



## Episode 48: An Interview with Amy Beth Horman

Christine Goodner:

Well, welcome everyone. I'm very excited today to be talking to Amy Beth Horman, and I was hoping we could just start today by you sharing a bit about who you are and what you do in the music world.

Amy Beth Horman:

Thank you so much for having me, Christine. I'm really, really happy to be back on the podcast. I am a violinist, a performer and a teacher at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in the pre-college division. I also run a private studio outside of the conservatory, and I have an online fundamentals class that I run, which is entitled Violin Breakfast. And I'm also the parent of a young violinist, so I help her with all sorts of things, which still include practice these days.

Christine Goodner:

Thank you. I know you, you do many, many things related to teaching music and learning music. I can't wait to talk about practice with you today. And I was wondering if we could just start by zooming back in time and if you could tell listeners who you know, haven't heard your story before, how old you were when you started playing an instrument, and what do you remember about practice from growing up?

Amy Beth Horman:

What I remember is, my parents actually said that they took me to a national symphony concert when I was about three, and I'm so proud of them in some weird way, looking back on that <laugh>, that they did take that risk and take a toddler to the National Symphony, to the Kennedy Center, uh, to see, uh, the National Symphony perform. And I don't know that they were aware that there was a violin soloist, that particular concert, but there must have been. And then afterwards they said they were walking in the halls afterwards and they, uh, like good parents would do, looked at me and said, so what did you

think about the concert? And I said, oh, I loved it. That's what I wanna do when I grow up. And they lit up because they're both professional musicians. And they said, you do, that's great.

Amy Beth Horman:

I think it would be wonderful to see you play in a symphony when you're older. And I said, no, I wanna be that girl in the dress in front of the symphony. And then they looked at each other like, oh, <laugh>. And then apparently I asked and asked and asked for a violin. They had decided amongst themselves that it was a little early to start me at three. At the time, I don't think they thought that was a good idea. I don't know whether that was, um, something specific to me as a child at three, because I, I'm sure you're very careful about starting at different ages for different kids. Maybe I just wasn't quite ready. Um, and they knew that, of course, they were both music educators, but they had made a decision it's not quite time, but I was very persistent. (pauses) I still am very persistent.

New Speaker:

Some things never changed, I guess. And at one point my mother told me that she got down to my level, you know, the way they instruct you to do with small children and looked straight at me and she said, I can tell that you really wanna play the violin, and I appreciate that. I'm so glad that you're telling me. But right now, we're not going to start the violin because we've decided you're a little young. We're going to start you when you start kindergarten, so you can keep asking me. But the answer turns to yes, when you start kindergarten, that's when we've decided you're gonna start your violin lessons. And she said, I looked at her and kind of cocked my head to one side and went, okay. And then I didn't ask at all, and she privately thought maybe I had forgotten all about it and actually kind of felt bad, like maybe she should have just said yes.

Amy Beth Horman:

And now I haven't mentioned it. And then she said, the very first day I came home from kindergarten, I walked up to her and I said, when do I get to start my violin lessons? (Christine: I love it. ) So it really shows you, you know, how stubborn and how persistent I was even as a child. And I love that story between us because she really respected me enough to have a conversation with me as small as I was. And I listened and I did exactly what I was told to do. Uh, and I trusted that she would start me as she predicted. And that's when I started. So I started in the attic of a music store, uh, with a Suzuki teacher in group classes first. And then I continued with that teacher for five years, in the Suzuki method. And about age 10, I switched to Jody Gatwood, who was, -, he's the former concert master of the National Philharmonic and a Julliard grad. And he taught me, uh, up until the time I left for Paris for the conservatory there. So I, I was lucky. I had really great teachers that knew when it was time for me to move to the next stage of things. And, um, and they did take the time to talk to us about it and help us find the next person even and, and pave that, that important bridge to what would be, you know, the journey of my life, which is to learn how to play this beautiful instrument and make music with it.

Christine Goodner:

I love that. Do you remember what practice was like for you growing up? Did you take to it right away? Were there hard parts about it that you can remember?

