

Parents Play the Most Central, Yet Vulnerable Roles in Children's Music Education

By T. Bandurina

The three basic parties who take part in children's music education are the child, the teacher (or teachers) and the parents.

To best understand how the young musician will regard music lessons, we must ask: "How should parents plan for the musical education of their children?"

As a rule, there are two main things to consider: the choice and cost of the instrument, auxiliary materials and lessons; and the search for a good teacher. After that, the preparation for the child's musical training is largely complete. However, buying the instrument and paying for lessons are not the most complex part of music education, although many parents think so and believe that the rest is up to the teacher and the child, who is obliged to frequent music lessons on a regular basis and do the homework. In fact, to parents, it all seems very easy! "Did you do your homework today? Have you practiced that piece enough? Have you learned the fingers in an etude? Come on, play the piece you had to memorize!"

Here's the simple truth: The reasons behind one's success in music education as well as the loss of interest creep in absolutely imperceptibly, and often during quite a long period of time.

First, then, let's discuss what happens when a child loses interest.

Again, parents are the most integral and important parts of the equation when it comes to their children's success or loss of interest in musical education. When a child gets bored with his or her lessons, the parents, who by that point are exhausted by battles with the child to practice and often feel financially pinched from the costs of the instrument and the lessons, must then face the difficult decision of whether to terminate the lessons.

While preparing the materials for my book, *Voices of our Children*, I talked to parents and teachers and asked them what they considered to be the prime reason behind the child's loss of interest. Can you guess who a whopping 80 percent considered to be at fault? The child! It was *he/she* who did not want to continue the education!

What's more important is that after terminating the lessons, very few parents asked themselves *why* their child lost interest. Let's look the perspective of each participant in this scenario:

The child. He is happy! His "tortures" have finally ended. He no longer has to hear unpleasant things about his careless attitude toward music lessons. No one will ever force him to learn music against his will! Now he is free from tiresome lessons and can spend time doing things he likes!

The teacher. Not every teacher, especially not those who often lose students, will search for the real reasons behind a child's loss of interest in music lessons. It is easier for some teachers to accuse or blame the student than to admit to their own mistakes.

In this case, what does the teacher do? He quickly forgets about former students and places an ad to get new ones – he has to earn a living. It's just a job.

Parents. Believe it or not, but I think that when the child quits musical training, the parents suffer the most – not only because they have invested in this venture materially, but because along with the

termination of music education they must part with their own dreams, hopes, and an opportunity to discover and develop their child's true talent that might not have been obvious.

Now, when the child quits music lessons, he can quickly redirect his attention to new interests. The teacher, who has lost the student, can compensate for his loss by finding a replacement. But the parents do suffer the most – they can not “move on” – they can not replace own child with another!

Therefore, to avoid this problem before it hits home, I strongly believe parents should prepare for their children's music education ahead of time. *They should know beforehand* what awaits them in the future, and *should be ready for possible hardships*.

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