

## ***“Music Education in a Christian Home”***

### Introduction –

- Glad to have the opportunity to share with you results of the researches on this topic and my 30 years of experience in this field. Before I begin, I would like to introduce to you three books that I will refer to from time to time during my presentation:

*“Music Education in the Christian Home”* by Dr. Mary Ann Froehlich, 1996

*Dr. Froehlich has degrees in USC, and Fuller Theological Seminary. She is a certified Music Therapist and a Suzuki music teacher. She has 15 publications which include books on raising kids, music and biblical teaching.*

*“Nurtured by Love”* by Shinichi Suzuki, 1983

*“The Right Instrument for Your Child”* by Atarah Ben-Tovim and Douglas Boyd, 1995

- For my presentation today, I am going to cover mainly in two areas:
  - I. Foundation – Biblical View of Music Involvement (how important music is in bible times)
    - Definition of Music Education
  - II. Practicality – practical issues related to music training.

### **I. The Foundation–**

#### **A. Biblical View of Music Involvement – View points from Dr. Froehlich**

“Music is **not** optional for God’s children” p.1

“- **not** another “Activity”. “It is a command from God”.

“- **not** any more optional than prayer or studying God’s word”.

“- **is** for God, for His glory and purpose” p.2

“- **is** the core of right relationship with God”. P.8

She quotes many scripture passages to show readers how music functioned in Bible Times.

Music is **tool for “Corporate Worship and Obedience”**

“The purpose of music in worship is to involve us actively in an intimate relationship with our God. We are participants, not observers.” P.9

**Ex 15** “When the Israelites passed the red sea. People danced and sang.

1 Sam 18:6 “after David killed Goliath.

2 Sam 6:16 “when the Ark of Covenant was brought home, David danced and sang.

**1 Ch. 9:33**, “Those who were musicians, heads of Levite families, stayed in the rooms of the temple and were exempt from other duties because they were responsible for the work day and night.”

**Ezra 3:10-11** “upon their return from exile the people of God laid the foundation for the temple and stopped to make music

**Ezra 7:24** Musicians were exempt from taxes.

**Neh 12:27-43** “When Nehemiah completed the wall, God’s people dedicated it with the organization of two great choirs accompanied by instruments.”

Lk 15:25 “When the prodigal son returned home, there was celebration with music and dance

**Ps 33:2-3** “Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.”

## Music as ***Tool for a Personal Relationship with God***

“Sing joyfully to the Lord you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise Him” Ps 22:1

Psalms – a great example of individual praise and communication with God.

It comprises praise, emotion of joy, happiness, thankfulness, also sadness, despair, anger, remorse and repentance.

## Music as ***Tool for Supporting one another***

Ep.5:19 “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, spiritual songs.

Paul encouraged believers to support each other in sorrow and in joy with singing.

## Music as ***Tool for Victory***

1 Sam 16:23 Saul used music in his battle with depression

**1 Sam 18:10** Battling the spirit of evil, David played harp to remain safe

**2 Ch 20:21** Fighting an impossible battle, King Jehoshaphat sent out the Choir to sing praises to the Lord before the army, and the battle was won.

**Ps 32:7**, “You will protect me with songs of deliverance”

**Ps 63:7** “Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings.”

**Acts 16:25** Paul and Silas sang hymns of praise while in prison

Dan 3:51 Facing the fiery furnace, Daniel and his friends sang songs of praise

**Rev 14:2-3** “Music is inseparable from God’s presence, We will unceasingly praise God in songs and will be surrounded by music in our heavenly home.

“Music is the unconquerable weapon of God’s presence that we carry with us.”

## Music as ***Tool for Instruction and Witness***

“to instruct others and provide a witness to His truth. It is an integral part of Christian education and evangelism.”

**Deut 31:19-22** The Song of Moses -

“Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them.

- ‘Song reinforces learning’ has its biblical roots.

**2 Ch 5:13** God responds to our music making. The temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud when the Israelites raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang “He is good, his love endures forever.”

## From Scriptures: ( Dr. Mary Ann Froehlich)

- Music making to God incorporates song, dance and instrument playing.

- In Biblical time, music makers were highly skilled. They pursue training as a priority. Mediocrity was not acceptable.

- We are to use music in our daily lives to encourage and comfort one another.