Amy Beth Horman:

I remember, I do remember practicing, when I was more around elementary school age and middle school age. I'm sure I did a lot of practice when I was younger. I don't remember that practice, but I

certainly have pictures of that because they took a lot of pictures and I was always with a parent. They were always kneeling, there was always a smile. I was very fortunate because my parents were music educators, so, um, they were really good at keeping things lighthearted and fun and knowing when to start practice and also when to end practice. So I did enjoy it. And then I think some of my most heartfelt memories of practice are when I was in middle school and had started to gain some independence. And I would stand outside the kitchen and we had a galley kitchen and we lived in a very small rambler, but I was in the living room, and I would stand outside the kitchen while my mother was cooking dinner, and I would carefully go about practice.

Amy Beth Horman:

And to me it felt like building a puzzle or a structure or, you know, I would learn notes and then I would go back and try them again and play them in rhythms or turn the metronome on and start an acceleration from slow tempo to medium tempo. And I would just systematically start moving in a direction in the practice. And I knew that my mother was listening, but she wouldn't say anything. She was just cooking dinner. And then when I was done, I would go into the kitchen and she would say very encouraging things, uh, like that sounded productive. How do you feel? And it was just such an important time for us because she was there, but she wasn't hovering and she was also doing something that was really meant to nurture all of us and nourish us. She was making dinner, the smells and the steam coming out of the kitchen.

Amy Beth Horman:

I can remember all of this, like it was yesterday is such a nice memory. So I think those are my favorite, very simple at home memories of, of practice. And then the other very vivid, I mean, it, it feels very strong, the memory of going to conservatory and practicing in those rooms, in the practice rooms. There was something so poignant about it and so powerful about being in a room in a big conservatory with lots of other instruments playing around you and the energy of everybody working so hard to achieve their dreams. I remember feeling so lucky to be standing in one of those rooms and to be part of that, that energy that was very exciting.

Christine Goodner:

Hmm. I really like those examples. And I think they're both like, you're doing your own thing and you're taking care of your own practice, but also there's like others around you doing something of their own that makes it feel like you're not totally alone in it. I think that's unique.

Amy Beth Horman:

Yeah, I, I definitely felt just surrounded by this very cushioned support and network of energized people. And that was, I think, part of what made me into the musician I am now. And it, it definitely influenced how I saw practice and, uh, what my body's response is to the time to practice or the growing need to practice more. I think it was incredibly influential to me, both of those examples in different ways but I, I think that's also something that has really taken me, to where I am now as a, as a teacher and, and how it is that I guide my own students in, in practice and what I wish for them to feel when they're in the midst of doing such important beautiful work for themselves.

Christine Goodner:

Ah, I love that. Could you say more about that? Like what, what could you share about what those hopes are for the students you're working with now?

Amy Beth Horman:

Oh, you know, I, I had a discussion with a group of students, um, not that long ago that was very interesting. And I actually didn't write this down to talk to you about this, but it's coming to me right now. I was in the workshop with them and I said, let me ask you a question. It has to do with mindset. When you go to your lesson to meet with your teacher, how do you feel walking in? What kind of energy do you walk in with? And they said, good energy, positive, optimistic, ready to work, eager to receive kind of energy. And I said, how do you walk in for yourself, for your practice? What kind of energy do you bring into the practice room to work with yourself, with your body, with your ears, with your spirit? Do you walk in with the same energy you just described or is it quite different?

Amy Beth Horman:

And every one of them said it was quite different. Oh, except for one, there was one who was very young. She said, it's the same. And then I said to that young one, I said, I hope you keep that forever, because I think that is the key to happiness in practice, to be holding space for ourselves and our spirits and our energy, our positivity, the same way we do for another person, that we respect very much, who we know we, that they can help us. So I, when I used to go to my teacher, I felt so positive before I went to him that he was going to help me with anything that I needed. So that in and of itself on the car ride over was very invigorating. It was an incredibly, uh, encouraging feeling because whatever I had at home that was bothering me in my practice on the car ride over, I was pretty sure that he was gonna be able to help me with those things.

