



Time to Practice Podcast

Interview Transcript for Episode 5 with Rebecca Lane

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On this episode we talk to Rebecca Lane. Rebecca is the director, founder, and owner of Lane Music School. She co-hosts the Kids Q the Music Podcast with her daughter Zara and coaches teachers and professional musicians in their businesses. She is a violinist, a teacher, a mom and it was a huge pleasure to talk about practice with her for this episode.

Christine Goodner:

Today, I'm excited to be talking to Rebecca Lane. Rebecca, I'm hoping you could start by telling listeners a little bit about who you are and what you do.

Rebecca Lane :

Hi, Christine. Thanks so much for having me. My name is Rebecca and I'm a violinist I'm based in Toronto, Ontario in Canada. And I grew up on the east coast of Canada and came to Toronto about 15 or 20 years ago and have been teaching and raising my family here. And now I actually am the proud owner of two music schools. One is a more recent addition. So a lot of what I do now is supporting the teachers at my school and doing all of the admin work and all of that leadership that's necessary to keep two schools running.

Christine Goodner:

Wow. That's a big job.

Rebecca Lane :

It is. But it's actually what I love to do, so I'm happy to do it.

Christine Goodner:

That's wonderful. And as teachers, when we have great admin support behind us, I know that's such a gift. I wondered if we could start just thinking about when you first started playing music, if there's anything you wanted to share about what got you interested in music in the first place and a little bit about what led you to become a violinist?

Rebecca Lane :

So I'm from the east coast of Canada in a small town in new Brunswick called Hampton. We had a really great school program in our public school system with a really wonderful teacher named Fran (indistinguishable) who really bolstered and grew a very strong string program over the course of her career. So I started violin lessons there when I was in grade four, I had previously taken some piano lessons, but knew that violin was my instrument. And from there it just sort of grew. And, you know, at around grade seven or eight or something, I started private lessons, which is quite late for most violinists. I didn't go through Suzuki at all. But of course, you know, with almost every string teacher, there's always a lot of overlap, at least in the repertoire. So I was familiar with that. And then, yeah, I kind of just, it took off throughout high school and I decided to pursue it professionally after that.

Christine Goodner:

What interested me about what you said is that you started with piano, but you knew violin was your thing. I wonder what sparked that, do you remember?

Rebecca Lane :

I don't Remember specifically that like the day that I knew I wanted to play the violin, but I do remember a string quartet came to visit our school and the purpose of their visit was to pique our interest. It was in grade three, which was the year before our strings program started. And so I remember getting very, just interested in the instrument, the string instruments at that point. And then my mom will tell this story. She remembers how, when we started our string program in grade four, we didn't even get to touch the instruments for many weeks. So we were learning all about it and we were learning respect for the instrument. And one day I came home and I said, mom, we got to touch the violin today. And I was just awestruck. And so like, it was kind of a love at first sight situation. I don't remember specifically when I said I want to play the violin, but it was always the one for me.

Christine Goodner:

I love hearing that. I love hearing what sparks people's interest in a particular instrument. And I get sometimes parents with three or four year olds come to my studio and say like, we don't know why, but our child is insisting. They want to play the violin. I think it's so interesting. What sparks that, especially because we talked a lot about practice on this podcast. I wonder, did you always love to practice? Was anything hard about practice for you? Could you share a bit about that?

Rebecca Lane :

I have to laugh because to this day practicing is not something that I enjoy and I have never been a fan. I was in piano lessons before violin, as I said, and didn't practice very well at that stage. I don't think that my parents knew specifically that they were meant to practice with us at that age. That wasn't, it, it was music for young children. It was group piano classes. And that wasn't maybe something that was stressed in that particular environment. And then when starting violin and grade four, it was again a group setting at school. And the teacher expected us to be kind of autonomous in our own practicing, which even still in grade four is like not, you know, you're eight or nine or something. That's not necessarily possible for those kids at that age. So I didn't love practicing. I wasn't really adamant about doing it on my own.

