



Engaging the Adult Learner in Studio Violin Lessons

by

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

Abstract

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Music has an important role in nearly every adult life. For most, their participation in music involves listening to recordings, attending concerts, or driving their children to music lessons and rehearsals. Many adults are hesitant to approach learning an instrument because they are aware that the majority of musical learning materials and methods are geared towards children. However, research suggests that there is no reason that adults cannot be as successful at playing an instrument as children. In fact, in many ways, adults are positioned to be more successful musicians, due to their life experiences, self-motivation, and self-concept for learning. Teaching adults can not only be emotionally rewarding, it also presents a market for the enterprising studio teacher, if the instructor is aware of the several unique aspects of teaching adult beginners which I will introduce in this document. I will discuss adult learning concepts, including lifelong learning and andragogy. Along with introducing concepts and relevant research, I will incorporate examples from my experiences teaching violin to adult learners. Additionally, I will explore why adults are motivated to learn to play instruments, as well as the possible benefits of learning a musical instrument. Furthermore, working with adult students offers benefits to the private instructor. However, teaching adults can present challenges to the studio teacher, who must be flexible and adopt the role of facilitator. Use of various studio strategies may aid the instructor in creating a productive learning environment. Oftentimes, adults are interested in the social opportunities that ensemble playing provides, but are not ready to play in front of others initially. I will explore how studio teachers can create a community and studio culture in order to fulfill adult students' desire for social interaction. In addition, I discuss the physical, cognitive, and emotional challenges that adults can present, as well as strategies for accommodating these challenges and a variety of learning styles. Finally, I will present a suggested progression for adult violin learning during the first year of instruction.