Amy Beth Horman:

And I had been living with those little gremlins all week by myself. So I was excited to see him, you know, take those and debunk them and make them into friendlier parts of my practice, <laugh>. And so there's that optimism, that faith, that trust. I know I will feel different on the car back, and I did every time I felt different on the way back, sometimes he made me feel so much better within three minutes of standing there with him, that it could almost be like the lesson was already over and I would be completely satisfied. But I think that we hold the power to do that for ourselves more than we believe. I think that we can walk into a practice room on our own and actually give ourselves a lot of the same nurturing and a lot of the same encouragement. And if our mind is in the right place, I think that we can puzzle through things that might have alluded us or troubled us inside the week.

Amy Beth Horman:

So I think it's so much, about mindset, and especially with the preteens and teens, I believe that is also true. And the other thing I wanted to talk about with practice, I probably should have answered this before Christine, when you asked me about practice, because there was another stage of practice for me, and that was when I was an adult, and practice as an adult, um, became very different because I ended up having, uh, beautiful kids and, uh, becoming a mother. And I was blessed with little ones in the house running around, uh, and also a full studio of students. but at the time when my children were babies and toddlers, I was playing, uh, big concerti with orchestras still. And so those times were very special to me because they looked impossible. You know, it looked like, how will I prepare the Brahms or the Beethoven?

Amy Beth Horman:

And sometimes I would have multiple concerti within a month. How am I going to do this and also teach and be a good mom and a good wife? That was, a puzzle in my head. And one thing that occurred to me

in my own practice, uh, because I was feeling so scheduled and like I needed to get things done. I think I was in my thirties when this happened, I must have been, but I remember very distinctly having a practice session, which felt to me to be very stressed and too regiment and too much like a task list. And I stopped and I thought, this isn't how I want to relate to my instrument. It's almost like the instrument is a person to me. And I felt like it was so disrespectful to this instrument that's given me so much over the years and has lent me such happiness and feelings of satisfaction and empowerment.

Amy Beth Horman:

And I thought, you know, here I am turning it into almost a chore, and it's a privilege to play these concerts. So if I'm going to play the concerts, I need to respect this energy that I have with the instrument. So I made a little rule for myself, which was that when I touched the violin or when it, as I said to my students, when it reaches my shoulder, when that tap happens, I try and shift into a place of gratitude where I remember that it is a blessing for me to make this beautiful music. And if I lose track of that feeling, I put the violin down no matter how much I've been practicing so far. And I started doing that. And I'm, I'm very good at making these little rules for myself and sticking with them because I'm curious about what will come.

Amy Beth Horman:

And so I did this for a week or two, and I recognized within that timeframe that it would completely change my relationship to practice again. And that shift was, I think, the only reason I was able to perform as long as I have. And it kept me, uh, just in love with the instrument and with sound and vibration for so much longer. And sometimes I look back on that and I think, you know, if I can impart that to students, that it's so much of this is on them, you know, to maintain that beauty, that relationship of wonder and curiosity and gratitude with the instrument, that that is actually something that they have to participate in and be responsible for and how special it is. That is something that I talk to the students about. And as the music gets harder, that is very difficult to maintain and that I understand that, but that I believe in it because I did it. And that process, to me was very dear to my heart. It definitely helped my whole house. It helped everybody in the house. And I like to think that it helped the audiences that heard me inside that year because it was an incredible shift for me.

Christine Goodner:

Oh, I love that. Thanks for telling that story. I think it's very easy for practice to feel like a chore for many students who are suddenly put in charge of their own practice, for example, after a parent guiding them through.

Amy Beth Horman:

Yes.

Christine Goodner:

Um, and was that your advice to those in that workshop, to the teens and pre-teens? How did you suggest that they shift?