Rebecca Lane :

There's a story that I like to tell actually, when I was in grade five that I started lying about the practicing that I was doing. We had a practice record. We were meant to get our parents to sign it and fill it out and everything. And I just started checking it off and forging her signature. And then by about Christmas time of that year, I couldn't play anything. And I had been kind of muddling through, I was a little bit more advanced than some of the other students in the class because of my piano background. And by Christmas I didn't have the pieces memorized. I wasn't ready for the concert. And it all just kind of fell apart and came out and everyone found out and it was very shameful

Rebecca Lane :

It's not a great story actually, but it was a great learning experience for me that I couldn't just get away with not practicing I needed. I knew at that point that I needed to do it and that I (it was no secret to anyone) I wasn't doing it. Everyone knew. And I, yeah, I couldn't get away with it. So I guess my discipline and practicing did improve over time. University was probably the best stage where I was, you know, practicing the most and the most effectively. But yeah, I've never really been a huge fan of it. I do it because it's necessary.

Christine Goodner:

What a great story. I know it was not a story to aspire to, but it's a story to learn from.

Rebecca Lane :

Yeah, for sure. Yeah. And I never disappointed that teacher again - you know, there was no punishment or anything like that, but I had to . . . my mom didn't come with me to the class. She said, "you have to tell your teacher that this is what you've been doing." And I had to tell her, and I think my mom wrote a note and I had to give it to her, something like that. And it was like, I was never going to do that again to any teacher at that time.

Christine Goodner:

What a great lesson and what a great lesson in that (concept) "oh, the practice is actually doing something. It's not just like, I'm being forced to do it for no reason." Like, I do feel like some other homework can feel like that growing up, but

Rebecca Lane :

Absolutely. Yeah. It wasn't busy work.

Christine Goodner:

Right. And I think it's important for non-musician parents practicing with their kids to realize there's not something wrong with your child, if they don't feel like practicing or spontaneously practice or love practicing because even professionals feel the same sometimes. .

Rebecca Lane :

I think it's actually probably the opposite that most people err on the side of not wanting to practice. Like that's how we, trend as a people. We typically do not want to do things that are good for us, unfortunately. So yeah, it is pretty normal to not want to practice. I think,

Christine Goodner:

And for me I wanted to play, I wanted to go be in the youth orchestra with my friends. I wanted to perform, I wanted to play in ensembles. So it's sort of a means to an end instead of the practice is a thing we love, it's the results and what we get to do with it afterwards that we love.

Rebecca Lane :

Exactly. Yeah. The performing is a much more enjoyable experience.

Christine Goodner:

Exactly. Yeah. I think that's so helpful to pick apart or think of as separate when we're parents practicing with our kids, because it can be a real challenge to make that happen.

Rebecca Lane :

.And I often will say to parents as well that, you know, kids, my kids certainly who are all under the age of nine, they don't even want to brush their teeth unless I forced them to daily a couple of times a day. So like, that's just not going to happen with brushing their teeth. They won't do it properly unless I monitor them as well. So even with practicing, it's very similar to that. They're not going to eat vegetables. They're not going to brush their teeth. They're not going to put their shoes away unless I ask them to, and then we're really consistent about it. And practicing is very similar.

Christine Goodner:

I think even in my own mind, as a parent, I compared it to go into dance class or an art class where you're free form painting or something like that, where it's like, well, they enjoy practicing those things. And so it's hard not to compare them and think, there's something wrong with this activity because it doesn't feel the same.

Rebecca Lane :

Right. And I mean, you can maybe can make the comparison between like a Suzuki violin group class and a dance class that yes, your child will probably enjoy the group environment. They will enjoy being with other children their age, et cetera, but going to their lesson is different practicing. Home's very different from that.

Christine Goodner:

And as you're saying that, I think of they're practicing all day long, moving their body and putting one foot in front of the other. And some of the things that are just the mechanics of movement and dance are being practiced in other ways. And that's what we're trying to do in our music practice. But you know, it's not all just happening in that group class. It's all the work in between.

