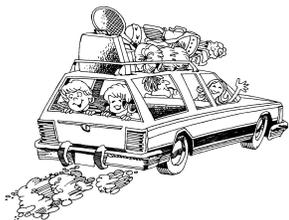


Fall '19 Newsletter

West County Strings

Welcome Back!

As we head into the 2019-2020 school year, Kirby and I wanted to take a moment to look back as well as forward to all that is in store for us this year. On a personal note, our family had an eventful summer. Kirby and I had the opportunity to teach at a several Institutes and camps over the summer, which meant lots of time on the road - clocking nearly 5,000 miles in the car! We are so thankful for our great travelers, Adelaide and Calder. We are looking forward to getting back into our weekly routine with you all as well as the structure that keeps us all grounded.



During our time away, we were reminded how blessed we are to have all of you to work with here in St. Louis. We have spent some time vision casting for West County Strings, in both the short term and the long term. It was inspirational to be around excellence at all levels at the various places we taught. We saw families come in to their week of study with a real desire for more and ready to learn. We also saw families leave weeks transformed in so many ways. Students and families were recharged, motivated (some *really* on fire!), better technically, and just as important: socially plugged in. We hope to bring some of this energy back with us to our home students and studio families. As the year goes on, we will share more and ask families who attended institutes and camps to share as well! Be on the lookout!

Fundamentally, we really believe in the importance of meeting every child where they are developmentally, as well as training them to meet challenges along the path to goals we mutually set. So often we talk about cooperation with our little ones. Everyone has a job to do and we are all working together. In order for everyone to thrive this year, we are going to take some time to review expectations in the studio. For now, we are going to stick to the essentials and we are starting with parents, because you are absolutely integral - regardless of your child's age and stage!

Parental Involvement

Parents, you are the most integral part of your child's musical development. What an awesome responsibility and wonderful opportunity! Even though Kirby and I strive to teach the very best lesson we can every single week, we only get to interact with each student for perhaps 10-20% of the total time that they spend with their instrument each week. The other 80-90% of your child's learning occurs at home, which is why it is absolutely necessary that you are learning alongside

your child to be their "home teacher." This role will look different at different stages as your child grows.

In a child's younger years, it is absolutely critical that a parent attend each lesson, take notes, and learn and fully understand everything that goes on in the lesson so that they can practice effectively with their child at home. And, of course, keep that Suzuki CD playing in the car, in the living room, and/or by your child's bedside. In a child's middle years, it is still vitally important that a parent attend lessons and take notes, so that as the child starts to develop independence in practicing at home the parent can still engage, encourage, and make sure that the child's practicing is still productive and on task. And keep those Suzuki CDs turning! In a child's later years, it is crucial that parents stay engaged with their child's musical pursuits—taking a genuine interest in what they're learning, helping them plan time in their schedule to practice, making sure they're still listening to their Suzuki CDs and other recordings—and that they stay involved in the studio community. Even as they near adulthood, children need their parents' love and support and will thrive if and when they receive it!



It is important to note that there are far too many factors in play to say at exactly what age or grade level a child will be ready to attend lessons on their own or practice by themselves at home. Make sure that you talk to your teacher before beginning to drop your child off at lessons without staying, or before encouraging your child to do the bulk of their practicing at home without your help. Fostering ownership and developing independence is a process, and it works best if the parent and teacher are in open and frequent communication throughout.

Student Preparation

Students, a big part of your musical development rests on your own shoulders! It is Ms. Kirby's and my job to teach you *what* to practice and *how* to practice, to show you the beauty and value of music that will help you understand *why* to practice, and even occasionally to help you find time *when* you can practice. However, it is up to you (with your parents' support)... to actually practice! Not a single thing that is worth having in life is ever achieved without consistent, disciplined effort, and Ms. Kirby and I are determined that each and every one of our students develop this discipline in their musical studies.