Amy Beth Horman:

Yeah, that it's, it's important to shift into that. We talk about gratitude a lot, but it's really easy to lose track of how thankful we should be to have this connection to sound that without having to actually speak words, we can sort through feelings that we can tell stories, and that we can heal ourselves from

things that have bothered us through the week or through the years that it's so cathartic to play. This is a gift, and it's very easy to lose track of that. And I think, especially in today's society where, you know, the children that I see in that age group are, are very scheduled, and have lots of, uh, afterschool activities. And so it almost makes sense that violin or that music or practice would be put inside a box with a big check mark waiting to happen. And it isn't that - I definitely don't wanna say we don't use charts or that we don't use check marks around here because we have to, to keep track of what we're doing. But, you know, our connection to the instrument is far greater than a check mark <laugh>.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah. The intention behind it is really different than just getting it done. Yeah.

Amy Beth Horman:

And, and the benefits that we experience on a daily basis are so much larger than the check mark that would look the same on the page as folding the laundry. It's just, it can't be put in that same category in our hearts. And if we take the time, I think with, with kids and with students to sit and discuss that with them, um, I, I do think it has the power to, to change them.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. That's a, that's a great thing to think about for those of us teaching and parenting teens and preteens who are having this relationship with their instrument. Yes. And I always think, you know, just, I've had a weird year where I've had to decide what do I actually have time for? And I had to pair some things down and I kept thinking like, what do I do that gives me something back? Which this podcast is one of those, but I think also the students can feel that way about their instrument. Yes, I'm putting in work, but I'm getting this thing back, like you said, working through my feelings, or I have this relationship with the instrument versus I have this chore to do, which is practicing every day. I like that.

Amy Beth Horman:

Yes. And then I think also as parents, um, and as teachers too, you know,, as a teacher, I have the responsibility to listen to what a child feels is their goal or what they would like to be playing on the violin, how they envision the violin as being part of their life later, and then build a road toward that. And sometimes we forget, I think as, as teachers that maybe there isn't room in the schedule to achieve quite the thing that they're describing right now. And that we're also responsible for that. If a child, for example, says to me at the conservatory, you know, I only have an hour and a half to practice, but they wanna learn The Last Rose of Summer and perform it in six weeks, it's my job to say to them, that's unlikely to go, well, I think you might experience more frustration trying that than joy or empowerment.

Amy Beth Horman:

And I am here to shield you from unnecessary feelings like that. We could easily do something which is more suitable for the time that you have for the violin, and make sure that at the end of this scenario that you're feeling amazing and that you have a great stage experience, uh, and that your relationship with music and the violin is nurtured and cultivated properly. Right? That is something. And then the parents, I think, don't often know, you know, how much time it would take to build a big concerto concerto or maybe a showpiece or a caprice. There's no reason for them to know that information unless they have an education in music or in violence specifically. And so I, I think I feel that very, very

much in the studio these days, especially with some of the advanced students that I'm, I'm blessed to teach.

Amy Beth Horman:

I really want to be able to help them, uh, formulate strategies and plans that lead them to good things. And it's hard to ignore that they might not be able to do that in on their own. Uh, it's just not possible for them. And then as a parent, I, I say to my parents all the time in the studio, uh, you know, we have to understand that some days just don't go as well as we would like in the practice room. And also some lessons don't go as well as we would like. And that that's something that we should already be familiar with in our own life as adults. That even when we prepare well and do everything that we know to be right, to prepare for something, that it is always possible that it will end up a little wonky or not exactly as we intended.

Amy Beth Horman:

And that, that is not a forever reflection on our work ethic or our innate talent or love for the instrument or our potential. Uh, it's just that this day didn't quite go, uh, as expected. I always tell my students that when I have days where I don't play as well as I would like that, those are the days where I learn the most. Everybody wants a day where they wake up and they play the violin and they sound like an angel, and they wanna call Sony and have them just run over and record them. We all have those days, and thank goodness for those days, we need those too. It fills our tank with gladness. I think that's very important. But we have to keep reminding the students, and I want for everyone to remind their kids that it's okay to have a day where it doesn't sound quite right, because those are the days where I think we learn more about why that is, or what could I do nuanced a little bit differently to turn this in a better direction.