Rebecca Lane :

Yes, yes. 100%

Christine Goodner:

Well thinking about your teaching and work with students, and I know now supporting teachers, what was it that sparked you to really want to be a teacher?

Rebecca Lane :

Oh, that's a great question. I started teaching when I was about 16. I was in high school and it was really as a way of earning money to pay for my own lessons that was at the stage where that was becoming my responsibility. And so I took on a couple of students. I think I had two or three young students, or I was really essentially their practice partner. I don't know how much progress we were really making. And I certainly didn't start them on their instrument, but that's when I started doing it. I really loved working with children at that point. And I was working as a volunteer in some of the group classes that I had grown up in, in the public school system. So I really enjoyed that. And then, you know, throughout university, I continued to teach a private studios and I had some of my own students, but then actually doing the Suzuki book, one training was a real turning point for me, which I wasn't expecting.

Rebecca Lane :

I was a big skeptic of this [inaudible] method and the philosophy. I think it gets a very bad reputation amongst musicians who don't know a lot about the philosophy. And we tend to think that, you know, students will never learn to read music or whatever. So I was really resisting it. I was referred for a teaching position by a friend and one of the requirements was that I took Suzuki book, one training on violin. So I went ahead and did it and it completely changed my philosophy of teaching. And it really changed how I approached teaching young children specifically because that's (for violin anyway) that's really where this is a key method. Shines is, you know, those formative years for kids and setting them up properly on the violin. So it completely transformed how I was teaching them. It greatly improved what I was able to accomplish with them. And that's when I realized that that was kind of my strength. I was more meant to do that than I was even to perform or, you know, practice scales all day. That was more fun to me to hone that skill and to pursue that teaching path. So, yeah,

Christine Goodner:

That's really fun. I guess I like to hear what sparks people to play music in general and also to teach because I had a similar moment of teaching a family friend and then realizing like, oh no, this is what I want to do. I had, it was thinking of going in a different path. And it's really rewarding. I think to see the difference you can make.

Rebecca Lane :

Yes, I had done performance degrees all the way through in university and thought that, you know, I was on track to play in an orchestra or chamber music or something like that. I thought I would be performing professionally for the bulk of my career and income. And certainly that did continue and has continued for a long time. You know, I still do perform actively, but it was during that Suzuki training that I realized that I wanted that to be my focus, that the teaching should be really what I spend the most of my time and energy doing rather than performing, which really had turned into kind of a grind for me.

Christine Goodner:

Well, when you're thinking about your schools and supporting the teachers that you work with, what is your hope for the learning environment your schools are setting up for students?

Rebecca Lane :

Yeah, so I mean, our philosophy of teaching at the Lane school of music, I think is pretty common among a lot of and music schools, which is we want children to love music. That's the base of everything that we do, which I think is shared for a lot of music teachers everywhere. T

he thing that a lot of us, I think forget is that, or forget to focus on, I should say, is that in order to enjoy an instrument, it really helps if you're good at it. And so you can't leave that excellence and that rigor out of the equation. If you want to teach children to love and appreciate music because the child that is not practicing the child that is not advancing is not enjoying music.

They are hating every minute of it because it's either super boring or super frustrating. So finding that balance between supporting the student, teaching them well and encouraging progress, it's essential to balance that with, you know, showing them how much love and wonder can come from learning music and learning to play it well.

Christine Goodner:

Right. Reminds me of your, your story about not practicing way back when, like it wasn't fun at that point to be playing the violin.

Rebecca Lane :

It was not, no, I was dreading going because I didn't, I remember actually at one point where we were rehearsing for like the Christmas concert or something, and the teacher made us turn either turn around or turn the (music) stands around, we weren't allowed to look at the music anymore. And it was like, I have no idea what I was doing at that point. I definitely was not enjoying music anymore.

Rebecca Lane :

Yes. I think I had to learn that the hard way too, is that, oh, the fun has had once you've put in the work instead of the other way around yes.

