



## Episode Ten: An Interview with Diane Worthey

**Christine Goodner:** I am excited to be talking to Diane Worthey. Diane, that would love to hear a little bit about who you are and what you.

**Diane Worthey:** Thanks, Christine. It's really exciting for me to be on your podcast. Thanks for asking me. I am an instructor at the university of Idaho for the Suzuki method, preparatory division here in Moscow, Idaho. I actually live in Pullman, Washington, and I teach students from both Pullman and mine.

So I've been teaching for gosh, over 30 years, I have a degree in music, violin as well, teach Viola. And then, more recently I have become an author.

**Christine Goodner:** Well, I'm excited to talk to you today about all of those things. So thank you for being here. I was hoping we could talk first about what does music look like in your life during this past pandemic year or year plus at this point when we're talking.

**Diane Worthey:** Well, music probably looks the same in my life as it does in yours, Christine. I've been teaching solely on zoom for over a year. Now our symphony season was completely canceled, so my own personal playing, and it's been very challenging and we've done our recital on zoom.

We did our workshop and our music Fest, which is an adjudicated event on zoom. And I just have to say that. When I first started in, I thought, I don't know how I'm going to do this! But I've learned a lot and it's been amazing in many ways. And my students have been amazing and I call them my COVID champions.

They, they have just really risen to the challenge of doing it this way. So anyway, I'm really looking forward to getting back to face to face and, playing again myself and the groups that I play in and doing gigs again and all that.

**Christine Goodner:** Yes, I can relate to all of that. Both the looking forward to things, you know, being in person and then also such a (pauses) I don't know what the right word, maybe respect or amazement at just what the students have done this past year.

**Diane Worthey:** And especially the group class teaching has been challenging but also fun. Cause I had to come up with different ways to get across the same things that I would normally do in person and lots of growth, in interesting ways.

**Christine Goodner:** Yeah, absolutely. I agree with that for sure. Well, I'd love to go back in time a bit and just hear a little bit about what started you off in music.

How old were you when you first took lessons or played your instrument and what interested you in that?

**Diane Worthey:** Yeah, well, actually I started on the piano when I was five, because I went to a movie called, Oliver. I grew up in a time where the musical movies were really big and the theaters like Julie Andrews and you know, these stars like that.

And anyway, Oliver and I came home and started playing one of the themes from the movie on the piano. And my parents were like, Um, who's playing the piano around here?? They're like, okay, we need to get her some piano lessons. So I started on piano and I had a really lovely teacher, very patient, very kind.

And I loved music from the start. I just felt like it was something that was always in my head. And I liked being able to express myself through music. I was very shy, extremely shy as a child. And music was sort of a safe outlet for me to, speak in a different way without using my human voice. And so, yeah, I started piano and then in fourth grade I became enamored with the violin because of another movie that I was taken to called Fantasia. And that was the original Fantasia movie. And when I saw the Philadelphia orchestra warming up on stage and all their bows moving together in the shadowy images on the screen, I was like, mesmerized. I was like, oh my goodness.

That's what I want to do. So that's when I started the violin in school.

**Christine Goodner:** I love that story. It's so interesting. What sparks children especially to really feel like, oh no, this is what I'm meant to do.

**Diane Worthey:** Yeah. Well, I came from a family that was not musical per se. I mean, I think actually they could have been, but they'd never really discovered that themselves.

So I've always felt kind of like an outlier in my family. So I sort of had these other influences ... my uncle used to bring old fashioned records - those of you who are listening, you might not know what a record player is, you know, with the turntable style record. And, I would listen to classical music records that he brought. So really I think about just how a little things in our environment spark really life-changing interests

**Christine Goodner:** I was curious. You've mentioned some of what you loved about it, maybe the way you could express yourself. I love hearing what people both loved about playing music as a child, and also, you know, did you love to practice and

**Diane Worthey:** well, okay, so practice, I always, (pauses) I was a good student. I practiced, I did what my teacher asked me to do, but I have to say looking back at myself, I think I practiced to please my teacher, I didn't want to disappoint the adults in my life. Right. And so that was sort of my motivation to practice. So did I love it? Love to practice all the time? No. However way later in my life, I discovered that.