Amy Beth Horman:

We, we really do discover things like that. And I think we should talk more about when things aren't going exactly the way we thought they would, because that music is so sensitive. Of course, what we do is so nuanced and there's so many factors, and consistency is a huge, thing that we strive for as professional musicians. But inside of any violin journey, it's going to be rife with inconsistencies. And how we respond to that is going to dictate how much joy and success the students will feel, not success in winning a competition or an audition, but success in, in their heart that this is something that's good for them and that it's turned into something that helps them be a better citizen. Help helps them be a better person. Somebody who listens, somebody who responds, right? That's how I think about the students and, and how we should be thinking about their journeys through practice. If practice isn't just another word for inconsistencies, <laugh> thanks, maybe that's what we should be thinking about.

Christine Goodner:

Absolutely. And I think if we get too hard on ourselves at times like that, we can get more and more tense or more and more pressured and then like, that's gonna be a counterproductive.

Amy Beth Horman:

Yeah. Yeah. We talk about leading with curiosity a lot in my studio, and I find the younger ones have an, an easier time with this, you know, that if they make a mistake, you can see the puzzle on their face. Like, well, that's weird. I wonder why that happened. And I'm always very charmed by that. I kind of look at them and I go, that was interesting, wasn't it? That doesn't usually happen there. I wonder whether

it's trying to tell us something, maybe we need to go back and just spend a little extra time with it and see how it responds. Then maybe that's what, what it's asking us to do. What do you think it's asking us to do? And just to approach it from not, um, a place of judgment, uh, which is generally what I find with, you know, some of the preteens.

Amy Beth Horman:

Uh, they're very sensitive, , to that. So, you know, if they have always succeeded at a spot in their concerto and then rehearsal hits and they fall down, the look on their face is generally not curiosity. It's more, what's the matter with me? Why, why did that happen? What does this mean? Um, how is this gonna affect the performance later? They have a whole other you know, category of questions. It's more personal, , to them, and that's normal. And I do talk to parents a lot about how that should be seen as almost par for the course. I mean, this is part of their child development is to be wondering, what does this mean about me? What does this say about me? And they're doing that all day long. So of course when they make a mistake on the violin, that is going to be a question.

Amy Beth Horman:

But that's really where our continued presence, like my mother in the kitchen with steam coming out, that is still necessary. And even now with Ava, you know, sometimes she'll just ask me, can you just be in the room? You know, when she wants to do a run through, I'll say, what do you need? Uh, which is, I hope, something that parents are asking, you know, a lot because I think it's interesting how smart the answer is to that. Sometimes with the teens that I know, if you ask them, what would, what would you like for me to do? How can I help? Um, and then actually take a step back and listen to what they say. It might not be what you think they need, but we need to trust that they know also what they need. And so if I say to Ava, I know you need to do a run through of your concerto, what can I do to help?

Amy Beth Horman:

And she said, and she says, is it possible for you to just be in the room? And then I'll say, yes. And then she'll say, but not say anything. And I'll say, of course. And she'll say, great, just my presence is comforting. Right. Just me being there. And as much as parents still need to do and help, uh, for their tweens and their teens in practice, I think sometimes it's the simple things they forget <laugh>. It's those simple things like turning on a recording in the car on your way somewhere, or maybe shooting them a little text when they're not with you. And asking how rehearsal went, but not being too concerned with the answer, just asking the question. Um, because that's, it just helps them feel like they have company, but not somebody who is taking score <laugh>. Yes. 'because I hear a lot of people tell

Christine Goodner:

Their, their story of practicing growing up and their memory is the mother in the kitchen shouting at them that the C is out of tune or something sounds weird about that. <laugh>, you know, those things like are seared in people's memory. And I think like you're, you're saying if asking them what they need, it might just be someone to play for, or someone a comforting presence in the room. Or sometimes a teen might say, can you listen and tell me if this sec, I've worked out this section the way my teacher asked me to. Like, if they ask for that, great. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But, um, I, yeah, it's really important.

