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Sharon Music Academy

Newsletter

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Summer Reflections

For a teacher a summer is a time to assess and reflect, time to read "smart books" and socialize with and learn from fellow teachers. I would like to share with you some of my summer reflections.

This summer two books made a big impression on me and I highly recommend them to you. The first book is "Outliers" by a best-selling author Malcolm Gladwell and the second is "Microtrends" by Mark J. Penn. "Outliers" has a sub-title – The Story of Success, and it re-searches the reasons and circumstances of the successful people. Though the subjects of both books are very far from music, they both dedicate many pages to it. If you think about it, it is no wonder that they do this. Music is a reflection of life and whatever is applicable to life is applicable to music as well. Based on his research and research of others, Gladwell states "10,000 hours rule" – the excellence at performing a complex task (whether it is programming, chess playing or music) requires a critical minimum level of practice – 10,000 hours. Bill Gates – the founder of Microsoft, Bill Joy – the founder of Sun Microsystems, famous chess grandmasters and Beatles - all of them had had their 10,000 hours of grueling drills before they succeeded. Research shows that what separates elite music performers from just good musicians is an amount of practice. To give you a point of reference : elite performers practice 2-3 hours a

week at age 5-6, six hours a week by age nine, eight hours a week by age twelve, sixteen hours a week by age fourteen, and up and up, until by age twenty they are practicing 30 hours a week. What separates elite performers from just very good musicians? 2000 hours of practice by age 20. The striking thing is that research could not find any "naturals", musicians who floated effortlessly to the top while practicing less than their peers did.

Should these staggering numbers discourage anyone from studying music if they don't intend to become professional musicians? Not at all! Elite swimmer Michael Phelps spends 8 hours a day in a pool, but everyone needs to learn how to swim at least 100 yards. The main point here is that there is a critical amount of effort to achieve meaningful results. Everyone has to put in enough effort to reach a point where one becomes proficient enough to enjoy music to its fullest. It is like climbing a mountain – you need to get above a forest line to enjoy a view. And the higher you get the more spectacular the view becomes! That's why we have so many students, who have studied music from pre-K to the end of high school and keep playing music in college and all their lives.

Everyone can do it – can get above the forest line. In my 35 years of teaching I've seen it many times. People usually em-

phasize well-known tangible benefits of music education – improved mental abilities, memory and coordination; learning how to focus and persevere; having an emotional outlet. Gladwell writes about KIPP Academy of Bronx, New York, one of the best schools in the country with an innovative educational approach, where learning an instrument and playing in an orchestra is mandatory for all students.

But intangible benefits (a spectacular view of music) are much more appealing. Even the process of leaning is very exciting. Each new piece presents itself as an emotional and intellectual puzzle that is so much fun to solve. "Microtrends" contains an interesting statistics about growing popularity of classical music. Tickets sales, number of performances, private philanthropy is at the record levels. According to Gallup surveys, the portion of US household with a member who plays a musical instrument reached 54 percent and the fastest growing group is 22-55 year-old. Classical music is an acquired taste. You can't appreciate baseball if you don't know the rules and play yourself. You can't appreciate music if you don't play an instrument. In "Outliers" Gladwell also points out that the children,

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who keep studying and learn-

"Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent.."

-Victor Hugo

Our Music Director
Tanya Schwartzman in
a TV Show "Meeting
Interesting People"



YouTube Video You Should See

YouTube became one of the most valuable resources in music education. You can easily find great performances by famous musicians – enjoy and learn at the same time. So we decided to introduce a new column in our newsletter – YouTube Video You Should See. Our first recommendation is "CatCerto" - Nora The Piano Cat plays with an orchestra:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeoT66v4EHg>

It is fun and amazing at the same time. A composer wrote the whole concerto around his cat "playing" the piano.

Applied Music Theory and Composition

We are starting group classes in Music Theory and Composition. Please indicate on a sign-up sheet in the hall what days and times you can come. Don't miss this opportunity to learn laws and rules of music. It will help you learn faster, understand music better and put structure behind the sounds. The course will contain practical knowledge to make students better musicians.

Faculty Concerts

You all know that our instructors are not only great teachers but are also wonderful performers. Those who attended our faculty concert last year still talk about it. This year many of our teachers will perform on various local, national and international stages including solo performances at Carnegie Hall. It is a tradition of our Academy for the faculty members to give performance for our students before the stage performance. This year we have scheduled several concerts and the first one will be on Sunday, October 18th at 6:30 pm.

Lisa Leong will present a piano recital of mostly American music on Friday Oct 16th, 2009 at Sharon Music Academy. The program will include John Adams' **Phrygian Gates**, written in 1970, considered by many a twentieth-century masterpiece of piano repertoire. Mr. Adams is one of America's leading composers today. His operas are internationally performed and commissioned across the globe. He is also the winner of the Pulitzer Prize and Grammy awards. Other featured works include a piece for piano and electronic sounds by British composer Jonathan Harvey, recently composer-in-residence at New England Conservatory, and works by young American composers, one of which is dedicated to Ms. Leong.

Space is limited to 25 people, please RSVP through our Calendar Page:

<http://sharonmusicacademy.com/calendar.html>

Supervised Piano Practice

At some point in their music career many musicians feel the need to share their love of music and start teaching. Over the years many of our advanced high school students have successfully taught beginners. Even now, 12-year-old Angelique Scully teaches a student, who is 4 times older than she is. At the same time many parents tell us that they are unable to help their children practice. So we decided that this is the perfect opportunity to give both groups a chance through

Supervised Piano Practice (continued from page 2)

the introduction of “Supervised Piano Practice”. For a nominal fee our advanced high school piano students, under the supervision of the Music Director, will help beginners practice, learn text and thus making lessons with a teacher more productive, and help them develop practice skills. Please send us email if you are interested in this program.

TV Show “Musical Moments with Tanya”

This August our Music Director was invited to the show “Meeting Interesting People” on the Medford Community Cablevision station in Medford, Massachusetts. You soon will be able to see interview with Tanya on our website. There is something addictive about the light of TV lamps that makes people crave for more TV time. So in October Tanya starts to shoot a pilot for a show on the Sharon Community Television with a tentative title “Musical Moments with Tanya”. The show will be about music, music history, famous performances and performers and just entertaining stories about music and musicians. If you have an idea for a show or want to learn about some specific subject please send us email.

Music Party At SMA

We always look forward for our Music Parties for Adult Students. It is always such a pleasure to be around these wonderful people, who, despite their high-demanding careers and family life, always find time for music. We already have our regulars at these parties and we hope to see more new faces. It is a potluck event—everyone shares music and food with fellow musicians. All our adult students and their families are invited. You don't need to perform, just come, socialize and taste a new dish. We hope to see you there. Music Party is scheduled for Saturday, November 14th, 7pm. Please RSVP through our online calendar page.

Summer Reflections (Continued from Page 1)

ing over the summer gradually accumulate more knowledge and more proficiency than the children who don't and, thus, have a significant advantage later in life. According to research the “summer doing-nothing” actually impedes the child's progress and there is no known advantage of having two months vacation. The countries and social groups, who have longer

school years, are always score higher in every subject comparing to the average US school-child. I've noticed this myself – the children who keep studying music over the summer make clearly more significant progress over the years.

Of course, I look at everything from the position of a music teacher, who wants to pass her

love of music to every student of our Academy. And a characteristic of a good book is the fact that everyone can find something appealing and interesting.

*Tanya Schwartzman
Music Director*