

## SUMMARY

### **Practical ways of making practising music at home easier and more fun**

**Preparing to practice.** This can be time consuming and off-putting. A five minute practice can sometimes involve 15 minutes of preparation and frustration. I am looking at ways this could be made easier. For example,

- Having a permanent performance space where the instrument, music stand, chair, lighting, sheet music storage, music bag, metronome, tuning equipment, CD player, backing CDs etc are located and set up ready to play.
- If the equipment cannot be set up ready, it can at least be stored together so it is easy to find. Parental help in setting up and taking down the equipment can reduce the burden on the child who can put their energies into tuning and practising.
- Locating the practice space where parents can hear. Many children like to practice near a parent.
- Organising sheet music so it is easy to locate and use
- Leaving the instrument out of its case and assembled for next time. This may require an instrument stand.
- Tuning could be quicker to perform or less frequent. This could be achieved by improving the quality of the tuning equipment, for example the pegs, or the fine tuning equipment on a cello.

*Questions: Has anyone found useful equipment or techniques to ease preparation? What instrument stands are best? Do you have tuning tips? What music stands are best? Do you recommend any particular seating or lighting? Do you have advice about the positioning and height of the music stand in relation to the player? Where is the most popular practice space?*

**Creating harmonies** adds enormously to the enjoyment. Having a backing track enables the child to create harmonies and complex rhythms which might otherwise be impossible alone.

*Questions: What are your views about backing tracks? Do teachers recommend SmartMusic or other software such as Transcribe which slows down backing tracks? Or do teachers make their own backing tracks and if so, at what speed? What are your thoughts on slowing down the backing tracks so that students can use them as soon as they start to learn a piece of music?*

**Choosing the right music.** Having music that the child wants to play in addition to set pieces can turn practising into playing for enjoyment.

*Questions: Do you encourage children to play music of their own choosing, such as Disney theme tunes or pop songs? Are there some classical pieces which always prove popular? Is it possible to buy backing tracks for these pieces? If not, would you like to see them?*

**Providing an audience.** Many children seem to enjoy practising their instruments in front of their parents.

*Questions: Do you advise parents to take time to listen to their children playing?*

**Make learning quicker.** For problems like not understanding the rhythm of a piece, the child can use a simple method like using their mobile phone to record the music teacher playing the new piece slowly. Then the child can play along to it at home. Also, a child could make a recording of themselves practising at home or in the lesson.

*Questions: What are your views on this? Does anyone make any recordings of this sort? Do you have any other practical tips to enable a student to learn a piece more quickly?*

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