Amy Beth Horman:



It is important. And I mean, I should say, I'm sure that I did play a c sharper or two or seven out of tune. Sure. And I mean, that is something to think about. I mean, if you have professional musicians in the house the way I did, and there I am practicing the idea that I didn't make mistakes or that I didn't need correction inside of those practice sessions is not believable. Of course I did, I was young, right? Most of the time I was correcting myself. But I'm fairly sure that there were still mistakes that I didn't catch, that she could have easily popped her head out and gone, you know, I don't know that that's the right note, or Are you sure that you're doing that with the right fingering or I'm sure she had lots of thoughts, but sometimes it's what you do with those that really matter as a practice parent, because sometimes it is time to step in and, you know, and sometimes it's not.

Amy Beth Horman:

And I also think with my studio occasionally, you know, when the deadline is near and the child themselves has chosen something, which is quite difficult, knowingly right, with, with my blessing, sometimes I'll say to them, you know, it looks like we might need to have a little bit of extra involvement this week. How do you feel about that? Can I enlist the help of a practice partner for you this week? At least part-time, because I think it would help if you had somebody to help build your awareness on a few aspects of your playing that would help this caprice spruce up by Sunday. You know, something like that. And it's interesting how that role as a teacher is better received by far than the parent actually just coming in and taking over. If, and sometimes I do it without even talking to the parent first.

Amy Beth Horman:

I'll just say to, how do you feel about it? Because I recognize that they do need maybe a, you know, another pair of eyes and that's only normal. And I try and explain that to them, that this is just, this is part of, of growing up, is that our bodies are changing so quickly. And it's really hard when you're changing size violins every, you know, nine to nine months or something. At a certain point, it feels like you never quite know where the end of your bow is. And so of course you don't know where the three quarter mark of the bow is anymore. Wouldn't it be helpful to have somebody who could help you with that just for this week? Because I think it would make a big difference so that there isn't any blame in the game, but just more, uh, just a lot more empathy and helping them find their own voice so that they can be part of the equation and not just be somebody who's taking instruction for the equation.

Amy Beth Horman:

Absolutely. They don't, you know, they don't work for music <laugh>, you know, we're we're there for them first. And, and that, that aspect of practice and, and you know, kind of inviting the parents back into the space, it's surprising, how effective that can be. and if, you know, on the rare occasion I have, occasionally I'll get a no. Right? No, I don't think, and then I don't know how things are at home, right? I don't live with them. So if I get a no, that really won't work for us from the child. I look at them and I'll, I just, very quickly, I just go, I understand that. So why don't we do this? Can we improve your practice space? Is there something that your mom or dad could do to make it more comfortable? Maybe there's better lighting. Maybe there's a place would be more comfortable and quiet.

Amy Beth Horman:

Is there a room that you would like to practice in this week that you don't feel like you have access to? How can we change your environment and elevate it so that you can get a little bit more focused work in? Because that also takes the, uh, collaboration and that allows them back in, but maybe on the peripheral. But there's something still very beautiful about that because they're still participating. And I

think the kids feel that even if they don't want them in the room, what can we do with the schedule? Can we par down the schedule for this week? Can we maybe do a little less of other things? I know when Ava has something really big coming up, uh, she isn't as, uh, tasked with as many chores in the house. We help out with more because we, we all do chores in the house, but if she's practicing four or five hours a day, it's, it's deemed reasonable that she might not be able to do that in the week leading up to something big. Um, and we all do sweet little things for her to show her that, that we're here, that we see that she's working. So maybe a, you know, her favorite breakfast or her favorite smoothie. Simple, simple things I think go a long way, even if you're not in the practice room anymore.

Christine Goodner:

Yes. I think that's really important to talk about. 'Because there's a lot of attention and discussion around like, how do we support really young musicians with the parent in there all the time. But I think this spot where they're more independent, but they do need us in many aspects, just, it looks really different. I think it's important to talk about.

Amy Beth Horman:

It does look really different. I think that maybe sometimes parents, especially ones that have some very high goals for their, , for their children, they get a little fixated on, but I want this, right? I want to help them with practice, or I want to tell them how to do this better. Or I want them to practice more. I want them to practice differently. And sometimes not the way back in, but the way to be welcomed back into the space, or to stay welcome in the space is to actually do things that don't have to do with that. Uh, so it might be to be like, look, I know we have you scheduled to practice two or three hours today, and I see that you're working really hard, but I think it might be a good idea to head to the luthier and just make sure that your violin in great working order.

Amy Beth Horman:

I, you know, your teacher said maybe a sound post adjustment might open up that G-string. Are you with me to explore whether the beginning of your Saint-Saëns would sound even cleaner if we maybe put a new G-string on and bumped the sound post a bit. Let's go out to lunch. Let's go to the violin shop. It'll replace one practice for you, but I bet you it's gonna be worth it. I mean, I think stuff like that, it just means so much to a tween or a teen, uh, because then you're bound to talk about things in the car and you have a little bit of time to bond and, and maybe, you know, cultivate trust and, and, uh, and love between you and I haven't ever gone to the violin shop to have that violin looked at where I didn't feel like, well, this is very helpful.

Amy Beth Horman:

Afterwards. Sometimes we get bogged down in our practice space and we forget that we still need somebody to maintain the instrument or maybe the bow or <laugh>. I mean, it's amazing what a set of new strings will do even, or just clean just a professional cleaning of the violin. It opens up the sound. And, I was very guilty of this, especially in my late teens and twenties when I was performing so much. I would think, oh, I can't, if I go to the violin shop, it's, it's such a long trip, and then I'm gonna miss so much practice. And every single time, Christine, I would come home and my violin would gloriously do all the things that I had planned to practice and fix. It was already doing all of them. And then all I had left to do was wonder how much time I had wasted in the week prior practicing, you know, the Beethoven Cadenzas, uh, from the concerto or something that just wasn't cooperating. Um, only to find out that, oh, I just needed, uh, to have my bridge straightened or something simple. Maybe there's a

seam loose and I just hadn't noticed it yet, and everything was running perfectly after the trip to the shop. It's, it's like the best practice session you've ever had, <laugh>.

Christine Goodner:

Well, that's so important. I think that doesn't get talked about enough. Just that maintenance of our instrument and how much of a difference that could make because we're not fighting against issues going on.

Amy Beth Horman:

Yes. And the maintenance of our relationships around us, our, our support network, you know, just going on those trips with my parents, when they would take me to the luthier, it nurtured our, our bond. I don't even know how to describe it, but, you know, we would do these things like getting their bow repaired. We would, we would take a little trip out. We always made lunch out of it. and there was always a reluctance for me, always, because I was gonna miss practice. I actually remember one time where I was really in a very, uh, difficult practice space because I knew I had a performance coming up and I was quite young and it was gonna be reviewed, and I knew that it was gonna be reviewed. So the pressure was kind of on, and I was doing the Revel sonata, which I loved so much, and I had so many magical feelings about it.

Amy Beth Horman:

But I had gotten myself into a place in my practice, which was not light filled anymore, and I couldn't find the sound I was looking for and nothing was working. And I was becoming very frustrated. And my mother, my beautiful mother came in and said, we're gonna take a trip. We actually need to rehair your bow, but also while we do that, we're gonna go to the aquarium because there's this really great exhibit on seahorses. Do you wanna go? And I went, no. Are you crazy? I don't wanna go. I have practice to do. Did you hear what it's sounding like? It doesn't sound great, and you know, it's gonna be reviewed and we have an argument. And she said, she said, no, you know, we don't have any other time to get the Bow re-haired and I can see that there's hair coming off, so I gotta kind of pull you in the car.