Who I'm practicing for is myself. I'm not practicing to please anybody else I'm practicing to better my own skills, my own self. And once I realized that. I love to practice because it's not about pleasing somebody else or disappointing someone else it's about not disappointing myself. That was a huge change for me. And I wish I would've learned that much younger than I did

**Christine Goodner:** So interesting. I think about this a lot, and I've done some research with a colleague about some of this, and it seems like once we're at a intermediate level or so students start to take some ownership over that. I wonder if we even can do that younger, even though I think many of us look back and like, oh, if only I had done this for more personal reasons,

**Diane Worthey:** that's true. And like anything in life, you know, pleasing other people is not really what you want to do. Kids kind of get, you know, of course, roped into that.

**Christine Goodner:** Yes, a common story. I feel like, oh, it was really hard. And either I was made to, or I wanted to make other people happy and then I feel like when we, if we become professionals or do it for life, somehow we make that our own. Thanks for sharing that. I'd love to switch gears a bit and talk about your new book *In one Ear and Out the Other*.

I'd love to just hear what you would like to share about the book itself.

**Diane Worthey:** So the book is about Antonia Brico, who was the first woman to conduct the New York Philharmonic. I played in an orchestra that she directed when I was a teen. That time she was in her eighties, she was still conducting, she was very scary to me.

I was an only child or teenager playing in the orchestra. It was a semi-professional, adult orchestra in Denver, Colorado called the Brico symphony. So she's the person who introduced me to the major repertoire, like Beethoven symphonies, and Sibelius and all sorts of things. The book came about because I, I started a new hobby a few years ago and that was, I wanted to write., I like to collect books for my studio, for what I call my sibling corner.

So when a student's waiting for a lesson, they can, you know, kind of look at musical kind of books and things. I noticed that at the library, that there's very small section devoted to the arts. I was like, you know what, this isn't right. Maybe I can, do something about this. Maybe I can write a book.

And so that's how my hobby started. And now it's not a hobby it's become kind of almost like a second job or career. I started realizing the impact that Antonia Brico had on my young life and decided to try to find out more about her. And I wasn't sure when I started digging. So the result is this book, for kids and it's aimed at ages seven through eleven, but I've had adults from all of the world, contact me saying they'd loved the book that they knew Antonia or that the message, it relates not only to music, but to . . . just everything that's kind of going on in our society right now with, you know, don't listen to naysayers, don't let people tell you, you can't do something that you want to do. So that's kind of how the book came about, but it was a very long book coming. The seed was planted when I was a teenager.

**Christine Goodner:** I'm curious, you know, you said she was maybe a bit of a scary figure to you way back then. And I'm wondering how you went from that feeling to really like I need to learn more about this person.

**Diane Worthey:** You know, there's another, another element to this. And that is when I was playing in her orchestra. I didn't know how important she was.

No one told me my teacher took me to play in the orchestra, but no one ever took me aside and said, "Hey, Diane, you know, you really need to know about this woman." To me. She was just of. The old lady up there, you know, who was scary. And if I, if I wasn't doing something right, she point her Baton at me and kind of, you know, call me out and so it's not like I had conversations with her.

It was all about the music. Right? And so the thing is then what happened is when I went to college, I was playing in the back-up orchestra for an artist Judy Collins, who is very famous folk singer, and she's still touring, or at least she was, until COVID and she is now 79 years old. I think Judy used to open her concerts by talking about Antonia Brico, because Antonia Brico was Judy's piano teacher and Antonia wanted Judy to be a classical pianist, but Judy had other ideas.

Folk music was her calling. But anyway, that's another seed that was planted because I was sitting there as a college student, so many years ago, hearing that Antonia Brico was important. I sort of sat up a little straighter in my chair and went, wow, I know her, you know, but it wasn't really until a couple of years ago when I started trying to decide what to, or who to write about... I knew I wanted to highlight a woman musician and it wasn't until actually my husband said, what about Antonia brico? Yeah, I was going to write about Fanny Mendelssohn, but he said, what about Antonia Brico and this kind of spark went off and then from there, just, everything just happened after that.

**Christine Goodner:** What a great story. Yeah. I can imagine having to reconcile the story you are hearing this famous musician tell plus this image in your head of maybe the grumpy conductor

**Diane Worthey:** And then that's why I worked so hard to get a blurb from Judy Collins and her words appear on the back of my book. Some of her words that I edited down, but I just felt like she was part of my story. Because she's the person who told me, "Hey, you know, Antonia Brico was an important, woman musician. And so, yeah, but that just sort of just, lay dormant in my mind for about 30 years as I went about my life and family and all that teaching and playing, and then it just sort of came back around

**Christine Goodner:** and it's so great. I think, you know, in the classical music tradition, we hear all of the time about men composers men composers and conductors and all of that all the time. I love hearing stories about women in the arts and in music and sort of the trailblazing they had to do that. Maybe we don't even think about these things.

**Diane Worthey:** Can't talk about this yet, but I just got another book deal for another woman musicians.

(Christine: Congratulations) . Yeah. Thanks. I'm waiting to sign the contract and hope it comes cause I'm getting nervous. But anyway, so that's kind of, like my mission right now is to kind of highlight, you know, women who've been overlooked in history, in history books, right? Shine, some light on them.

[00:12:20] **Christine Goodner:** Yeah, and I think I'm glad in recent conversations, people are looking around and just seeing, okay, who's been left out of some of these historical conversations and musical conversations and make sure we're including more of those stories.

**Diane Worthey:** We are and it's also important that you tell a story that you. (pauses) It's your own, it's an own story. Like, you know, there are certain stories that I can't tell. So yeah. So just knowing which ones are appropriate for you to tell them

**Christine Goodner:** right. And supporting other people who might want to tell those other stories that are not for us to tell, but how can we help them get told?

Yeah, important conversation for sure. Well, as a fellow writer, I know the work that goes into making a book and writing a book. And I think about also the work that goes into practicing an instrument and learning music. And I just wondered what parallels you found, if any, about the writing process and the instrumental practice process.

**Diane Worthey:** Oh my gosh. That was the one thing that surprised me the most. When I started writing, I immediately could see the parallels. And honestly, I think being a musician is what has given me success getting my book published, finding that a traditional publisher to publish my books, everything, I point back to music.

First of all, you have to work with others to realize your skills. I've joined a writing group right away and, get critiques on my manuscripts. And they helped me mold my manuscripts and make them better. And musicians do that too. Right. Where we don't learn in a vacuum. We learn with others. We have a teacher, that's our mentor.

We have other players, peers that we play with. It's especially important as a string player to play with others. You learn more. And I always learn more in an orchestra than I learned anywhere else. When I was a kid being able to take constructive criticism about what you're working on, knowing that it's not.

It's not you that someone might be saying let's improve this, or let's make this different. You're talking about your art. They're not talking about you as a person. So being able to separate that out, honestly, for me Writing is easier that way. Music is so personal. It's so personal to me that it's harder for me to take criticism music, but if you can do it with music, you can do it with anything.

It's what I think. Yes. Revising, revising, revising. I can't tell you how many times I revised my manuscript? I have, I lost count. I don't even know. I was okay with that, because that's what you do in music all the time. When you're working on a difficult spot and it's not working, you gotta change something.

Right? You've got to revise. So that was like a biggie, repetition of sticking with difficult spot until you solve it. I don't mind sticking with one paragraph in the manuscript I'm working on, because that's what I do with four measures of a hard symphony part. So, you know, it's like, it seems the same process. In writing, you get a lot of rejection, I suppose that happens in music too.

If you know, you're trying to get into a certain orchestra, maybe you don't make it the first time. You know, and so you keep going, you keep at it. This one's important, believing you have a story to tell that the world needs to hear. Something to say that hasn't been said enough, music will never be said enough in my opinion.

So it's important that you do it. Don't listen to the naysayers who say you'll never have success. I've had that both in music and in writing. So, that's the whole point of my Antonia book right there. Let those discouraging words go in one ear and out the other. And, those are words Antonia Brico herself said over and over.

I did not make up that phrase for her. She said it, that was kind of her. Which I have now taken on as, "yes, I like that." If it's in your heart, a part of you sing it out to the world, you know, don't be shy about it. So those are things that I found that are very similar in writing and music and also. This last publisher that just, I had the conversation with is a musician.

And that's why he liked my manuscript. He almost majored in music. I was like, "yes, I found the right person." And he said, you know, being a musician, you just, you know how to write with a cadence, you know how to write with an arc, you know how to have a climax to your piece when you know a falling action, you know, it's very similar to a symphony or a concerto or,

**Christine Goodner:** Yes. And cadence is so important to me when I read, especially children's books, if the cadence is off.

**Diane Worthey:** Oh, I know it. So those are things that will come naturally to you if you're already a musician and I haven't, I've never taken a writing course other than college level English courses, but I just think it's, it must be the music. That's helped me in this new hobby.

**Christine Goodner:** Those are such great examples. I also think about the level of deep focus and putting aside distractions, you know, if I'm going in the practice room to really practice something, or I'm going to sit down and really work on my manuscript, I'm in the middle of editing a book draft right now.

So I'm deep in it, but I think that just the level (of focus) that's required. (laughs) Like I really have to prepare

**Diane Worthey:** myself. Yeah. And do you feel Christine? That for me, I need space around me. Like in terms of like right now, I'm not seeing students for a little while because I, we did all our semester and we're done with recitals and things, and I'm gonna take some time off and I feel like I need time off from some things in order to get the creative juices flowing and the same with my practice violin practice. It's like, if I could I just practice more on my

vacation, then I seem to, or I spoke as better, I guess when I'm practicing, when I don't have so many things to take care

**Christine Goodner:** of. Agreed. In fact, this year I've been really stepping back from you know, extra obligations and things that I do love doing, but I've realized I can't do those things. And write at the same time and other people can do those things, but nobody else can write my book, so I won't make time for it. Yeah.

**Diane Worthey:** And the same goes for music too. Right. I mean, it's, it's like if you're working on something that's, you know, giving a concert or something and it's like, yeah, you gotta have space around you.

Yeah, that's something I've noticed.

**Christine Goodner:** It's super interesting to think about. Thanks for sharing those. I have two more questions for you. One is kind of pivoting back to your own journey as a musician. What did you learn the hard way about practice? Maybe it's what we were just talking about or maybe something

**Diane Worthey:** else comes to mind. So I'll tell you what I learned the hard way. And again, it took me way too long in my life, I think to learn this, but there's a quote by Albert Einstein. It's called insanity. "Insanity is doing the same thing. Over and over again and expecting different results." Okay, let me say that again. Cause I think this is really important "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results" from Albert Einstein.

I'm sure most people know he was a violinist as well as a scientist. So when I was young, I remember thinking. If I look back, I remember thinking, "oh, that person over there who plays so well, it was first chair or concertmaster, they just naturally are good at that.

They just, you know, they must have just been born with this. It's just magic. They just magically do it" is what's going on in my little 10 year old mind or whatever, but that's not true. At all. I mean, the thing about really good players is they know how to practice and they experiment. They make a hypothesis.

"Well, that shift, that shift didn't work. Why is that?" Is it, "oh, maybe my thumb was tight on the neck or so I short shifted" or "maybe, I'm not hearing it. Maybe I'm not listening enough to know where exactly am I going when I'm doing this difficult shift" and they experiment and, and they find what to change.

I didn't do that then, I wish I had known. I just did things over and over and over. Well, maybe it'll work this time. So that's huge. And I think once you, first of all, you need a really good teacher to give you the tools so that you know, what things you can experiment with and, and find out how to make what you're doing better.

**Christine Goodner:** I can relate to that so much. And I was talking to some colleagues recently and we said, we felt like much older when we learned how to practice and we're

teaching, you know, eight and nine-year-olds how to practice some ways we had to learn as a young adults really.

**Diane Worthey:** And oh yeah. Yeah. I mean, even in college, I don't think I knew how to practice it properly.

I mean, really, I think teaching taught me how to practice really Suzuki method taught me how to practice. Right? Because I didn't have the Suzuki Method as a child. It wasn't. Yeah. It was going, but not in full force yet here in this country when I was a kid.

**Christine Goodner:** Yes. That's a great quote. I was smiling when you're ready. Nice. I really liked that. So true.

**Diane Worthey:** Well, I tell myself that I still have use it cause I'm just like. Wait a minute, change something, do something different, figure it out. And if you can't figure it out, ask someone, yes. How can I do this? Cause it's still not working. I've tried this, this, this and this. Yeah.

**Christine Goodner:** And that takes some bravery to admit I can't figure this out, but yeah. Saves a lot of

**Diane Worthey:** time. No need to reinvent the wheel. So to speak, the violin has been played for hundreds of years and people figured out how that, how to do classical violin. And let's not reinvent the wheel ourselves.

**Christine Goodner:** Exactly. Well, the question I always like to end with is what is your best tip about music practice you'd like to share? And you can definitely mention something you've already talked about today that you want to just bring up again. And if you have something different you'd love to share. We'd love to hear that too.

