



(<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/>)

We Want Our Kids To Play Music Like We Do, But Nothing Is Working

BY JOSEPH WILSON

PHOTO © DARBY VIA TWENTY20

Twelve years ago when my wife and I got married, her parents bought us a piano. Ever since there has been a slow-burning dispute between us over who plays better.

I say it's her: she can read music for both hands and finished Level 6 at the Royal Conservatory, enough to get her a high school credit. She says it's me: I can play along with whatever song is on the radio and bang out chord progressions to sing along to. When we had kids we decided that ideally they'd have both skills — the ability to read music and the ability to improvise. But how would we construct that experience? Should we force them to attend lessons and practice every day or should we just let them discover music on their own?

Joseph Wilson hasn't just introduced the piano to his kids, but opera too — and they loved it. (<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/learning/view/we-dont-force-our-kids-to-love-opera-they-just-do>)

The Trials And Tribulations Of Teaching Music To Three Kids

Our eldest daughter, Sonia, did piano for two years with a musician friend (<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/learning/view/how-we-can-afford-to-be-a-cultured-family-we-barter>), but then COVID struck and we put the lessons on hold.

“Do you want to do lessons online?” I asked.

“Meh,” she said, turning back to her book. She certainly hadn't been bit by the music bug yet, so we let it go.

When I was her age I found my dad's old guitar (it only had four strings) and played it every day. Then I turned to the drums and never stopped. It's been an important part of my life ever since, whether meeting people through bands or knowing I can get

better at something I work hard at. I really want them to have that experience.

"'You've got to practice,' I said.
'What? Like every day?' she said with horror."

Sonia's younger sister, Elizabeth, first experienced music through an old iPhone 4 brought to her by Santa Claus. She was perplexed as to why the iPhone came loaded with pictures of her aunt on a camping trip and a full music library.

"I guess Santa just really likes Teagan and Sara," I said weakly when Elizabeth asked about the music on her phone.

She listened to those songs over and over and sung them in front of the mirror. She would belt out Adele and fall asleep to Norah Jones. "She helps me sleep," she would say, putting on her headphones and curling up under the covers while humming *Come Away With Me*.

"Now that's a music lover," I thought to myself. So we bought her a ukulele. She was thrilled, until she realized she wasn't very good.

"I thought I could play it," she said. "But my fingers aren't strong enough."

"You've got to practice," I said.

"What? Like every day?" she said with horror. The ukulele got thrust aside. She knew how badly I wanted her to play music, but I tried to play it cool.

"OK, whatever," I said. "Whenever you're ready."

"She sat down at the piano and looked at me perplexed when I asked her to play what we learned the day before."

Our youngest daughter, only five, was my next great hope. I found a series of videos online that explained how to read music by personifying the notes. Mr. C was the leader, naturally, and had a big family. Seven of them to be precise. You get the idea. She was enthusiastic so we went through the first lesson together. Success! The next day she asked me if we could rehearse. "This is it!" I thought, "we found the musician in the family!"

She sat down at the piano and looked at me perplexed when I asked her to play what we learned the day before.

"Where's the video?" she asked.

“We watch that to learn what to play,” I said. “Now we have to practice.”

“I want to watch the video,” she said. She made it clear she wouldn’t touch the keys until I let her watch the whole “season.” She thought it was a Netflix show.

Make learning music fun with these games that use Lego Duplo blocks to teach theory and rhythm. (<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/play/view/3-music-theory-games-using-lego-duplo>)

Making Music Part Of Their Life

A few months ago I set up my drum set in the basement and just left the sticks lying around (along with earplugs — drums are loud). After a couple days of wonderfully chaotic noise the novelty wore off. Last week I literally cleaned dust off the cymbals. Loving music is not something that can be forced. This is what my wife means when she says she “can’t play the piano.” She can play the notes well enough, but doesn’t feel comfortable improvising or playing by ear.

Recently, we found a new piano teacher the kids seem to like who joins us every Sunday morning by Zoom. The kids get stickers if they practice and so far (three weeks and counting) it has been working.

After practicing from their sight-reading book for 10 minutes we try and encourage them to stay at the piano and just mess around, picking out melodies or trying to play songs they know. That way, they’ll learn to play a bit like Mom and a bit like Dad and music will be part of their life.

SHARE

You Might Also Like

I Think The Policing Of School Lunches Has Gone Too Far

(<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/learning/view/lunch-shaming-is-real-and-it-happened-to-my-daughter>)

Stealing From A Three-Year-Old Kid Is BS

(<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/learning/view/stealing-from-a-three-year-old-kid-is-bullst>)