Amy Beth Horman:

I know you're not gonna like me for the next 30 minutes, but let's just go. I bet it'll turn, you know, things will turn around. So I'm, I'm just gonna pull you in. And I was so grumpy. I mean, I was really not a nice girl on the way to the aquarium. We dropped the bow off and then headed to the aquarium, and we walked in. And Christine, the seahorse exhibit was one of the most spectacularly beautiful out of world experiences I have ever had. I mean, it was like watching Alien Magic and Water, and they were fluorescent, they were blinking, they were disappearing the way, they didn't actually move in any normal way that I had ever seen. It looked like Christmas tree ornaments hanging in the aquariums in the most glorious colors. And they were floating in this kind of diagonal, ridiculous way.

Amy Beth Horman:

And I couldn't take my eyes off of them. And as soon as I just fixated on them, and I was walking all around this room, my mother just let me walk around. And then I came home and I knew exactly what my bow hands needed to feel like, which was like one of those dangling seahorses. And it fixed everything. And I didn't practice at all that day. But do you know who fixed that for me? That was my mom that fixed that for me, that story, I think I will tell for the rest of my life to practice parents, because sometimes it isn't practice that you need. It's bonding, it's love, it's connection. And that

connection back to the people who are responsible for starting you on the journey in the first place, it affects you from stage because you look at them and your heart is just swelling with gratitude.

Amy Beth Horman:

Because that concert was probably one of my best concerts because she handed me the revelle back to my heart. I had lost it, and she handed it back. And I don't, you know, I'm not even sure that she calculated any of that. I think she listened to her intuition, to her parents' intuition, because maybe somebody who's listening to this thinks, well, I don't know that I could ever come up with such a strategic move as to go to the, I don't think it was strategic at all. She just, she just moved with her heart. And by doing that, it teaches me to do the same. Um, so it, it is such a special thing to remember these, these crazy moments with my parents and <laugh>, um, and practice, because that, I mean, that's about erasing practice, right?

Christine Goodner:

Right, right. And I think if we're the parent, you know, if children around that age, we can get sometimes the grumpy attitude or the like, oh, mom and whatever else. And I think just being like, no, I like we know if we know it's gonna be good for them. I think just realizing that that will pass. And, uh,

Amy Beth Horman:

Oh, I really admire her for that because now that I have teenagers, I mean, yes, it can get very grumpy and tense and she endured a very difficult car ride with me <laugh>. I, I look at it, but you know, I, and I, I wish she were still alive, so I could apologize because I tell this story so much and every time I tell it, I feel kind of horrible because I put her through this very tense car ride. But what a special, uh, experience it was, and especially in retrospect, um, you know, just knowing where it is that you need to pull back and broaden the perspective and lighten the load. You know, these are parenting skills that need to be really honed if you have a young artist at home, uh, because they're still young, even though they're playing these very difficult pieces.

Amy Beth Horman:

And they will plow forward almost into a ditch, which is what I was doing. And she saw that, and she knew what was best for me, and she was willing to be uncomfortable for that car ride to see it happen. And she also didn't, you know, for the record, didn't push me toward the seahorses. She let me just walk around the room. She didn't try and draw a correlation, right? She didn't say, I wonder if this will help your bow hand thing. She didn't say, look at this one. Doesn't this remind you of the color that you're seeking? In the beginning of the, you know, she didn't do any of that. She just let me experience it. And then we didn't even talk about whether that would help my violin playing at all. We just talked about how absolutely stunning they were. And then when I went home, you know, I just went into the room and I picked up the bow and everything changed.

Amy Beth Horman:

And I thanked her. I just went, wow, that really fixed it. I don't know how that fixed it, but thank goodness, I hope it sticks. The only worry I had after that was that I would lose track of the feeling. So I practiced, you know, quite a bit that night, just trying to memorize all the feeling in my right hand that I was capturing to make that, uh, tone, that sound that I had been, you know, searching for. Sometimes you can't find what you're searching for in four walls. You just can't, you have to go out and, and live and

experience. And, um, you know, that's maybe something that parents need to <laugh> just to hear as well, because how do, how do you get all this practice done and still go to the aquarium.