**Diane Worthey:** Well you probably know about the Nike tennis shoes.

Which is "just do it." Well, there's also a Shia Labouf YouTube video. I don't know if you've seen that. My son showed that to me called "just do it." That's the number one thing is you just have to do it and you have to just set aside time. Hopefully the same time every day to do it. I can't sugar coat that it's just kinda like same with when I was writing my book, I just had to sit down and do it, and it was hard.

But you just, you work on it every day; find a time of day that seems like, this is my violin practice time or my Viola practice time. This is, this is when I do it. And then pat yourself on the back, you know, and say, Hey, I did it. And for me earlier in the day is better than later, because then I can relish in the:

"oh, I got it done!: Instead of it hanging over my head going, " still need to practice. I still need to do this." So that's one thing. And then this comes from Julie Andrews. "Some people regard discipline as a choice. For me, it's a kind of order that sets me free to fly. "So I like that. I'm thinking of it as it's going to help me just discipline's going to help me fly. The best practice tip is just make it fun while you're doing it.



And there's one thing I do with my students that they really love. And it's probably something other people do too. This might not be new, but I have this game called the dragon dice game. Do you know that game? I don't. Okay. Well, they used to sell these kits of blocks. Okay. And what you do is they don't sell them anymore.

So I make my own, so you can get a wooden block. It's some six sided block. You can just get the app, like a craft store, get a big enough one that you can write things in, say Sharpie on. And so you have one block that has a repertoire on it, which. Right now I have this block-out has Hunters' Chorus, Two Grenadiers and Waltz

so this is like a book two block and then I mean, it could be your etudes or your scales or whatever. So make lots of blocks with different choices on them. And then the other block is numbers. So you just number them. From one to six, the sides of the other block, and then you roll them.

And so it's sort of like, you know, you're going to practice these things, but it's kind of fun to have a little chance on what do I get to do first? Okay. So you roll on it. And then what you do is you have, that's what the rep block is for. But then with the numbers, you've rolled out one and that number represents something like, ...so if you're going to do something serious, maybe a number one represents abow or a number two is your going to think about your feet or number three, you're going to play with a beautiful tone or, you know, all those technical things that your teacher wants you to do.

But you can also have a silly key that's where you would... say you roll on number one, you have to stand on one foot and play, or you have to turn around in a circle and play, or did you lie down on the floor and play?

You know? So anyway, those are ways that my students have fun practicing, and I actually use it too.

**Christine Goodner:** I love that for myself. And I think that's really important. Just do it and make the time, but it doesn't mean it has to be miserable the whole time. Like how do we make it more enjoyable? Because we're going to do it every day.

I think that's really key.

**Diane Worthey:** Yeah And mix it up. Like you might get tired of this dragon and it's called dragon dice because you can put a wild card, wild square, which is a dragon. And that means it's your choice, if you could do anything. So, so yeah, I just like having the parameter of this is what we're practicing.

Okay. But there's some chance or there's some game into how we, we accomplish it.

**Christine Goodner:** Exactly. I think that goes for anything that's disciplined. How do we make it more enjoyable? So we actually do it every day. Wonderful. That's right. Well, thank you so much for chatting with me. We will share the link to where people can find your book and anything else we mentioned today that might be helpful.

Is there any way, if people are looking to follow your work and your future books, that they can get in contact with you or following.

**Diane Worthey:** So I do have a blog it's you can easily find it. It's just Diane worthy.blog. You could go there and leave a message for me and I'll definitely respond. Awesome. The Brico book is now available at Shar music.

I wanted to put in a plug for them because they were really good to carry it but it's available anywhere, or you're at any bookstore, if they don't have on the shelf, they'll get it from you. But yeah. So yeah, I do have a blog and hopefully I'll be able to get more information up there as well as things progress.

**Christine Goodner:** Perfect. Well, thank you. And I hope when the next book comes out, we can chat with you

**Diane Worthey:** again. Thank you so much. And, it's been really fun talking with you, Christine.

#### **Three Takeaways from today's Podcast:**

- **When it comes to practice - just do it but also make it fun and change things up.**
- **There are many parallels between the art and discipline of writing and practicing. It's helpful to remember that some of what makes it challenging to practice and play our instruments is the same as what is hard for any discipline that requires deep work and focus.**
- **There are amazing people all around us that we might not even realize play an important role in history or whose story may not have been told yet.**