Rebecca Lane :

The journey isn't always enjoyable. It can be to make the journey enjoyable is secondary to enjoying the result of the journey in many cases,

Christine Goodner:

Right? Reminds me of learning another language or doing some sort of endurance events or, you know, exercise, race, or something like that, where the feeling you get after you've done the training or the studying, you know, you have amazing opportunities, but getting there sometimes is a lot of work and not a lot of fun.

Rebecca Lane :

I completely agree. And I think for kids too, I think the reason why when we're first starting, for example, a violin student who's four years old or something like that, they don't yet understand that the journey can be difficult, but the result can be fun because they've never had that fun result. They've just have started out. So we incorporate all these games and practice strategies and we encourage them and everything to make the journey fun from the beginning. I think that's essential because they don't yet know what they're working towards. The journey is the entire thing for them. They have no idea what the result is, but yeah, as kids get older, it is such a wonderful thing to see them learn that, that then, you know, you've really taught them a life skill that they've really learned something that they're going to take forward with them in life. If they know that the result as well is actually so much more exciting and enjoyable than all of the hard work that they had to do to get there.

Rebecca Lane :

Exactly. And I think you bring up a really important point is that part of the practice partner, you know, adult role can be just, how do we make today's practice, have some sort of fun and enjoyable part to it? I think that's really important because otherwise it does just feel like work and why do we want to do it? So we, as the adults can sort of cultivate that in an environment of celebrating what's going well and making it fun with games or stickers or whatever it happens to be until they hit that stride of, oh, now the music does that for me.

Rebecca Lane :

Yes. And that happens at a very different stage for many kids. It's, it's very personal to them when they, some students feel like that we're never going to get there and we're always playing games with them. It's much later. And some students know that early on. They've learned that lesson somewhere else, but yeah, that's essential.

Christine Goodner:

I do find some really young students that seem to just love the discipline of practice right away. But it's definitely an exception. And I think, you know, more reliably middle school, sometimes high school for some students, it starts to click over and change gears like that. So if you're a parent listening, there's, there's a long trail to getting there, but it's

Rebecca Lane :

Coming. Yes, exactly.

Christine Goodner:

Exactly. I haven't seen someone who has stuck with it, not get there. It just can really vary. Like you're saying. I think as teachers, we have that perspective, oh, I can trust that all my students will get there because I've taught many students or seen many students. And I know as parents, sometimes just for various things with my kids' life, I'm like, oh, I wish I could see in the future and know this was going to be okay or I'm doing the right thing, having them keep going with XYZ.

Rebecca Lane :

And I found actually, even as a parent who, who is a teacher as well, I have, I still categorize my kids in a different bucket to every other child that I have ever taught. So it's hard for me to transfer those teacher lessons over into my own parenting. So yeah, if you, if you're a teacher listening and you have a parent in your studio who was a musician and maybe knows all of these things already, or is a music teacher, they still need just as much encouragement as all of the other parents. Absolutely.

Christine Goodner:

Sometimes it's harder in a way I think, because we just know so much about music. We can see the gap between maybe where a child is and where we hope they will go eventually. And that can be even harder sometimes the more, you know,

Rebecca Lane :

Or I feel like I almost assume that my kids should know things by osmosis. Like they, they're not in my brain anymore than any other child, but since they live in my house, I feel like they should know more about music than they do or something. So yeah, it can be, it can be challenging.

Christine Goodner:

Right? Absolutely. And I think the key is, you know, we have good teachers and we cultivate this environment and help our children enjoy the process. And if we can bring in whatever, I always say, whatever works, whether that, you know, some people use m&ms and chocolate chips with young kids, some people use stickers, whatever. I think whatever works. When I talk, we've done some research with a colleague and I with teenagers and a lot of them said rewards is what they remember motivating them when they were young. And none of them said, that's what we rewarded them currently. As you know, teens, that's not what pushed them to practice now, but back then they remember it. That was like the one I was willing to practice for. So I think that's really helpful to think about.

Rebecca Lane :

Yeah. So if you're rewarding, your child with chocolate chips know that when they're 16, they probably won't need the chocolate chips. Okay.