- Music making is inseparable from God’s presence. It is a powerful tool against our spiritual enemy

- Music making instructs believers and witnesses to non believers

- God delights in responding to our music making. He comes to us in Music.

## In Conclusion:

✓ **Music Making is an important part of our spiritual growth, just like reading God’s word and prayers.**

✓ **How does music play out in your spiritual life?**

**B. What defines Music Education -**

- A Musical Environment
- Learning basics of music notation (pitch and rhythm).
- Learning the skills of singing or playing an instrument.
- General knowledge of music appreciation and music theory.
- Participating in choir, musicals, band, orchestra or worship team.
- Develop keen listening skills to appreciate the beauty of music.
- According to personal interests and special gifts, training can be specific and more serious towards the professional route.

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## II. **The Practicality** - Practical issues to consider when providing music education for your child

### A. **When and Where** (under the umbrella of Musical Environment – always play music at home and in car ride)

- In the womb – mom listen to music, sing to the fetus
  - Infant / toddler - sing to the kids, play music around (folk, traditional and classical), attend live performance for kids, **rhythm** and **movement** game play, group rhythm music class (mostly at home or church).
  - Preschool / Kindergarten – rhythm, music and movement game play, group music class (not just in preschool). Introducing different musical instruments by shape and sound, watch live performances. (emphasis shifts to outside classes)
  - Elementary school- check for readiness to start private lessons, develop discipline of practice, acquire basic skills of playing an instrument, learn theory.
  - Middle school – acquire basic keyboard skills, reading chord symbols, play by ear, improvisation, apply theory knowledge to playing in groups. Consider taking a second instrument to participate in band and orchestra (ensemble music making is a great motivation for teenagers). Develop sight-reading skills. Learn both contemporary and classical styles.
  - High school – continue to develop classical training (art form) and explore how functional skills (play with chord symbols and improvisation) contribute to the fun of music making by participate in worship team.
- ✓ **Having the skills of making music brings personal joy and build up self-esteem.**

### B. **Practical issues** with taking private lesson.

1. Readiness for private instrument (Suzuki, p.90)– read fluently, write eligibly with no problem, do simple math, handle well in school work, ability to follow instruction, sit and focus for 20-30 minutes at one stretch, understand the difference between work and play, slots of regular practice available in daily schedule, parents willingness to supervise and support at lessons and at home practice. The general recommended age is 6 -7 for girls, 7-8 for boys. (younger age for exceptionally gifted child)
2. How to choose the right instrument to begin– (Suzuki, p.94) Basically, piano is the beginning instrument because it introduces the whole range of sound, and it is a self-sustaining instrument (ability to produce a piece in its own). It is easy to understand the basics of music theory as the keyboard provides a good visual image. Piano training can be the basis for all other instruments at a later age. It speeds up the progress greatly when students have foundation at piano.
3. How to choose a 2<sup>nd</sup> instrument (for band or orchestral). Many elementary school or middle schools have Band and orchestra as an elective. Students as early as 4<sup>th</sup> grade will be introduced to a band or orchestral instrument. The school provides training from the very early stage. Students who have piano background can always get by without taking private lesson on the 2<sup>nd</sup> instruments (except for strings). There are few criteria for certain wind and

string instruments (specific details can be found in "*The Right Instrument for Your Child*". The importance is for the kids to hear the sound of the instrument. They have to love the sound to learn it. Many kids can tell quickly which instrument they like.

4. Readiness for piano – besides all mentioned in “point 1” above, here are specifics a Piano teacher will usually check at interview: ability to identify high, low tone, to match pitch, ability to imitate simple rhythmic patterns, tap in steady pulse, fine motor skills (fingers), average eye sight to identify small lines/spaces (“The Right Instrument”, p.94), eye hand coordination.
5. How to choose a teacher – Word of mouth, MTAC (Music Teachers’ Association of California) website, google “Find a teacher”

#### Finding a good match

- ask for friends recommendation to find teachers with similar philosophy of training as you prefer.
- Attend student recitals to get a sense of the training.
- Research the background of the teacher (trainings, professional affiliation)
- Set up an interview for personal interaction
- If possible, observe lessons

#### A good teacher should be

- friendly, encouraging, yet firm in expectation.
- Organized, have a studio policy for business operation and adhere to it.
- Consistent with policy, but with flexibility in special case
- Have an average studio size to allow enough energy and attention for each student
- A teacher of good training – musical and experienced is essential for beginners

