stage with the London Sinfonietta (see app for details and deadlines).

Mastery: T he Keys to Success and Long-Term Fulfillment, George Leonard, Plume, 1992. 176 pp. Paperback, $9.89.

Modern society predisposes us to be seduced by the allure of instant gratification and the quick fix. But as Beverly Sills once said, "There are no shortcuts to any place worth going." This classic book will inspire you to want to pursue the path of mastery (vs. seeking the quick fix). It explains the nature of practice and skill development and via its explanation of practice plateaus, will give you the patience to continue to work at something – even on days when it seems like no progress is being made.

The Little Book of Talent: 52 Tips for Improving Your Skills. Daniel Coyle. Bantam, 2012. 160 pp. Hardcover $13.62, Kindle $9.99.

The Little Book of Talent is a manual for building a faster brain and a better you. It is an easy-to-use handbook of scientifically proven, field-tested methods to improve skills—your skills, your kids' skills, your organization's skills—in sports, music, art, math, and business. The product of five years of reporting from the world's greatest talent hotbeds and interviews with successful master coaches, it distills the daunting complexity of skill development into 52 clear, concise directives. Whether you're age 10 or 100, whether you're on the sports field or the stage, in the classroom or the corner office, this is an essential guide for anyone who ever asked, "How do I get better?"

The Complete Idiot's Guide Music Dictionary. Stanford Felix, Alpha, 2010. 336 pp. Paperback $5.45, Kindle $10.99.

Written in clear, concise, easy-to-understand language, The Complete Idiot's Guide(r) Music Dictionary covers a multitude of musical aspects indispensable to any musician. Author and music professor Stanford Felix has compiled the most commonly found terms and explains them in a way that even the most novice musician can comprehend. The only dictionary geared toward the beginner musician. Gives clear, concise definitions of terms, theories, and instruments, as well as important works, musicians, and composers.

Carry the Tune DVD. Fiddlesticks Productions, carrythetune.com, 2015, 68 min., $15.99 home use.

Across the U.S., students embark on musical journeys toward personal fulfillment as they are pushed into paths toward financial success and economic growth. Music educators and researchers estimate that 75% or more of high school music students quit their musical studies after high school. Many are unaware of the musical opportunities in college and beyond. This documentary shares the stories of people who have discovered these opportunities, and shows how music provides a vital sense of balance in their lives. While filming, the directors found more people than could fit into one film who talked about the importance of music in their lives or the regret of not continuing with it. These stories fueled the motivation to complete this large project.

Parent's Column

Reminders & Helps to Enhance Your Child's Musical Experience

AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS

"Americans for the Arts is a national nonprofit organization whose primary focus is advancing the arts in the United States. Their mission is "to serve, advance, and lead the network of organizations and individuals who cultivate, promote, sustain, and support the arts in America. Connecting your best ideas and leaders from the arts, communities, and business, together to ensure that every American has access to the transformative power of the arts."

"Americans for the Arts has published an Arts Education Navigator through a partnership with Vans Custom Culture and is a four part series of e-books designed to help...advocate for the arts. This series is a unique resource that contains statistics, advocacy tips, and techniques for effectively communicating with decision-makers. Below are some of the statistics from book 2 of this series entitled, "Facts & Figures."

- A student involved in the arts id four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement.
- Students who take four years of arts and music classis average almost 100 points better on their SAT scores than students who take only one-half year or less.

"Students involved in the arts are:

- Four times more likely to participate in a math and science fair.
- Three times more likely to win an award for school attendance.
- Four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement.
- Three times more likely to be elected to class office.

"The arts help students succeed in life:

- Low-income students who are highly engaged in the arts are more than twice as likely to graduate college as their peers with no arts education.
- 72% of business leaders say that creativity is the number one skill they are seeking when hiring.
- Low-income students who are highly engaged in the arts are more likely than their peers with low arts involvement to have obtained gainful employment, completed college, and volunteered in their communities.

"We must continue to advocate and tell our story:

- 93% of Americans believe that the arts are vital to providing a well-rounded education.

To view the entire Arts Education Navigator visit: http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networks-and-councils/arts-education-network/tools-resources/arts-education-navigator-series."

Conn-Selmer Division of Education Touchpoint Newsletter, Issue 488 – November 10, 2015, by Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser.