



Episode 45: An Interview Jennifer Roig-Francoli

Christine Goodner ([00:02](#)):

All right, welcome everyone. I'm excited today to be talking to Jennifer Roig-Francoli. Jennifer, I always like to ask people to introduce themselves a bit to everyone listening to us today, and tell us a bit about what you do in the world of music.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([00:14](#)):

Yeah, thank you. Thanks so much for having me, Christine. It's really nice to be here and well, a little bit about myself. Well, I wanted a violin when I was two. I got one when I was four, and my mother found out about the Suzuki method. So I was brought up in that tradition. And, she was a Suzuki cello teacher herself from my childhood. And throughout my teenage years, all I cared about was the violin, pretty much. I had a quite successful career as a soloist. I was going in that direction. And long, fast forward <laugh>, now <laugh>, I still play the violin, but not so much. Mostly what I do is I coach musicians online, adult musicians of all kinds, and I help them to learn how to get over mental and physical blockages to feeling really great about themselves and their music and being able to make better music, you know, improve their skills, their technique, and so forth. So that's mainly, mainly what I do now. And I got to this point through becoming an Alexander Technique teacher, which is a mind body discipline to help you really connect how you're thinking with how you move and how you do things in life so you can feel better physically and emotionally, and everything you do gets easier and more fun. So that's a little bit about me. I hope that helps <laugh>.

Christine Goodner ([01:45](#)):

Yes, absolutely. That's great. And you have a new book out "Make Great Music with Ease!" That we'll talk about as our conversation goes on today. But one thing was, I was reading the introduction of that that you talked about was finding joy in your playing and practice. And it's interesting that that's a theme that's come up in a few interviews so far this season, you know, without anybody planning on it. It just keeps coming up about how, how well we might mm-Hmm, <affirmative> improve our playing by

tapping into that. And I think sometimes it can feel if we're a parent coaching a young musician in home practice, that it's supposed to be just like intense <laugh> or, you know, finding joy can feel like maybe we're wasting time if we're finding, you know, the silly moments in the middle of practice or the joyful moments. So I just wonder if you could talk a little bit about your thoughts on that.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([02:29](#)):

Oh yeah, absolutely. And actually the full title of the book is it's Make Great Music with Ease, the Secret to Smarter Practice, confident Performance and Living a Happier Life. So the Living a Happier Life, <laugh> is really very important. And I'm a mother, I have two boys. They are grown now. One just graduated, well, they both graduated from the University of Cincinnati College conservatory music, and one is doing a master's and one is going off to have a singer songwriting career <laugh>. And so they both ended up as musicians, but as a parent, the last thing I was trying to do was to steer them towards a music career, <laugh>. And you could have bowled me over with a feather when my older son, Gabriel, just a, a few years ago, decided he wanted to go into music because he was heading towards a political career in social science, <laugh> and, and law and all that.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([03:28](#)):

He changed his mind. And my other son, Rafael, is a violinist and becoming really an excellent violinist, but he didn't tell me that he wanted to become a professional until halfway through high school. So I was a very hands off parent as a musician. I think it can be really challenging for, um, parents sometimes who are musicians to know how to guide their, their kids. It's hard for any parent. But that's, that's sort of where I was coming from. Um, and I just wanted my kids to be happy and music was in our family so it made sense to, you know, introduce them to music. But I was much more interested in having them enjoy their lives and really learn how to, you know, be good people and contribute to society and really have that happiness inside them that then they could express through music or anything else. And music was just one way.

Christine Goodner ([04:29](#)):

I think it is. we can go different directions with intensive music study. I love what you just described. And then there's also a path we could go down that's just intensity all the time. Yes, perfection and never being happy with what we're producing or the process itself, but mm-Hmm,

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([04:44](#)):

<affirmative>,

Christine Goodner ([04:45](#)):

Yeah. I know. I hope to help my students avoid when we're working on practice together.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([04:51](#)):

Yeah, I think that's really, really challenging, especially in the classical music world. I'm not so sure. I don't think it's quite the same in some other genres like jazz. I think they tend to be a little more flexible <laugh> in some ways than classical musicians. I feel very lucky that my parents were both musicians, but they weren't pushy. And, and yet at the same time, it was a nice balance between, you know, I wanted to be a musician. So the way to do that meant practicing every day. And it meant not necessarily playing outside with friends when I wanted to <laugh> it meant, you know, doing my practicing first. And so there's a, a fine line between, you know, finding balance between enjoying your

everyday life, but also doing what needs to be done. But I think the key is to find ways to enjoy the actual practicing, which is, you know, what you were just saying.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([05:52](#)):

And it's really hard to do that if you have a perfectionistic tendency and nothing ever seems good enough and it feels like you're never going to be able to learn this thing, whatever it is. So we need to find different mindset strategies and techniques. And what I specialize in is the mind body strategies that include the whole self. So you're bringing your whole self to your instrument. So it's much easier, I think, to integrate your everyday life with your music and having the purpose include happiness and joy. <laugh> I think is essential because it's easy to forget about it. Because it's not easy, you know, playing an instrument is challenging and it takes a lot of patience.

Christine Goodner ([06:39](#)):

Absolutely. And I think it's really valuable to hear from someone like you and your story, because it can feel as a parent, if we're in charge of the practice with our children at home, that if we don't push hard enough or make them work hard enough, how will they ever end up getting anywhere? It can feel a lot of like pressure on parents, I think sometimes. Yes. Like what if we're being too relaxed about this? So it's great to hear that we don't have to go that direction and we can still get to very high levels in music.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([07:05](#)):

Definitely. Yeah. And I really - it's always going to be up to the child, right? In the end, hopefully it will be up to the child. It isn't actually in, in, in actual life. I mean, I have students I used to teach at the university and I had, um, students come to me for Alexander technique lessons. And I think the saddest thing was always to see the occasional student who had been pushed into music. And I remember one student in particular who really couldn't even conceive of the possibility of making music with joy. And that was because that child had been forced to play the instrument and she had no choice whatsoever. She was forced to practice for hours every day. She didn't like it, but that was irrelevant. She had to do it because her parents wanted her to go to music school and become a musician. But that was their goal and not hers at all. And I'm glad she found me because I was able to help her see things differently. And she was able to get to the point of really enjoying what she was doing with her instrument. But, uh, so many years of pain and unhappiness and physical pain as well, and all that could have been avoided with a different strategy from her parents, I think, which included more of what, how she felt about things and what she thought and what her wishes were. Right. And not every child needs to be a musician <laugh>, obviously. Yeah.

Christine Goodner ([08:40](#)):

You know, I always tell people, you know, tension is the enemy of what we're doing as musicians, like mental tension, physical tension. And I think realizing that, that we like, the more pressure we put on, actually the more tense the child might be and the less they're able to learn or you know, the more they might develop an injury, that sort of thing. So I imagine with your Alexander technique background as well, I wonder if you could say anything about tension and playing

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([09:06](#)):

Oh yes. So much <laugh>. Yeah. And actually the kind of Alexander technique that I teach is uncommon. It's not the traditional method that, you know, if any of your listeners have heard of Alexander technique is traditionally taught through touch. Very gentle, non-manipulative, non-invasive touch. But I

have come to the, the point where I don't use touch when I teach, and that's how I can teach exclusively online. But I put that kind of Alexandra technique work into a broader context that I call the art of freedom method for conscious living and masterful artistry. And I call it the art of freedom method™ because I feel it's so essential for each of us to realize that we have the freedom to choose how we're going to respond to the things coming our way. So for example, I mean it's, it's really tricky between parents and children of course, because it's always about balance.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([10:11](#)):

You want to give your children freedom, but they can't have unlimited freedom because then they won't be safe <laugh>. Right. And they can make really stupid choices sometimes. So we need to, you know, learn how to guide them in a way that gives them practice making choices and you know, allowing them to make wrong choices without getting hurt. And, help them to realize that they do have power over their thoughts and their actions, so that more often they're motivated to make good choices for themselves. And that's of course in everyday life as well as in their practice room. I mean, getting them into the practice room is I think one of the biggest hurdles to get over. You know, how do you pull them away from their phone or their tablet or their video games or their friends outside? You know, it, the world is endless distraction and so they just want to have fun and feel good like most people. But they need to be taught that if you really want to get somewhere with something, like you said you need to do the work, but how can you get them do the, to want to do the work <laugh> so that they have the freedom to choose to do the work themselves. Exactly. That's the challenge.

Christine Goodner ([11:33](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. There's that Fred Rogers quote, which I'm sure will butcher where, he says something about like, what we're trying to do is not force children into doing something, but to so create an environment in which they actually want do it themselves.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([11:46](#)):

Yes, it really is. And I feel really fortunate that my kids could go to a Montessori school, where they're actually - they give a framework, right? There are certain things you need to do by the end of the day, but the child gets to choose in which order to do things. And I think this is a really important thing for music practice too, that, you know, a child comes home from school and has options. Well, they can practice their dance, their violin, their gymnastics. They can go out and play, they can do video games, they can do homework. There are so many things. So how do, how do you give them the freedom to, to choose what they're attracted to and yet put the limitations that they need to get X, y, z done by the end of the day, <laugh>. So, and then it does come down to how does the parent manage their own emotions? And if the child isn't cooperating or it doesn't want to do what you think is best for them, how do you respond to rebellion or resistance or laziness or procrastination and all those things, <laugh>. And so, yeah, it does come down to the parent first taking care of themselves and being able to model good habits of taking care of themselves so that then the child learns through an imitation and example.

Christine Goodner ([13:18](#)):

Yeah. That, yeah. That's a big project to undertake, to practice with our children. Yes and take care of our own selves in the process. Absolutely.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([13:27](#)):

I think it's one of the hardest things in the world, if not the hardest thing to be a parent, in my experience anyway. Absolutely.

Christine Goodner ([13:33](#)):

Absolutely. Yeah. I had somebody share with me once they thought, and they were talking about Suzuki parenting or music parenting, but it was like the hardest but most rewarding thing they ever did. And I liked that framework because it's like so worth it, but challenging.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([13:46](#)):

Yes, it really is. But you know, you all grow <laugh>, the parents grow, the kids grow hopefully. And so then it can be a beautiful thing. I feel so grateful that my mother, well, she was also trained as a kindergarten teacher, you know, educated, her degree is in that, so she had, you know, educational skills in a different field that then she brought to, um, the violin. You know, in traditional Suzuki, I'm, you know, this I'm sure, your listeners might know too, but in, in the old days of early Suzuki <laugh>, it used to be that the parent was expected to learn the instrument along with the child. And it doesn't always work so well in today's environment, in our culture, especially American culture. Um, we have so many activities and things and parents are so busy too. But my mother had the time and the interest to learn the violin along with me, and she learned a lot, <laugh>, you know, learned a lot from learning an instrument.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([14:53](#)):

And then actually wanted to go to Japan to study with Suzuki as a teacher. So she went along with a group to train with him and then liked it so much she brought me over to Japan to study with him for a month a year later. And I think the best thing about the Suzuki method is really that it's not so much about what you're accomplishing, it's really about the process. And, you know, Suzuki is always, you know, there's a whole book called Nurtured by Love, right? So I think the essence of that technique and you know, there are always drawbacks to every technique. So, you know, there are a lot of people who are anti Suzuki, but I have a feeling that maybe they don't really understand the, or the original <laugh>, you know, and the essence of it sometimes. And it's not always taught these days the way it was intended.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([15:47](#)):

So it's really hard to discern. But nurtured by love I think is such a core purpose to have. And if you really focus on that, the loving connection and relationship between parent, child, teacher, it's like that triangle, right? I mean, obviously the love between the parent and the teacher is different <laugh> from the parent and the child. But if you're - if everyone has this understanding that that love is more important than anything that any of these people might end up doing, like, or the success that child might have and or the, the speed of learning is so irrelevant when there's love there and acceptance and compassion and patience, kindness, all these qualities that really take a lot of practice. That's what we need to practice more than anything, I believe.

Christine Goodner ([16:48](#)):

Absolutely. Absolutely. And I think if we are successful at creating that kind of environment around practice, then hopefully as a child grows up and continues to make music, they can do that for themselves. And we can get away from some of the negative. I know in your book you talk about like unwinding some of the unhelpful habits or things we say to ourselves, that get in the way of practice.

And I would great to hear what you see. Those are for adults. And then, you know, we could always bring that back to, well, how could we maybe get at the start of where those develop, you know, where it's not under our control Totally. As parents, what our children think,

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([17:20](#)):

That's a great question. I I call them the doubt monsters, <laugh>, you know, and I work with adults and some of my adults are in their seventies, eighties, you know, and we still call them the doubt monsters, you know, it sort of tongue in cheek, but you know, they're not little monsters really, but they're thoughts that we think and sometimes we've been thinking them since childhood. And really those thoughts often start very early. And sometimes they're even planted there by the parents unconsciously because the parents are thinking those doubt monsters. So an example is, I'm not good enough. So for example, the parent might think about their parenting, I'm not good enough, I'm not a good enough mother, I'm not a good enough father, I'm not a good enough musician to be able to help my child. There's all that. I'm not good enough energy.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([18:11](#)):

It's not really helpful for the parent <laugh>. And then it gets passed on to the child and children pick up on everything. Know, even if it's unstated, it's never said out loud. Um, they pick it up and then they start to feel it. They feel the energy of the I'm not good enough. And it can be projected on them too. So a child is told sometimes that's not good enough. Do it again. You're not good enough, you're not behaving. Your behavior's not good enough. So I'm just giving one example because it's so common. So many people think they're not good enough in one area or another, or just kind of in general. And when you think you're not good enough, this comes back to what you were saying a minute ago about the tension that that creates. So tension is a major obstacle for any age <laugh> or anybody of any age.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([19:10](#)):

Um, and the origin of the tension is the way we think. So if you're thinking, I'm not good enough and I'll never be able to play this passage correctly, I've been practicing it for weeks and I'll never get it. Your body responds to that kind of thinking by increasing tension, your mood is affected, you kind of feel a little more down. There's a heavier downward energy. Your muscles start to contract a little bit. You may or may not be aware of it, but these doubt monsters are insidious. And a lot of the time we're thinking these thoughts without even realizing we're thinking them. And then we go around life with an extra layer of tension that we're not even aware of that's getting in the way of everything that we want to do. So for example, if you're playing a string instrument and you're frustrated because you can't get those notes in tune, even, you know, you've been practicing for half an hour on that passage, you get frustrated, you try harder, you are like, okay, I'm really going to get this today and I'm not going to go on to the next thing until I've got this.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([20:21](#)):

And so you work harder and harder, and the harder you work, the higher the tension level goes. And so tension is muscles contracting. When muscles, muscles contract, they're not as flexible. Now you can't move the joints as easily. So say you're trying to play a fast passage and it's just not working up to tempo and you want, and so you try harder, but you're sabotaging your experience because as you shorten those muscles, they can't move as quickly <laugh>. So, so my work is all about helping people recognize how they're thinking so that then they, they can choose to either keep thinking that way, if it's helpful and it makes them feel good and it works. Or to explore and experiment with other ways of thinking. So

for example, you know, back to, I'm not good enough. Well what if the person thinking that could be open to the possibility that maybe it is good enough for right now? You know, there are different ways to phrase things, different ways to think things. And that's, that's the big part of how I work with my students to help them think differently and think outside of the box, be more flexible in their thinking because the body just reflects our mind. There's never a problem with a body. I mean, yes, you can have an injury, but then healing the injury, overcoming the injury is so helped by how you're thinking. Mm-Hmm.

Christine Goodner ([21:55](#)):

Yeah, that's really helpful. And I think if you're a parent listening to this, you know, both of us are parents. Mm-Hmm. I'm sure both of us could think of examples, how we brought things into the practice room with our own children unconsciously. because it just goes, who knows who said what to us? You know, nobody's at blame here.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([22:12](#)):

that's Right. Exactly.

Christine Goodner ([22:13](#)):

Pausing where we are and thinking about like, what, what's actually happening here? What could we all, everybody on that little triangle we were talking about, teacher, parent, child, grandparent, whoever's practicing, how do we all change our mindset and let go of the tension and not blame anybody for it? I think that's important.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([22:28](#)):

I'm so glad you're saying that. That's so, so important. Yes. In fact, I, I really strongly believe that whatever we're thinking, there's a good reason for it. Even if it's a, a doubt monster that is sabotaging what we're doing. We learned to think that way and keep thinking that way because at some point in time it was useful to think that way. And we may never understand why. And it really really doesn't matter. Why. Because it's over. Yeah. The past is gone and over and all that really matters is, okay, well what's happening to me right now? What am I thinking right now? What am I feeling right now? And do I like it? No, it feels bad. Well then how could I think differently? And that's where the specific work that I offer my students, um, comes into play. We call it constructive thinking. And there are very specific ways to think that I teach my students to kind of get out of that loop, that negative loop and into something more experimental and you know, healthy curiosity and like playfulness and yeah, you can find new healthy ways of thinking that make you feel better and help you loosen up and let go. And then things start working magically. It's amazing.

Christine Goodner ([23:45](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And I do find myself saying to teenage students sometimes, like, think less. Like, I need you to stop thinking so hard. And they always are like, what?

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([23:53](#)):

Yes, <laugh>. It's true. That's really good advice.

Christine Goodner ([23:57](#)):

Yeah. I'm glad. Yeah. Great. That you're talking about it and I think, uh, you know, people want to pick up a copy of your book and get some insights into that. How else can people connect with you if this, because we could probably talk about this for days on end and you know, our time will be limited. So if this is making somebody think like, oh, I need to find out more about that, what's the best way for them to find you?

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([24:16](#)):

Yeah, I would love for them to find the book again. I'm just going to say the title again because it's a long one. It's "Make Great Music with Ease! The secret to Smarter Practice, Confident Performance and Living a Happier Life." That's on Amazon right now. And if people want to find more about me and my work in general and my past and maybe listen to my music, I have a website, it's www.artoffreedom.me, that's me. And I have a YouTube channel that's under my name also with music and teaching videos, um, that have to do with these mind body issues. Most of my students come because they have physical pain or performance anxiety, or they just want to improve their skills because they feel stuck, they know they have more tension and it's getting in the way. So all kinds of practice and performance issues for adults. I work with the adults and lots of educators come to me, um, for help with their teaching <laugh>. So yeah, thank you for asking.

Christine Goodner ([25:20](#)):

We'll make sure all those links are in the show notes for the, for the episode so people can, can find those easily.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([25:26](#)):

Thank You.

Christine Goodner ([25:27](#)):

And I think one other thing is - I know in your book you talk about some of the obstacles that get in the way of learning or mastering our, our instruments, and it's a big topic, but I wonder if you have any thoughts that come to mind that we could share with people today about that?

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([25:42](#)):

Oh yes. Lots of things come to mind. <laugh> I guess I would start by putting it into the framework of my Art of Freedom method, which has five life pillars, is what I call them. They are purpose, mind, body, spirit, and artistry. So in each of those areas, there can be endless ways that we interfere with our wellbeing and our, you know, healthy natural coordination, our confidence, our ease of movement. So the first pillar is purpose. I think it's really important for people to at least think about why they're doing what they're doing. Because, you know, people may not, you know, be in touch with having a life purpose per se, and that's okay. A lot of people do have a sense of what their life purpose is. But even if somebody doesn't, it's important to have goals and at least think about, you know, what do I want and what do I need to do to get what I want?

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([26:52](#)):

<laugh>? So we need to have clear intentions and goals, like if you go into the practice room and you don't, you can just flounder and waste a lot of time doing this or that and not really knowing what you're doing or why. So we've got to start there. Um, and then we move on to the mind all kinds of ways we can, um, get in our way with mind wandering distraction again, not thinking really clearly about what

we're doing, really not being present or mindful. I played a performance once and I was the soloist playing La Poem. I think I put this story in the book, , but I was playing the whole first page before I realized I was doing it. It was freaky. So my mind was wandering. I don't know where it was for the whole first page <laugh>. It was not a very pleasant or happy experience <laugh>, I, it didn't cause a problem and nobody noticed but me, but it really freaked me out.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([27:55](#)):

So those are some of the ways the mind can get in the way. And this may be one of the most important things is we need to learn to have better control over our thoughts and what we're doing with our mind in this present moment right now. And it's always about right now. So then the body, you know, people can have injuries, they can have repetitive use syndrome, you know, overuse. But a big part of what we deal with at the Alexander technique we call misuse, where we're using our bodies in ways that are not how it's designed to be used. So, you know, maybe you're forcing your thumb or your fingers or your, your arm to go into a contortion that it's not really designed to do, but you, you believe you're supposed to do it that way.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([28:47](#)):

So you force it and then down the road you get tendonitis and you wonder why. So <laugh>, learning how to use the body in a way that is aligned with the natural design is really essential. But again, you can't really do that if you don't have control over your mind and you don't have the subtle sense of when something is actually working for you or not. So it's really a skill to be in tune and in touch with your mind and your body. Um, and we're not taught that in school unfortunately. I think we should be <laugh>, but yeah.

Christine Goodner ([29:28](#)):

And sometimes it's like mind over matter, like, oh, don't worry if it doesn't feel good to your body, just focus your way through. And I think just thinking of the not having so much tension in our minds so we can relax our body. Yes. You might help us actually get in tune with that, it all works together so much.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([29:44](#)):

Absolutely. You can't separate the mind from the body. Right. And we, our culture does a lot, but we need to learn to unify, uh, the different aspects of ourselves. And that actually takes me to the next pillar, which I call spirit. And I use that word, you know, I like that word because it goes with creative spirit, but also I put it like capital S for spirit, but people can use whatever the word works for them. Some people like the word God, some people want to use the word love, or life force or flow. You just, those things I put into one category and I call it spirit. And you can't make great music without that special spark, whatever you want to call it, <laugh>. And so, uh, we get it. You asked about the obstacles. I think when people overfocus on technique or overfocus on the notes, or have the doubt monsters get in the way with how they're thinking, um, or they don't really know what they're doing or why they can't tap into inspiration.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([30:53](#)):

So there's a blockage there and you know, people can play with phenomenal technical facility. You just go onto YouTube and you can find children who are playing <laugh>. I mean, amazing things. You know, the technical wizardry that's out there is just mind blowing sometimes. But a lot of it to me can sound like a computer did it and it's lacking in heart and the love the spirit isn't there. I'd much rather hear

somebody who played a note out of tune here and there, but it gives me goosebumps so meaningful. And there's a real essential beauty that person is conveying through their personality. It's not their ego displaying itself.

Christine Goodner ([31:38](#)):

And I think that's a good argument for not squashing the playfulness and what can feel like silliness in children learning to play music because children will just react to music in a very free spirited way sometimes. And like, yes, we have to have some parameters around that when we're playing an instrument, but if we squash that completely out of them, then it's very hard to bring it back later.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([31:59](#)):

Absolutely. And I think it causes a lot of pain for everyone involved when that spark gets dampened. And yes, children naturally almost always are in touch with that. And it can be hard for parents <laugh> because, you know, their eyes might be all over the place. They might want to walk around the room and, but whatever we can do to keep their, their lively curiosity alive and let them experiment and play, um, you know, always within a boundary. Yeah. Like we have our job is to set the boundaries and the frameworks and give them the steps that need to be done, but to find ways and, you know, to be a good teacher is <laugh>, just like being a good parent is really challenging. because it, it requires you to call on all of your resources of your whole self, your mental, you know, ingenuity and your, and your love, your your heart. You need to nurture your students with love. Right? Yeah. And yeah, bringing all of it together to connect with the student and, and help them find their way with that spark that that's, that's already there. I think if you can do that, then, you know, whether they become a musician or not down the road is irrelevant because whatever they choose to do, they're going to bring that special something to it and make a positive impact in the world and the people around them. Yeah. Just what I think we really want.

Christine Goodner ([33:31](#)):

Absolutely. Absolutely. And I love that, that's, that's, it's an art form I think sometimes to figure out, you know, if they have some elaborate movie going on in their head related to the music that's very imaginative, you know, helping channel all of that and not squash it is definitely an art form for those parents out there doing that.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([33:47](#)):

Yes. And I really admire the music teachers who, like you, who work with little children. I've done some of that in the past, but I am personally more drawn to working with adults and the work that I do, um, you know, works, it works for anybody, but it, it would need to be adapted. Sure. And, you know, used differently for children. So, you know, I like to work with the educators and give them ideas for how they can do it, but I just have to say hats off <laugh> to the music educators working with kids because I've done it and I know how challenging it is. Yeah,

Christine Goodner ([34:24](#)):

Yeah. Well, and we need teachers on all ends of those spectrums to reach everybody. So, Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. that's really great. And I maybe we have one more pillar that I interrupted you before you got to share, so maybe we can lead people with some thoughts on that. Yes,

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([34:37](#)):

That's right. We have purpose, mind, body, spirit and artistry. And so artistry is the one that I think people just assume is what the music lesson is all about, right? You go there to learn the violin <laugh>, and so you go there to learn how to read music and how to play different dynamics and speeds and different tunes and you know, all those specifics about the pieces and the composers and all those artistic elements, you know, are there in the art of freedom method because it is a method to help musicians. And, but it's not just for musicians, you know, artistry is, the way I think of it is it's really about how you live your life. It's how can you bring that creative spirit and spark and curiosity and then grace. It's like what makes something artistic? I think of the Japanese tea ceremony, you know, just the graceful movements of a beautiful animal.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli (35:45):

They're doing it unconsciously, but we're animals too, and we get in the way of our natural graceful movements. So learning how to consciously tap into that is an art. And we're applying that to, when I work with my students, their any instrument, any skill level. Some of them are elite professionals with world class careers and some of them are in their seventies as a beginner cellist, <laugh>, for example. Everything I don't care. Um, but you know, it's all about learning how to get out of the way to allow the natural coordination and graceful movement and conscious free choices to make our lives beautiful. And that to me is artistry. And then of course we put it into a musical context. So how can you play, whether it's Mary Had a Little Lamb or a Tchaikovsky violin concerto, how can you play that with true artistry, not just technical wizardry? So you need to learn all the skills you need to obviously learn, which are the strings, and you know, how do you play a major scale <laugh> and all that goes into the artistry category, but then how do you really make it great art? And how do you make great music with ease, right? That's the title of my book. And that's, you know, what all of my work is about. That's those five pillars. They all are addressed together, separately and together. <laugh>.

Christine Goodner (37:18):

Yeah. I'm glad we got to talk through those. I think that's really helpful. And I think maybe we could, I like to end with like a practice tip. And I was thinking as you were talking about the artistry with really young children, sometimes it's like telling a story through the music and plotting that out with the child or thinking of an emotion or a color. But I wondered if you had any thoughts for maybe even thinking back to when you were practicing when you were younger or with your own children. How, how could have a young student tap into that artistry? Well,

Jennifer Roig-Francoli (37:43):

I wasn't the best, parent <laugh> for practicing. I gave my, my older son to my husband at the time and I said, okay, you work with him because I really just couldn't do it. <laugh>. And then my younger son, I worked with him, but most of the time I just left him on his own <laugh>. So I can't really say that I knew how to do what I'm teaching now, but of also that was many years ago and I've learned quite a lot since then. But I do have, uh, can I offer two tips? Is that okay? Because I couldn't choose, of course. The first tip that I would suggest is that before you even get out the instrument, to take a little time to pause and just get in touch with how both a parent, I mean, if this is a parent working with a child, it would be about both.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli (38:39):