6. Parental support over the course – provide a musical environment at home with recordings, develop a daily schedule at the very beginning, make it a daily routine (Suzuki, p.97), teach to experience fun after work, Assure the kids that parents have the authority when it comes to piano commitment, when to practice and how much to practice. Be firm, but with loving encouragement.
7. Instrument - Providing a decent instrument (An acoustic piano with regular tuning) is a must if you want your child to be productive and interested in their practice. It leads to enjoyment in practice and trains good listening skills. It is an investment of time and money. But it is well-worth it.
8. With a foundation of basic technique and musicality, students should learn functional skills such as sight-reading skills, reading chord symbols, simple transposition, improvisation, ability to collaborate with other musicians. Learning classical literature is important to create beautiful music, whether it is for worship, or for personal enrichment. The training process teaches students to be attentive to details. It also develops critical listening skills and encourages the appreciation of God’s creative beauty.
9. Memorization - Nowadays, with resources at a “click” away, there isn’t much need to memorize. Yet. There are tremendous benefits in memorization, it is critical to brain health. “Memory is essential; depending on training, your ability to memorize gets better and better” (Suzuki p.92)  
- a parent once told me that her child has good memory because she memorized many of her piano pieces.

10. Tone deaf?! – There is no such thing as “tone deaf”. Students need a musical environment and training to recognize pitch and to reproduce it. It is easy for some and takes longer for others. (Suzuki p.90). My philosophy is that everyone can be trained to identify and reproduce pitch.
11. Music Evaluation (p.131) music exam gives students a goal to work towards. The road of learning an instrument can be a roller-coaster. Students and parents need a goal from time to time to put progress in perspective. During the course of preparation, students are paying more serious attention to what they study. As a result, it consolidates what they learnt and it gives them a sense of accomplishment. Receiving certificate of recognition also builds up their self-confidence and gives them incentive to move on. From my experience, those who can succeed till advanced levels are the students who took annual evaluations. By the time they reach advanced levels, they started to appreciate all the practices and training they had. They are beginning to enjoy music for its worth.
  - Pamphlet – The Benefit of Structured Music Education)
  - Various kind of music evaluations and their differences. (App. I)
12. Competition – are for students who are interested in music and willing to take on high challenges. And they must have the ability to combat failure. Besides training students to be patient, be meticulous in their learning and aim for perfection, it trains them to deal with all kinds of emotion- working under pressure, dealing with roller-coaster emotion, with negative emotion. It is a great training for emotional maturity. However, it is only for selected personality. There has to have give and take in the process.
13. Theory – is it necessary? It is essential for all music making. Students who have good understanding of the structure of music (from notes./rhythm to chords, forms) have a much easier time to collaborate with other students in worship team setting, band etc. It helps them greatly in learning advanced pieces. When students can apply the theory knowledge in their practice and learning pieces, it sparkles new interests in their experience.
14. How much practice is enough – Start with the right **concept** of learning to play an instrument is of utmost importance: which is Understanding the importance of practice, commitment, discipline; understanding fun comes after hard work. The parents have the authority on practice and goal, as said before. As far as how much to practice, it depends on the teachers’ requirement and the students’ goal. Daily practice is essentials for making progress. While quality practice is more important than quantity practice, quantity cannot be neglected. It needs to build up from 20-30 minutes at the beginning stage. Have an organized and structured practice routine is of utmost important. It guarantees success and efficiency in learning.
15. Many recent researches have proven that learning classical music, learning an instrument, piano in most cases, has many added benefit for brain development and brain health. See “Benefit of learning piano” (App. 2); “Benefit of structured music education “(App. 3)

In Conclusion, Good teacher, Good instrument, Supportive parents, Good practice commitment lead to success in music glorifying God!

## Appendix I

Music Evaluations: -

- a. Certificate of Merit  
–California Music Teachers Association
- b. National Guild of Piano Playing Audition  
– American College of Musicians
- c. Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music  
- England
- d. The Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM)  
- Canada

Please contact Ellen via email if you are interested to find out the differences between different Evaluations.

## Appendix II

### 10 Benefits of Playing Piano (Steinway & Sons)

1. Sharpens the intelligence
2. Develops passion and diligence
3. Maintains an aging brain's health
4. Exercises the body
5. Encourages creativity
6. Strengthens memory
7. Elevates moods
8. Calms the mind
9. Fosters community
10. Boosts confidence