

An Open Letter To Parents!

by Richard Kubow

Dear Parents,

Often after several months of lessons, a distressed parent will call and say, "I think I'm going to have to take my child out of music lessons. He (or she) seems to have lost interest."

Naturally, I sympathize with the parent's concern. I understand the daily struggle of constantly reminding an unmotivated child to practice. Also, from a financial point of view, it doesn't seem wise to invest in education that is not appreciated or put to good use.

Music education, however, like other academic pursuits, is something a child will frequently not appreciate until years later. I often ask parents, "Do you allow your child to stop reading if he loses interest in books? Would you let your child quit math if she won't learn her multiplication table? If your child doesn't want to run laps, should he or she be permitted to cease athletic activities?"

Children should not be the masters of their own destiny, parents should be. Most children left to their whims and preferences would probably choose a diet of candy and soda pop, days of amusement park rides, and evenings of television. Children are simply not mature enough to know what activities are going to enrich their lives. The most worthwhile endeavors of life, including playing a musical instrument, require hard work and concentration. It's no wonder we have to instill discipline, perseverance, and motivation to help our children become doctors, lawyers, teachers and musicians.

I often listen to evening broadcasts of symphony orchestras from all over the world. Invariably before the concert, the announcer will interview the featured soloist of the evening. A common question is, "Did you enjoy practicing your instrument as a child, or did your parents require that you take lessons?" Whether the artist plays piano or trumpet, violin or bassoon, a clear majority of these well-renowned musicians answer that at first, they enjoyed the lessons, but soon lost interest. However, their parents insisted that they take lessons and practice daily. Often they were not inspired to make music their career until several years had passed. Now these artists are eternally grateful to their parents for influencing their lives.

I have to admit that I was uninterested in music lessons as a child and often wanted to quit. Thank goodness my parents encouraged me to continue for six years of lessons. Little did I know as an eight year old that, by age fifteen, I would begin composing my own music, that I would play professionally at age twenty-one, and direct a choir by age twenty-nine. I had no idea that what started out as a chore would become my hobby, and later, my livelihood.

Parents, I wish you the best as you face the challenge of shaping and molding your child into one of the leaders tomorrow. Your child may never make it to Carnegie Hall, but I guarantee that he or she will thank you for giving the gift of music, the gift that lasts a lifetime.

Sincerely,

Richard Kubow

(Richard Kubow is a musician, teacher, and owner of Richard's Music in Jackson, MS. Used with permission of the author.)