Like each person gets in touch with, okay, what am I feeling right now? And just take a little inventory. What's happening to me in my body? How's my mood? What do I want? Do I want to be here? And the

student might be grumbling? Of course now I don't want to be here. And, you know, this is just a moment. It, it doesn't have to be belabored. There's no right way to do it, no wrong way. It's just taking a moment to pause and bring your attention back to yourself, your being your experience as a moment instead of already focusing on what, what you're going to do. Because if you are more present to your experience in the moment right now, that gives you a better chance at being able to do that when you're practicing. And if you're not present and your mind's wandering all over place and you really would rather be somewhere else than your practicing suffers and you're actually practicing that, sorry, you're getting really good at playing your instrument with your mind elsewhere.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([39:44](#)):

Remember what you practice, you get better at, whether it's something good or not, <laugh>. So, so I think it's really healthy and important too, somehow. You know, I have a special technique that I teach my students and you know, I can give you the link for that. And it's called the Cycle. I have a YouTube video that teaches that could use, kids may not have the patience to do a complete cycle, but that's okay. It's the idea. And even just doing a little bit of it goes a long way. And kids don't really need as much as adults do anyway, because they're so close to their natural essence, <laugh> more than parents. So that's the first one. Basically stop before you start and get in touch with yourself in the present moment. And then another tip that I really wanted to share, because I think it can make a huge difference in a student's progress, is something that most people don't realize.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([40:35](#)):

There's a lot of emphasis, I think, on repetition of things. So for example, let's say you want to learn how to play open string one, two, like three notes, or let's say 1, 2, 3. You want to play those notes in tune, right? So you practice getting those notes in tune and you repeat them a few times and then all of a sudden they're in tune. Great. Then I think it can be counterproductive sometimes. And I'm not making a black and white rule here. Um, there's much more to this and we don't have time to talk about it. To notice that once a student has been able to play 1, 2, 3 in tune, that means that the brain has got it, that the student can do it. And it's better sometimes a lot of the time to move on to something else at that point, because research has shown that the brain keeps on learning even when you're not doing that activity anymore.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([41:36](#)):

So it's really good to stop when you're feeling successful. Also, the student is going to be much more motivated to come back to it later or to do something else when they feel like they've accomplished something and they can do it rather than, like, old school would be, okay, let's play this 10 times in a row correctly. And if you mess up once you have to go back to the beginning, you know, that's not that uncommon. And it can be really counterproductive because it puts a lot of pressure on the student to be able to do it again perfectly, which increases tension, which as we spoke about earlier, I guess in the way <laugh>. And then if it doesn't work and they have to go back to the beginning, or even if they just have to keep going with the same thing and it's not working, they can get frustrated and start to feel bad about themselves.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([42:21](#)):

Like, what's wrong with me? Why can't I do this again? All those doubt monster type of thoughts, increased tension, and so it becomes really counterproductive. Whereas if you play it once and it's correct, I think it's much more valuable to trust to, and this takes practice too on the student's part and

the parents and the teacher's part to trust that it's in there, the capacity to do it again is in there and we don't need to check to see if that can be reproduced right now. It'd be better to move on to something else and then, you know, if you want to come back to it five minutes later, come back or leave it for next week or tomorrow or whatever. But the idea is to stop when you're ahead and let the brain and the the child, you know, feel successful, feel good about themselves because then everything they do next is going to be easier.

Christine Goodner ([43:13](#)):

Yeah. That is definitely different advice than we sometimes hear for practice. So yeah. Yeah. Good, good food for thought,

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([43:21](#)):

Something to experiment with Right? And again, it's not a hard and fast rule. And what matters more than going on is how you do whatever you do next. Do you do it with an open-minded, curious, playful attitude or you do, you do it with an intense competitive, want to do this again? I need to get it again. Now attitude: is it, you know, is there freedom in your mind and body when you do the next thing? Or is there kind of grabbing like a hooked intensity that that includes tension? That's just not necessary. You don't want to be practicing something with unnecessary tension because then you're learning how to play your instrument with unnecessary tension. <laugh>. Yeah. Never a good idea.

Christine Goodner ([44:07](#)):

Yeah. Oh, such valuable advice. Well, thank you so much. It was so wonderful to speak with you. I look forward to the next time we can connect and thank you for sharing all your valuable thoughts with us today. We appreciate it.

Jennifer Roig-Francoli ([44:18](#)):

Thank you so much, Christine. It was a pleasure. And thanks to everyone for listening.