Christine Goodner:

They may still enjoy them, but they wouldn't need them. Exactly. Well, switching gears a little bit, I'd love to hear you talk a little bit about the podcast that you have and how listeners can find it and, and what you talk about on there.

Rebecca Lane :

Yeah, of course. So my podcast is called Kids Q the Music, and I host it with my daughter Zarra, who is eight going on nine, or you could say she's eight going on 17. And we really started this podcast because we found, or I have found in, you know, in parenting, in and teaching that classical music, isn't always accessible to kids.

It's easy for them to listen to it, but they have so many questions and they have so many things that they don't know about music. And it's really fun to hear what those things are. And so often when we expose them to music, we don't give them an opportunity to ask those questions, or we assume that they will know things that are obvious to grownups that just aren't to kids. So it's really fun to hear them ask those questions. So is there an I interview professional musicians, but we also interview other children who are learning music.

So students, conductors and performers, and every everyone in between teachers, we have an episode coming up with a violin maker, which is going to be really fun just to find out more about what, what it is these musicians are doing and yeah. To just make it interesting and fun for kids so that they can learn in a really easy and non-threatening way.

Christine Goodner:

Great. We'll make sure we link to how people can find that. It sounds like a great resource just to add some interest into practice and music for kids. So, yeah. Great. Thank you. Now, as we wrap up, I always like to ask people, if you had one tip you could share about practice with students or your children, what, what would you like to share with listeners? I think

Rebecca Lane :

The thing that has worked the best with my own kids, and again, I'm no expert. And I know that you've said this tip before Christine, so I apologize for repeating it, but I think it bears repeating that practicing at the same time every day is for my family, the most effective way to make sure that it gets done and to minimize disgruntled complaining children. So if they expect that it's going to happen, it's no surprise when I ask them to do it. And you can make that time of day, essentially any time. I mean, the earlier in the day, the better, I think if you can do it in the morning before school or whatever, then that's usually when kids are the freshest for my family, that's not usually possible to do in the morning. And with my son, he's seven and he's doing cello. We always do his practice right before bed. So he's in his pajamas, all right, B, he comes into the practice space and we do it. It's really short and hopefully sweet, but he just expects that it's going to happen. And there's not a lot of complaining because it happens every day at that time. So that would be my tip practice at the same time every day, whenever possible. And be as consistent as you possibly can. Yeah.

Christine Goodner:

It's such an important tip. I think it's really key people say that's really the thing that makes it work for them in my experience. So thank you. I like that mental picture of practicing and the pajamas before bed. Well, if people want to connect with you more and find out more about what you do, what's the best place to find you. So

Rebecca Lane :

Definitely in my podcast, Kids Q the Music is a great resource for parents and teachers. If you are encouraging a love of music in children, that's a great place to start. I also coach musicians and teachers to help them grow their studios and get more students from a business and marketing perspective. You can find me there at RebeccaLanecoaching.com and of course on social media, [RebeccaLanecoach](https://www.instagram.com/RebeccaLanecoach), and we're currently [Upper Beaches Music](https://www.instagram.com/UpperBeachesMusic) on social media, but we will soon be the Lane School of Music.

Christine Goodner:

Great. Well, congratulations on the extension of your music school and all of the wonderful things going on. Thanks for making time to chat with us today.

Rebecca Lane :

Thank you so much for having me.

Christine's top takeaways:

- 1. Practice isn't always enjoyable but what we get from it often is (and is what's motivating).**
- 2. Practice with our own children often feels much harder and more complicated than working with our students.**
- 3. Feeling motivated and taking ownership of practice happens at really different ages depending on each individual child.**
- 4. Even the pros haven't always loved to practice (and still might not) but we do it because we can see it's what works – it takes time and experience to learn that lesson.**

We hope you enjoyed this conversation! Subscribe to the Time to Practice podcast on your favorite podcast platform and follow on social media so you're sure to see future episodes. We can't wait to share them with you!