In order to set yourself up for success, please set aside a folder or ½-1 inch 3-ring binder that you will dedicate to your practice charts and handouts, and keep it organized

throughout the school year. Much time and progress is wasted if we materials are misplaced from week to week. With your parent, sit down and **plan when you will be able to practice** each day, before or after school, and along with all the other activities in which you participate. Ms. Kirby and I both expect our students to at the very least touch their instrument **every day**. Ideally, a full and careful practice could be carried out 7 days/week, but even when life gets very busy and stressful, at least pick up your instrument and practice a careful scale and a few review pieces that you enjoy. Oh, and as we said to the parents, make sure you're listening to your Suzuki CD every day!

Ms. Kirby and I will be discussing goals for this fall semester and the school year with each of you in your first week of lessons, so start thinking now! What technique would you like to master? What book would you like to finish? What Institute would you like to attend? How many days in a row would you feel proud if you practiced? Be creative, and dream big!

Studio Policies

Hand Washing

Upon arrival to the studio, please enter, take off your shoes, wash your hands then get your instrument out. Wait quietly until it is your turn for your lesson.

Cell Phones

After much discussion, we decided against a mandatory cell phone basket for all who enter the studio. We did, however, decide to place an optional cell phone basket for parents and students to insert their phones into as they enter the studio. We understand life does not stop while you are in lessons. But, there is great power in taking a break from distractions and focusing on why you are here and who you are here with. If you use your phone to take notes, please discuss this with us. If you use your phone for videos, please take it out of the basket temporarily, but resist the temptation to check email/texts/social media.



Recitals

Because we want to be sure to get our recital dates/times/locations just right this year, we are going to wait just a little while to announce. We hope to have all pertinent information out to you by the end of September/beginning of October. Thank you very much for your patience! Once dates are set, we ask you to plan to attend your assigned recital in its entirety.

Group Classes

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd has asked us to refrain from having any food/beverage in their facilities without special permission. If you need to grab a quick bite or drink before/after group class, we encourage you to take advantage of our proximity to the shops nearby (ie: Starbucks, Straub's, Subway, etc).

Group Schedule

- 5:50-6:20 - Pre-Twinkle - Andantino
- 6:25-7:05 - Etude - Seitz 5:III
- 7:10-7:50 - Vivaldi A Minor - Beyond the Books
- 7:50-8:10 - Blended Technique (incl. VLA)
- 8:10-8:50 - Ensemble (incl. VLA)

Mentorship

Kaya McNurlen and Abby Gottfried are two AWESOME girls in our program that are looking to get some volunteer hours in for their school honors programs by helping younger students practice. They are also both are wonderful with kids, and excellent violinists. We are still working out the details with them, but if you would like to be involved in this in some way, please e-mail Ms. Kirby!

Federation (and Scholarship Money!)

For the past several years, we have enjoyed having students participate in the Missouri Federation of Music Club's "Spring Festival," in which students can participate in a wide variety of events. Most students have participated in the "Violin/Viola Solo" event in April, in which they prepare and perform two select pieces for a judge, and are given feedback, a score, and can accumulate points towards trophies over the years.

However, by doing the exact same thing for the Camp Scholarship Competition in March, students are eligible to win \$500 to use towards the music camp of their choice. Even if they don't win, they still get feedback, a score, and points towards trophies as they would in April.

Ms. Kirby and I would love it if each and every one of our students who is eligible participates in these events this year. Ideally, we could send several students to music camps each with \$500 of their bill paid! And for everyone, it provides a good goal, a great performance opportunity, and some good feedback on your playing. Details for these events will be forthcoming as the year progresses!

Calendar

Fall 2019

- Aug. 19 - Fall Semester Begins
- Sep. 3 - Play-In & Ice Cream Social - 6:00-7:30 p.m.
- Sep. 10 - Group Classes Begin
- Oct. 29 - Halloween Party - 6:00-7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 25-30 - Thanksgiving Break
- Dec. 23-Jan. 5 - Holiday Break

Spring 2019

- Jan. 6 - Private Lessons Resume
- Jan. 13 - Spring Semester Begins
- Jan. 14 - Group Classes Resume
- Mar. 16-21 - Spring Break
- May 23 - Spring Semester Ends

