



Junior Hoedown

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Music Inspires: An Interview with the Beckman-Saito Sisters

The following interview by Michelle Harvey appeared in the October/November issue of True North Parenting Magazine, and is used with permission. (Part 3 of 3).

MH - What about you, Bob and Jan? Is it true that your whole lifestyle revolves around music?

Bob - It's part of our lifestyle. But I think that when music and practicing becomes a burden, it is because there is not balance with other things. There was a time when we did more kayaking and hiking. We don't do as much of that anymore. The girls went to three summer fiddle camps, all of them at least a week long. But Kiarra got some binoculars this summer so we do things like go out 'binocular hunting.' We look at birds and such.

MH - Do the girls complain?

Bob - They are both vocal about things not going right. So we don't have to guess when it [music practice] is too much. If it gets to be too much, we try to do something that is enjoyable.

A major part of becoming a musician is understanding the commitment to practice. Even for adults it is difficult to remain motivated. Dillon Schneider, executive director of Cascade Community School of Music, believes that without that commitment a musician cannot grow and enjoy the payoff of performing. "Parental support is critical," said Schneider. "If a parent wishes their children to pursue music, it is vital that they understand the level of support and guidance needed to do that."

MH - So how do you motivate your kids to practice?

Jan - Practicing can be a real drag. It is like studying. So when you expect a parent or an educator to always make it fun, that is not so easy.

Bob - Right. I think you have to instill in kids that it is a discipline. But it is similar to kids who have aspirations of becoming pro athletes. There are a certain number of them who intuitively understand that it takes special effort. Same with music. It is part of your daily activity and it is not always fun.

MH - That's tough. How do they stay motivated? Kids want to have fun all of the time. It is part of being a kid.

Bob - We have to constantly talk to the girls about where their efforts are going and where their efforts need to change. It is a constant process.

Jan - I think it is important to teach discipline. But one of the rewards is a real social component. When the kids get together at camps, they play together and they have so much fun. They meet people from all over the country.

MH - Why have you decided to pursue music this way?

Mia - Music has enriched my life in every way. I think when you are my age, you spend a lot of time trying to fit in. With music, we always fit in. I meet a lot of people, kids, and we can talk about things and we have so much in common. I think Kiarra and I have really found our place. And I have learned that if you want to get somewhere, you have to work hard to get there.

MH - Did you wake up one day and say, "I'm a musician!"?

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Mia - I think I am still trying to work up to that point. Part of being a musician is putting yourself into a song and when people recognize my playing, that is when I feel like a musician. But I did just write my first song!

Kiarra - I think I am still working on that.

MH - You are both hard on yourselves. From my perspective, you are wonderful musicians.

Mia - Yes but I learned at camp once that there is a difference between playing the violin and being a violinist. The difference is discipline and how you feel about the music. I'm getting there.

Kiarra nodded her head in nonchalant agreement. Bob and Jan smiled at their kids and at me. They graciously thanked me for my interest in the girls as if it were a great favor. I, however, smiled, thanked the family, and jotted down two words: Music inspires.

Tune of the Month: River John Sunset

River John Sunset is a Canadian tune from Prince Edward Island, composed by Francis Killen.

River John Sunset

The musical score for "River John Sunset" is written in 3/4 time and D major. It consists of eight staves of music. The chords indicated above the notes are: D, G, D, F#m, Em, D, G, D, D, A7, D, D, D7, G, D, D7, A7, D.

Rhythm: waltz